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Solo Performance: An Extension of Vocal Pedagogy

Monica J. Harte

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Solo Performance:
An Extension of Vocal Pedagogy

by

Monica Harte

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Solo Performance: An Extension of Vocal Pedagogy

by

Monica Harte

Advisor: Stephanie Jensen-Moulton

In this study, I examine the significance of the solo performance opportunity in vocal pedagogy at the tertiary level. In order to discover tangible correlations between solo performing and applied lessons, I designed and implemented a case study that focused on fourteen subjects rehearsing, performing, and recording roles in the children’s opera, Mambo. The findings stem from my theoretical analysis of substantive data collected through forty-one interviews and three months of observations. The data collected disclosed that whether the participants advanced within a particular performance practice (such as presentation), or developed a specific vocal technique (such as coloratura), Mambo became an extension of their private lessons and aided in developing vocal aptitudes that were previously missing or incomplete.

The pedagogical tools acquired by the subjects during the Mambo production represent significant advances in their technical skillsets. Since these skills are typically addressed as part of applied lessons in universities and conservatories, we may conclude that the rehearsal-performance platform yields untold pedagogical tools for students studying vocal performance at the tertiary level.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to thank my parents, Ted and Deena Puffer, for immersing me in music and laughter from my very first day; and my husband, Greg Tatar, for believing in me wholeheartedly, introducing humor to my academic hurdles, and accompanying me through life’s trials with a beautiful glass of wine.

Special gratitude to Jovanna Castagnola, author of the original children’s book, who generously allowed me to expand upon her story to write the libretto for the opera; and to John Cleary who captured the musical style of each whimsical character perfectly and proved to be a superb collaborator for Mambo. To Dan Bøhler, George Brunner, and the young artists who participated in the Mambo production with exemplary levels of commitment to this study, I am truly thankful.

I am grateful to the faculty and staff of the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College. By granting me the venue and access to the talented young singers pursuing degrees in voice (both performance and music education), the institution bestowed upon me the research endowment necessary to conduct my investigation. The generosity of my colleagues, who showed support for the Mambo study, was testament to their
commitment to the students as well as to pedagogical research. I extend my deep appreciation to the Dean of Visual, Media and Performing Arts, Maria Ann Conelli, for her support and encouragement. Finally, to my friend and mentor throughout this entire process, Donna Doyle, thank you from the bottom of my heart.
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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

Vocal pedagogy, as discussed in this dissertation, is defined as the art of teaching a combination of vocal skills, musical skills, and performing skills. These skills are typically acquired at the university and conservatory level in applied lessons, methods courses, and repertoire courses. Those teaching voice at the tertiary level typically address the following pedagogical elements during applied lessons: technique, languages, diction, repertoire, career advisement, performance practice, and solo performance opportunities. Effective voice teaching requires empathy and flexibility in order to move the pedagogical agenda forward as efficiently as possible.\(^1\) Part of the complexity of teaching voice at the tertiary level is the element of moving the singing student from the private lesson experience to the public performance. My research investigates the importance of the public performance and examines elements of vocal pedagogy that can be addressed from within a solo performance experience.

Designing a case study to prove the importance of performance as an extension of vocal pedagogy implies that alternative philosophies or institutional policies exist. In fact, there are teachers who subscribe to the school of thought that students should not perform until they are *ready*. This pedagogical approach can be widely varied with endless possibilities of what constitutes a readiness to perform. A voice teacher’s caution can be based on concerns for vocal health, the confidence-success ratio, or the perception of their colleagues if their students do not perform well. Where institutional policies are

concerned, budgets are concerned. All performances cost money and it can be a financial challenge to offer several students solo performance opportunities. However, I argue that these opportunities are invaluable for students at the tertiary level as performing can give young singers the competitive edge necessary to succeed in the professional arena. With this case study, I intend to prove that various vocal styles, musical skills, and performing skills can be addressed from within solo opportunities; and therefore, these opportunities are crucial extensions of the overall pedagogical process as a complement to applied lessons.
The Importance of Performing

1.1 Rationale

Although there are dissertations as well as scholarly articles and books verifying the importance of performing with regard to developing professional singers, none that I have discovered document the ways in which specific vocal techniques are addressed during the process of preparing and performing a role or solo performance. In this study, I define the “solo performance opportunity” as the process of acquiring, learning, and performing a role in an opera, operetta, musical, oratorio, or other major solo performance, such as a solo recital. I will also address the correlation between increased professionalism and performance, specifically in reference to the performing experiences of young singers. I refer to Colleen Skull’s definition of professionalism as performance excellence. In her 2013 dissertation “Performance Excellence: Toward a Model of Factors Sustaining Professional Voice Performance in Opera,” Skull’s definition of performance excellence derives from a combination of quotes from artists such as

Leonard Bernstein and Renée Fleming, which include technical skills as necessary aspects of a professional performance.³

In order to demonstrate pedagogical improvement arising directly from learning and performing a role, I created a performance opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students studying voice at the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College. The production is centered on the children’s opera, *Mambo*, which I wrote in collaboration with John Cleary, a composition student at Brooklyn College. The opera was written, produced, performed, and recorded for this dissertation.⁴ *Mambo* fits into the medium of operas that are traditionally used as pedagogical tools for the following reasons:

- The roles in *Mambo* were modeled on existing roles in operas commonly produced in conservatories and music schools.
- The roles contained technical requirements found in standard operatic repertoire, including but not limited to high notes, coloratura, musical line, and register negotiations.
- The roles required acting, moving, and managing sets and costumes.

I wrote the *Mambo* libretto based on an unpublished children’s book by Jovanna Castagnola.⁵ Castagnola wrote the book as part of the requirements for her degree in English at the University of Nevada, Reno. I chose this book for the anti-bullying theme, the theatrical possibilities, and the character prospects.

---


The book has two main characters, Mambo, a maple leaf, and Chief Leaf, who Mambo encounters on his journey. The other original characters are bullies who live in the town and drive Mambo to leave in order to find friends. The libretto that I wrote adds Mambo’s mom plus a number of characters Mambo encounters during his journey to find friends. Select characters can be included or cut from any given performance depending upon the number of performers who need solo opportunities. Additionally, one singer can portray more than one character in a performance. The version I produced included all the characters with a double cast, giving singers the opportunity to learn and perform more than one part in the production.

Following an eight-month break, the singers were invited to make an audio recording of the show for use in creating an animated version of the opera. The full production represents the case study in which the subjects have voluntarily participated. Each participant has signed a participant consent form (Appendix A) and has agreed, in addition to performing and recording Mambo, to participate in three interviews for data collection, analysis, and reporting.

1.2 State of Research

Although there is a dearth of research examining specific vocal technical skills from the performance perspective, the importance of solo performance as a general component of the learning process for young singers has not been completely overlooked in recent research. In his 2006 dissertation, “The Necessity of Extra-Curricular Activities for the Undergraduate Vocal Performance Major: How Performance Opportunity Correlates with Success,” Zachary Marshall uses a ‘success’ formula with the following criteria for measuring success: continuing to graduate school, paid employment
opportunities in the field of singing, and realization of potential.\textsuperscript{6} His findings reveal that success at the undergraduate level is enhanced by the incorporation of performance opportunities, citing opera performances as the most beneficial, based on his analysis of survey responses.\textsuperscript{7}

In addition to Marshall’s dissertation, recent research papers, scholarly articles, and books address various correlations between performing and technical skills, confidence, and success. This research includes Shirlee Emmons’ and Alma Thomas’ 2008 article discussing the “toughness of thinking” and the mindset necessary for singers to succeed;\textsuperscript{8} Robert Anthony Tamborrino’s 2001 dissertation exploring performance anxiety;\textsuperscript{9} Colleen Skull’s 2013 dissertation noting the skills necessary for professional-level operatic performances;\textsuperscript{10} Kathleen Baughman’s 2014 dissertation codifying performance preparation;\textsuperscript{11} and Carolyn Black-Sotir’s 2012 dissertation outlining the elements of opera and vocal performance.\textsuperscript{12} Some scholarly books addressing the topic include Richard Miller’s \textit{On the Art of Singing},\textsuperscript{13} Arabella Hong-Young’s \textit{Singing Professionally},\textsuperscript{14} Elizabeth Blades-Zeller’s \textit{A Spectrum of Voices: Prominent American Performance for Three Stages.}\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Ibid.} Ibid., 110, 114.
\bibitem{Tamborrino} Tamborrino, “An Examination of Performance Anxiety Associated with Solo Performance of College-Level Music Majors.”
\bibitem{Skull} Skull, “Performance Excellence.”
\bibitem{Baughman} Baughman, “Music for Three Stages.”
\bibitem{Hong-Young} Arabella Hong Young, \textit{Singing Professionally: Studying Singing for Actors and Singers} (Heinemann Drama, 1995).
\end{thebibliography}
Voice Teachers Discuss the Teaching of Singing,\textsuperscript{15} Richard Miller’s Solutions for Singers,\textsuperscript{16} John Glenn Paton’s Foundations in Singing,\textsuperscript{17} and Clifton Ware’s book Adventures in Singing.\textsuperscript{18} Each of these works addresses at least one aspect of vocal pedagogy in detail, and informed my development of the research questions and case study design for this dissertation.

1.3 Research Questions

The fundamental research question of this study is as follows: Can elements of vocal pedagogy be addressed for students within a solo performance opportunity? Subsets of this question include the following:

1. How do performance opportunities enhance the process of acquiring singing technique?
   a. What is the role of movement and staging in teaching vocal technique?
   b. In what respect does the communication of thoughts and feelings through singing affect the process of learning vocal technique.

2. Is it possible for a voice student to learn a specific technical skill exclusively through the process of learning and performing a role in an opera or musical theater show, or is it necessary for each skill to be addressed in private lessons?

\textsuperscript{15}“A Spectrum of Voices; Prominent American Voice Teachers Discuss the Teaching of Singing. (Reprint, 2002),” \textit{Reference and Research Book News} 19, no. 1 (February 2004): n/a.
\textsuperscript{17}John Glenn Paton, \textit{Foundations in Singing: A Guidebook to Vocal Technique and Song Interpretation} (McGraw-Hill, 2006).
\textsuperscript{18}Clifton Ware, \textit{Adventures in Singing: A Process for Exploring, Discovering, and Developing Vocal Potential} (McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 2006).
a. To what extent is the solo performance opportunity an extension of applied lessons?

b. Does a group dynamic and repetition on stage foster different results than self-motivated practice?

The term “singing technique” refers to the skills typically defined as “technique” in vocal pedagogy including all aspects of vocal production, breath support, resonance, agility, and physical coordination. For the terminology “performance professionalism” and “professional success” I refer to Marshall’s study and definitions of professionalism with regard to success in financially stable careers, Skull’s definition of success as performance excellence, and James Stark’s account of numerous interpretations of success in his 2003 book *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*. Stark documents the following components among those historically pertinent to eventual success: exceptional voice teaching, the tenor high C (C5), a unique vocal “fingerprint,” and advanced breath management.

1.4 The Mambo Production

With these research questions in mind, my goal as principal investigator was to create a microcosm of a professional performance, namely the *Mambo* production.
Through this vehicle, I worked with a group of singers to discover the various ways in which they each developed vocally, professionally, and artistically during the process of learning, performing and revisiting a role.

1.4.1 Acquiring Engagements

Acquiring engagements often requires extra voice lessons and repertoire preparation for specific auditions. The casting process for this study was not standard and did not require extra preparation on the part of the singers, as I did not hold auditions. I requested resumes and repertoire lists via email, specifically asking for literature the singers were studying in their private voice lessons at the time. I cast each singer based on the information they provided.

1.4.2 Personal Life and Rehearsals

Personal life and rehearsal schedules were taken into account. Singers are often asked to commit to enormous blocks of rehearsal time for opera productions. In the university setting, productions often take an entire semester to mount. However, the rehearsal schedule for Mambo lasted two weeks, typical of a schedule in a regional opera house.23 Unlike typical rehearsal schedules, the Mambo rehearsals were scheduled around the singers’ classes and personal work schedules to minimize stress and support a positive work environment.

1.4.3 Learning Roles

Learning the roles took place during the rehearsal process for many of the singers. Learning a role can be expensive, as many singers find it necessary to hire an accompanist to play the score, or a coach to address musical and diction issues. Each scene in *Mambo* was sent to the singers as a digital audio file for learning purposes, and the stage direction was designed to aid in memorization. I provided additional private instruction to those who did not possess the skills to master the music through this method. *Mambo* consists of twenty-nine minutes of music which includes four minutes of ensemble singing. Except for the singers cast as Mambo, each participant had less than ten minutes of music to learn, including the participants singing more than one role.

1.4.4 Technique and Confidence

Vocal technique was observed and documented during the rehearsal process. Confidence was examined as a relating factor among the singers as it can play a vital role in voice students’ abilities to improve during rehearsals. The rehearsals remained positive in order to give each singer a safe environment in which to try new things, make mistakes, and eventually grow vocally and professionally. As producer, librettist, and director, I was able to encourage them to take risks and make mistakes as part of their development. Also, I taught them stage skills for dealing with unplanned variables during live performance such as memory lapse, audience cell phones, and staging errors. My approach to staging remained constant with each singer, regardless of his or her experience and skill level.

1.4.5 Acting and Movement

Acting while singing is a skill that takes practice, and young singers need the opportunity to learn this skill.\textsuperscript{25} As stage director, I addressed these issues during the *Mambo* production by teaching them skills to incorporate movement into their singing. If the staging remained awkward, I changed the staging to fit the skills of the performers I was working with.

1.4.6 Production Values

Costumes and sets allow inexperienced singers to immerse themselves in roles more easily.\textsuperscript{26} I hired Dan Bøhler, a designer and animator, to design and build the costumes, and I designed and built the set. These production values were included as part of the original plan for *Mambo*, and were important for the singers and audience members to envision the story.

1.4.7 Positive Experience

Positive performance experiences enhance confidence and strengthen singing and performing skills.\textsuperscript{27} Positive experiences can include audience reactions during and after the performance, unscripted changes that were dealt with professionally, and feelings of vocal technical accomplishment.\textsuperscript{28} Through my observations, I was able to witness the


\textsuperscript{26} Emmons and Thomas, *Power Performance for Singers*, 197, 236, 295.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 97–99.

\textsuperscript{28} The children’s reactions during the first *Mambo* performance increased performers’ energy levels and performer-audience rapport, March 15, 2015.
effects of positive input, and select subjects in the Mambo production addressed these issues during their interviews.29

1.4.8 Revisiting a Role

Revisiting their roles was a first-time event for many of the Mambo subjects. Singers typically have a different approach to a role they have already performed. They are often more aware of specific technical difficulties and pacing issues.30 This case study included an opportunity for the subjects to sing the roles they performed in March, in recording sessions eight months later. I was interested in discovering which, if any, of the singers would show improvement or approach the music with confidence not previously exhibited during the initial rehearsals.

1.5 Rationale for a Case Study

The investigation into vocal pedagogy from a performance point of view requires a research design that incorporates performance. John Creswell defines case study research as a “study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting.”31 Consistent with this definition, I have created a case study around a performance opportunity that includes a rehearsal process, two performances, and subsequent recording sessions. My intent is to define the performance opportunity as an extension of vocal pedagogy and to explore the effects of performing as part of a broader pedagogical regimen. The vehicle for this case study, the children’s opera Mambo, has allowed for

29 Subject 11, Performance Interview.
31 John W. Creswell, "Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches" (Sage, 2012), 704.
ample opportunities in which to observe singers in many aspects of learning, performing, and revisiting roles.

Using a combination of case study research methodologies as described by Creswell, Robert E. Stake, and Graham Gibbs, I followed the steps below to assess the validity of using case study research as the format for my inquiry.\textsuperscript{32}

- **Conceptualize the issue:** I developed my research questions.
- **Choose research strategy:** I decided to observe singers in a production setting and to conduct interviews that would focus on the singers’ perceived experiences in that production.
- **Select methods:** I chose to be an active participant and observe the subjects from within the production.
- **Organize the practicalities:** I created the performance opportunity that would allow for my research questions to be addressed, advertised for volunteer participants, and arranged for the location of this case study.
- **Collect data:** I conducted fieldwork by observing the singers during the rehearsals, performances, and audio recording sessions. I took notes and video-recorded for observational documentation. I then conducted a series of three semi-structured interviews with each participant.

• Analyze data: I used HyperResearch—qualitative research software for organizing and coding data—as well as Creswell’s template for case study data coding. Following the coding, I analyzed the findings.

• Report: This dissertation represents my report.

Creswell defines case study research as research that follows a type of qualitative design, encompassing both an object of study and a product of inquiry. This research approach explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system over time, and methods of data collection that involve multiple sources of information. The Mambo production is a real-life, contemporary performance opportunity. The subjects have volunteered to participate in the entire study including rehearsals, performances, recordings, and interviews. The subjects are comprised of fourteen singers who performed roles in Mambo and returned for the recording sessions eight months later.

1.6 Methodology

The methodology for conducting research in this study began by identifying the philosophical assumptions that guide the inquiry. I examined my biases and framed my research in social constructivism. Creswell discusses social constructivism in terms of the research goals, which rely on the participants’ views of a situation. The purpose of examining these views is to acquire an understanding of a particular situation, such as an opera production in a music school. Each stage of the methodology is described below.

34 Creswell, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, 64–65.
1.6.1 Research Design

John Creswell’s work on philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks serves as the basis for my case study design.\textsuperscript{36} Creswell’s “phases” of qualitative research design are similar to Gibbs’ “planning stages.”\textsuperscript{37} Both scholars discuss acknowledging the researcher’s theories as early elements of the research design, and elements that ultimately define the philosophical framework of the study. Creswell breaks the concept of philosophical assumption into four categories: ontological beliefs (the nature of reality), epistemological beliefs (what counts as knowledge and how to justify those claims), axiological beliefs (the role of values in research), and methodological beliefs (the process of research).\textsuperscript{38} Within a social constructivism framework, these categories incorporate the following specifications: ontology refers to multiple realities and experiences; epistemology relates to the subject-researcher interaction; axiology introduces the individual values within a group setting; and methodology assimilates emergent ideas obtained through interviews, observations, and analysis (see Figure 1.1).

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., chap. 2.
\textsuperscript{38} Creswell, \textit{Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design}, 20–23.
With regard to ontology, I intend to report each singer’s reality, or lived experience, regardless of individual perspectives, and by doing so, to allow themes to develop from their descriptions. The question of epistemology is addressed in part with the length of the *Mambo* Production: fourteen months with three months in collaborative fieldwork. The amount of time spent negotiating the three stages of the production resulted in decreasing the professional and emotional distance between the subjects and myself. Additionally, my participatory role in the case study has increased the singers’ trust in my work as a professional, and in my motives as a researcher. Each phase has created a new level of familiarity, informing their expectations with respect to the next stage of the study.

The axiological issue needs to be addressed in terms of the subjects’ individual experiences in connection with my ontological beliefs. The comfort and confidence of the subjects in this study has been a primary concern throughout the production. I have been able to focus on the participants’ needs in *Mambo* due to the values and experiences that I bring to this study. I believe performance opportunities are necessary at every stage of vocal pedagogy and I believe every stage of vocal pedagogy is enhanced by performance.
Having grown up in an opera company with parents who were opera producers and music pedagogues (teachers of piano, solfège, vocal technique, musicianship, and conducting) I am able to appreciate technique as a crucial element in acquiring the skills that lead to great performances. In addition to studying music and voice with my parents, I studied violin and ballet with professionals outside my home for more than ten years.

My performance experience began when I was three years old and placed in my first professional production as the baby in Madama Butterfly. I sang my first line in a professional opera at the age of four (“I want a trumpet and a drum,” La Bohème). As I was immersed in a creative environment, many of the lessons I learned growing up were acquired through observing and listening. The household goals were to foster great musicians, teach great singing, and create great productions at the tertiary and professional levels. Three concepts that influence the values I bring to this particular study originated with my teacher, mentor, and father, Ted Puffer:39

1. If you have enough empathy, you can teach technique using music in lieu of exercises. This was a system he used with students who were resistant to new exercises or technical concepts.

2. “You have to perform!” Puffer believed—and I observed many times in his teaching as well as in my own—that technical breakthroughs come from performing.

3. People perform at their best when they are at their most confident. This is true for their vocal technical skills as well as their performing skills.

My ontological beliefs have allowed for the emerging design of this dissertation and have enhanced my ability to conduct unbiased research. The methodology includes my interview questions, which relate specifically to observations during the fieldwork. The questions were therefore developed after each stage of the process. The analysis includes comparisons of the three interview outlines and is supported by my observations.

Once I articulated the philosophies guiding this study, I discovered that a singer’s experience in an opera production ties together with each element of research analysis in the social constructivism framework. I was, therefore, able to place my vocal pedagogical values into this framework to conduct my research. Opera productions combine numerous artistic experiences and ideas. Singers need to interact efficiently with each other as well as with musical directors, stage directors, wardrobe people, and various other staff members. In a matter of weeks, a complex social web is spun in order to produce an opera. The social constructivism framework works well for studying singers within the complexities of the opera setting since the following elements are addressed within this framework:

1. The subjects’ experiences entering the study are taken into account (ontology – what each singer brings to the study).

2. The subjects’ interactions with the researcher – in this case the librettist, stage director, musical director, and choreographer among other duties (epistemology – the singers’ relationships with me in the various hierarchical roles).

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3. Each singer’s reactions within the group – the other performers (axiology – acceptance from within the *Mambo* ensemble).

4. The analysis of data collected through observations and interviews encompassing all of these components (methodology – interpreting the ideas and concepts of the subjects during and after the production).

Although I did not have a specific pedagogical model as a working example of this method, the corresponding qualities between social constructivism and my pedagogical case study supported this framework as basis for my research design.

1.6.2 Researcher as Participant

According to cultural anthropologist Brian Hoey, since the term “ethnography” (a detailed description of everyday life and practice) has become equated with all types of qualitative research, it is now defined as both a qualitative research process (one conducts an ethnography) and a qualitative research product (outcome or cultural interpretation).41 Alternatively, author Michael Angrosino, Professor Emeritus at the University of South Florida, is explicit on the topic, subscribing to the belief that it is not a research method, but rather a strategy that facilitates data collection in the field.42 For the purposes of this study, ethnography refers to collecting data through interviews and participant observation for analysis and interpretation. Wayne Fife refers to participant observation

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as the most basic form of ethnographic research.\textsuperscript{43} David Fetterman writes that participant observation is “crucial” to effective fieldwork and cites six months to a year as an ideal span of time to be immersed in a culture.\textsuperscript{44} Angrosino discusses the validity of non-continuous participant observation when there still exists a substantial amount of interaction.\textsuperscript{45} I experienced non-continuous participant observation in the \textit{Mambo} case study, as I was able to interact and observe the subjects in classes and performances during the eight-month break.

Creswell insists that defining one’s participant observation role is crucial and divides the participant observation roles into two categories: complete participant and participant observer.\textsuperscript{46} I define my specific observer role as “participant-observer.” As such, I have participated in every part of the case study. However, my participation has not been as a singer-actor-performer with the subjects, but rather, as a librettist-director-producer. This distinction supports my determination in defining my role as participant-observer.

In the “Participant Observation” chapter of the \textit{Encyclopedia of Evaluation}, Sandra Mathison cautions against a participant observer “going native.”\textsuperscript{47} She states that by completely adopting an insider's perspective, a researcher can lose the evaluator persona. By adopting a position of hierarchy within the case study (librettist, director,
producer) I was able to understand the subjects’ experiences with an insider’s empathy, while maintaining the objective point of view necessary for accurate evaluations of their behaviors.

It is worthy to consider the possible effect that my position as librettist and director may have had on the subjects’ willingness to communicate their musical and theatrical desires. With this in mind, I repeatedly invited the performers to take a collaborative approach and voice all libretto, musical, staging, and costume requests as early as possible so that their needs could be met. Nevertheless, it is important to note that my multiple positions within the production may have inhibited select singers from disclosing their performance needs during the musical and staging rehearsals.

1.6.3 Data Collection and Analysis

As stated above, the data I have collected has been acquired through observations and interviews. The observations have been logged on protocol forms (Appendix E) specifying the activity, the length of the activity, the descriptive notes, and reflective notes, using Creswell’s example. See Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 Observational Protocol Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol</th>
<th>Length of Activity (rehearsal, performance 1 &amp; 2, recording sessions)</th>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General: What are the singers’ experiences–location, atmosphere, etc.</td>
<td>How do the singers appear to be feeling or reacting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interviews have been audio recorded on one of two computers with the recording software Garage Band. Most of the interviews were conducted at Brooklyn College in Boylan Hall room 1234 and in Roosevelt Extension room 201. One of the interviews was conducted by phone. All the interviews have been conducted on an individual basis in a private office.

I have transcribed each interview directly into the qualitative research software HyperResearch and waited until all the interviews were transcribed before data coding. To validate the coding, I offered each singer a transcription of their individual interviews accompanied by a summary of my interpretations of the data. Once I received clearance from the subjects to continue with my interpretations, I began clarifying my analyses, cross-referencing between the interviews (one, two, and three) and cross-referencing the interviews with the observations.

1.7 Summary

The global question I address in this dissertation is whether elements of vocal pedagogy can be addressed within solo performance opportunities. Sub-questions focus on ways in which performance opportunities accelerate the acquisition of vocal technique and the role staging plays in this acquisition. In order to investigate these questions, I designed a case study in which I was able to observe and interview fourteen voice students from within an opera production. The students were comprised of undergraduate and graduate students on both performance and music education degree tracks at the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College. The vehicle was a new children’s opera, *Mambo*, written for this case study to provide an equal performance experience for each student involved, regardless of his or her standing at the conservatory.
In order to successfully examine my overriding research question—can elements of vocal pedagogy be addressed for students within a solo performance opportunity—I investigated and learned qualitative research techniques and design. The sources that have been most pertinent in developing qualitative research skills have included The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, John Creswell’s Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, and video courses and interviews by Graham Gibbs and John Creswell.\(^{49}\) I have consulted other articles, books and online video explanations as well, in order to validate my research methodology.\(^{50}\) Subsequent to my procedural validation, I chose a step-by-step approach that works well for this study. Following Creswell’s procedures as stated in his book Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, I have designed a case study with observation and interview protocols for collecting and analyzing data pertinent to this study.

This case study, which has taken approximately fourteen months from start to finish, has resulted in extensive data from observations and interviews. My documented observations have included references to the singers’ interactions, comfort levels, technical skills, and demeanors during the rehearsals, performances, and subsequent recording sessions. The forty-one semi-structured interviews have resulted in a


considerable amount of data containing the subjects’ descriptions of their experiences within the *Mambo* production and the effect, if any, that *Mambo* has had on their singing techniques. The responses to the interview questions include commentary relating to every aspect of the opera from the process of editing the original show to the final recording. The case study design was a crucial component of the subjects’ experiences, my data collection, and the overall success of the study.
CHAPTER TWO

Case Study Design and Implementation

The global question in this dissertation is whether elements of vocal pedagogy can be addressed from within a solo performance opportunity. In order to adequately examine this question, I designed a case study with a performance opportunity at the heart of my study. My goal was to create an impartial learning environment in which to observe the voice students applying and expanding their current skills as singers and performers.

In this chapter, I will describe the development of the children’s opera *Mambo* and the steps I took to build the production in order to conduct my observations and interviews using ethnography-based methods of inquiry.¹ The production, as described in Chapter One, refers to the case study in which the singers have voluntarily participated. That being established, the case study includes the three parts of the production—the rehearsals, the performances, and the recording sessions—all of which took place at Brooklyn College in Roosevelt Extension, the Conservatory’s performance wing. In this case, the relationship between the location and the subjects is deeply connected to the question at large: can elements of vocal pedagogy be addressed for students within a solo performance opportunity? The Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College determined the subjects of the study to be serious voice students at the tertiary level; and allowed me,

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as the principal researcher, to observe and interview them not only from within the case study, but at other school events as well.²

The themes introduced in Chapter One formed the foundation of my research design: acquiring engagements, the confluences of personal life and the rehearsal period, learning the role, technique during rehearsals, acting and dancing while singing, performing and revisiting the role. I designed each segment of this production with vocal technique in mind. This vehicle (the three-part production) is the foundation of the case study design, described in detail below.

2.1 Writing the Mambo Libretto

I began the creative process by imagining the collaborative aspects of the production I was planning. Among my considerations were ways in which to challenge the singers while maintaining a light-hearted working environment. I examined various approaches in which to guide the composer’s creative input through the libretto. In his book The Art of Writing Opera-Librettos, Edgar Istel cites three types of existing plots from which librettos are developed: 1) the subject is already dramatized in scenes; 2) the subject is derived from an epic form, such as a novel; and 3) the subject is an embellishment of an anecdote.³ The Mambo libretto is a combination of forms one and three. Although I embellished the story with new characters and situations, the essence of the original book remained intact. For example, I wrote the entire libretto employing various rhyme schemes to coordinate with the couplets written by Jovanna Castagnola.

The libretto would be humorous in order to present the seriousness of bullying to children without disturbing them. In his article “Humor in Education,” James L. Teslow pointed out that most educators accept humor as qualitatively valuable in an educational setting. Kehr’s study examining humor in the classroom with university students supports this theory. The humor aspect in Mambo was meant to engage the audience as well as the singer, promoting the nurturing learning environment that I desired.

I advertised the show to the singers and the audience as a children’s opera, with dialogue, as most of the roles required classical vocal training. The roles that were accessible to musical theater singers with respect to vocal range and style were also appropriate for singers studying a classical technique. The opera-musical theater debate is in my opinion, simply a semantic issue. However, it is important to young singers seeking opportunities and roles for their resumes. Although I wanted to enable singers to participate who may have been more comfortable with a musical theater vocal approach, I needed to attract the students in the conservatory studying classical techniques. In April of 2000, the New York Times published an article in the theater section entitled “Musical or Opera: Which Is It?” The article includes a conversation between Ned Rorem and Stephen Sondheim. Within the conversation, Sondheim expressed his thoughts on the issue:

Essentially, the difference, I think, is in the expectation of the audience. Obviously, there are differences in terms of performers and how they

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5 Neelam Kher, Susan Molstad, and Roberta Donahue, “Using Humor in the College Classroom to Enhance Teaching Effectiveness in ‘Dread Courses,’” College Student Journal 33, no. 3 (September 1, 1999): 400.
approach singing as an art form. But primarily an opera is something done in an opera house in front of an opera audience. And a show, or whatever you want to call it—musical play, musical comedy—is something done in either a Broadway or Off Broadway theater, in front of that kind of audience.

Rorem’s comments also addressed the genres, citing vocal capabilities of specific singers:

The difference, of course, lies not in the quality but in the genre – for example, the difference between a so-called art song and a so-called pop song. The two genres, like church and state, have run parallel forever and in Europe have sometimes merged, while today there is a new breed of crossover, like Adam Guettel or Ricky Ian Gordon. But if, say, Eileen Farrell or Audra McDonald can cut it both ways, Barbra Streisand or Madonna cannot.

In the same article, Milton Babbit said that genre classification is not discernable: “In terms of what is being written today, the line is becoming more and more blurred between the two forms.” The importance of this classification was significant to me since, as an opera, the piece would attract a sizable difference in participants than as a musical theater show. Following the wisdom of these three brilliant composers, I proceeded with the label “opera.”

2.1.1 ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS

The next step in producing a rhyming libretto was to devise the additional characters for the opera that were not in the original book. The nineteenth century German composer, Albert Lortzing, discussed great libretti in terms of the characters. He stated in an interview in 1869 (Leipzig) that if an opera includes roles for a diverse group of performers (providing singers with good singing parts and actors with good acting parts) the show would be well received by an audience, as the musical and dramatic

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7 Istel, The Art of Writing Opera-Librettos, 8.
experience would be fulfilled. I took this into consideration as I added characters to the story, including roles that could be successfully portrayed by performers with diverse levels of experience.

The original book (see Appendix B) begins by describing the city of Leafy Brown, a city inhabited by leaves. Although the city is described as a happy place, some of the leaves are bullies and they torment the protagonist, Mambo McFall. Mambo is bullied for being a large maple leaf who falls from his tree. He meets the Chief Leaf when he runs away to escape the bullies. The Chief tells him the key to happiness is in his heart and gives him the courage to return home a confident leaf. When I wrote for these characters, I employed some of the original lines from the book in my libretto.

The characters I added to the opera built the storyline, lengthened the show, and created additional performance opportunities for students. It was important to have a vehicle that could accommodate five to twenty singers, as I was not sure how many people would choose to participate in the production. I used Mambo’s journey as a way of introducing characters: each new character was a leaf he met on the road to his new town. This dramatic approach made it possible for a performer to leave the stage as one character and reappear relatively quickly as another. These roles were also used to demonstrate Mambo’s innate goodness and strength of character. Istel discusses the importance of roles in opera. He refers to the roles as the “‘open sesame’ to the doors of the stage” and considers singers and actors to be “the authors’ chief aids to fame and

8 Ibid.
fortune.”¹⁰ I specifically added roles with varied personalities and musical styles in order to attract several singers to the project.

The naming process was important in order to fit new characters seamlessly into the existing story. I studied different leaf shapes and names to guide my process for adding personalities to the opera. Using the dance element of Mambo’s first name with the descriptive element of Mambo’s last name, I combined personalities with different types of leaves to develop the other characters and incorporate various musical styles.

With these parameters in place, I put together a scene sketch, shown in Table 2.1 below, ensuring every character would be featured with solo dialogue and/or music at some point in the show. I considered existing operatic scenes commonly used as pedagogical tools in conservatories and university music schools as I developed the scenes in *Mambo*.

### Table 2.1 Opera Scenes List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenes</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Music and Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Leafy Brown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Leafy Brown</td>
<td>Town Leaves, Mambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I'm Not As Happy</td>
<td>Mambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Mambo, Bullies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bully Song</td>
<td>Bullies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Mambo, Magnolia, Mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mambo My Mambo</td>
<td>Mom, Mambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I Will Go</td>
<td>Mambo, Town Leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Elmer, Mambo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Librettists</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>On the Road to Flowertags</td>
<td>Bobbie BoxElder, Mambo</td>
<td>Rap Duet, patter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Boxing Rap</td>
<td>Bobbie BoxElder, Mambo</td>
<td>Rap Duet, patter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Mambo</td>
<td>Bluesy Solo with Backup, Mama Morton: When you’re good to Mama, Kander &amp; Ebb, <em>Chicago</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>I’m Sassy</td>
<td>Sassy Sasafrass, Sassettes</td>
<td>Bluesy Solo with Backup, Mama Morton: When you’re good to Mama, Kander &amp; Ebb, <em>Chicago</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Dialogue - short</td>
<td>Mambo</td>
<td>Bluesy Solo with Backup, Mama Morton: When you’re good to Mama, Kander &amp; Ebb, <em>Chicago</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Are You Coming Or Going</td>
<td>Fandango Fig, Figlettes, Mambo</td>
<td>Patter Aria: King Gama: If you give me your attention, G&amp;S <em>Princess Ida</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Sammi Samba, Mambo</td>
<td>Patter Aria: King Gama: If you give me your attention, G&amp;S <em>Princess Ida</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Sammi’s Samba- Mambo</td>
<td>Sammi Samba Silverbell, Mambo</td>
<td>Aria/Duet, Vallencienne: Can Can, Lehar’s <em>The Merry Widow</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Mambo, Bruno Butternut</td>
<td>Aria/Duet, Vallencienne: Can Can, Lehar’s <em>The Merry Widow</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>But You Are Strong</td>
<td>Bruno Butternut Leaf</td>
<td>Aria, Dr. Bartolo: A un Dottor Rossini’s <em>Il Barbieri di Siviglia</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Bruno, Mambo, Ruby</td>
<td>Aria, Dr. Bartolo: A un Dottor Rossini’s <em>Il Barbieri di Siviglia</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Would You Like To Join Me?</td>
<td>Ruby, Mambo</td>
<td>Duet, Frederick &amp; Mabel: Ah leave me not to pine, G&amp;S <em>Pirates of Penzance</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Hillary Hickory, Mambo</td>
<td>Duet, Frederick &amp; Mabel: Ah leave me not to pine, G&amp;S <em>Pirates of Penzance</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>I’m Hillary, I’m Hickory</td>
<td>Hillary, Mambo</td>
<td>Coloratura Aria: Fire: Arrière, Ravel’s <em>L’enfant et les sortilèges</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Mambo, Chief Leaf</td>
<td>Coloratura Aria: Fire: Arrière, Ravel’s <em>L’enfant et les sortilèges</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>The Key Is In Your Heart</td>
<td>Chief, Mambo</td>
<td>Coloratura Aria: Fire: Arrière, Ravel’s <em>L’enfant et les sortilèges</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Going Home</td>
<td>Chief, Mambo</td>
<td>Coloratura Aria: Fire: Arrière, Ravel’s <em>L’enfant et les sortilèges</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Mambo, Ruby</td>
<td>Finale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>I’m Back To Stay</td>
<td>Mom, Mambo, Ensemble</td>
<td>Finale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2 Libretto Writing Process

With a strong outline in place for the show, I began to write the libretto. The actual writing took one week. With the clear scene structure, I was able to write the dialogue and libretto for the musical numbers almost completely in order of appearance.

In order to give the composer a clear picture of the styles I had in mind, it was important that my text conveyed the proper inflections and cadences. Guiding the music...
through text inflections, was one of the missions of the Florentine Camerata.\textsuperscript{11} According to Chua, this shift allowed the composer to “bend music according to his linguistic will.”\textsuperscript{12} Composer, Virgil Thomson, expressed his belief that finding the correct rhythm for the words is an American approach to composition.\textsuperscript{13} In reference to collaboration with Gertrude Stein, Thomson wrote:

> There is every difference imaginable between the cadences and contradictions of Gertrude Stein, her subtle syntaxes and maybe stammerings, and those of practically any other author, American or English… For with meanings jumbled and syntax violated, but with the words themselves all the more shockingly present, I could put those texts to music with a minimum of temptation toward the emotional conventions, spend my whole effort on the rhythm of the language, and its specific Anglo-American sound, adding shape, where that seemed to be needed… from music’s own devices.\textsuperscript{14}

By reciting my lyrics in the rhythmic style I envisioned for each character, I hoped to promote a strong rapport with the composer. I believed the clearer I conveyed my intentions with regard to characters, the easier it would be for the composer to create the music.

In order to maintain a connection to the original book, I wrote some of the musical styles into the storyline. In this way I was able to tie the names of the characters to the music. For example, Sami Samba makes her entrance executing the Samba dance step. The Samba and the Mambo dances have different rhythmic qualities, but can be

\textsuperscript{11} Christopher Richard Joby, \textit{Calvinism and the Arts: A Re-Assessment} (Peters Publishers, 2007), 67.
\textsuperscript{12} Daniel Chua, \textit{Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning} (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 35.
\textsuperscript{13} Virgil Thomson, \textit{Music with Words: A Composer’s View} (Yale University Press, 1989), 44.
\textsuperscript{14} Richard Kostelanetz, \textit{Virgil Thomson: A Reader: Selected Writings, 1924-1984} (Routledge, 2013), 212.
performed to the same music.\footnote{Sydney Hutchinson, “Mambo On 2: The Birth of a New Form of Dance in New York City,” \textit{Centro Journal}, 2004, http://redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=37716209; Barbara Browning, \textit{Samba: Resistance in Motion} (Indiana University Press, 1995).} A Samba is a Brazilian dance beginning on beat one with a rest on beat four, whereas a Mambo is a Cuban dance beginning on beat two.\footnote{Hutchinson, “Mambo On 2”; Browning, \textit{Samba}.} This inspired the entire scene development for Sammi Samba. The two dance steps are metaphorical for Sammi’s message: knowledge is the key to accepting diversity. As she explains her point of view, she tries to teach Mambo the Samba step. Meanwhile, Mambo continues to respond while executing the Mambo step. Both fit perfectly into the rhythmic music, but ironically, Sammi becomes frustrated that Mambo cannot change his inclination to accent beat two.

Since producing a show that would be attractive to other universities or conservatories was important to me, I chose to write the libretto so that the characters could be easily cast. Therefore, many of the characters can be performed by more than one voice type and in more than one vocal style (classical or musical theater style). Additionally, the characters can be doubled to cut down on numbers of singers if necessary. Nonetheless, my desired voice types and musical styles motivated my writing as shown in the table below.
Table 2.2 Characters and Voice Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Voice Types</th>
<th>Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mambo</td>
<td>Tenor or mezzo</td>
<td>Operatic, light lyric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullies</td>
<td>Any voice types, can change names</td>
<td>Rhythmic, operatic or belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnolia</td>
<td>Acting part, singing in ensemble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom (Maple)</td>
<td>Big lyric, spinto, dramatic soprano</td>
<td>Operatic, high B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmer</td>
<td>Acting part, sing in ensemble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobbie or Bobby</td>
<td>Any voice type</td>
<td>Rhythmic, rap, operatic or belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassy</td>
<td>Big lyric soprano or mezzo</td>
<td>Bluesy, operatic or belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandango</td>
<td>Baritone with coloratura</td>
<td>Baroque/Gilbert and Sullivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammi</td>
<td>Any female voice – midrange</td>
<td>Operatic or belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruno</td>
<td>Buffo, can be bass or baritone</td>
<td>Operatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>Mezzo or soprano</td>
<td>Operatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary</td>
<td>Soprano with coloratura</td>
<td>Operatic, coloratura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Leaf</td>
<td>Baritone, big lyric</td>
<td>Operatic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.3 Composer Collaboration

For the music composition, I decided to collaborate with a composition student at the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College. In order to find the composer who would best fit the needs of the production, I considered Karen Erhart’s study on job-employee “fit.” Ms. Erhart’s study is based on service-oriented jobs and focuses on personal interaction as well as dependability (two crucial elements for the Mambo collaboration)

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as important features of a positive fit. She concludes that personalities and personal interactions are key to a successful person-job fit and job satisfaction. In order to secure a positive collaborative relationship, I conducted a two-month unstructured interview process that began in October 2014 with graduate student composition majors at the Conservatory. During the two-month interview period, the composers and I collaborated on possible music for the introduction to *Mambo*, and discussed various aspects of creating the production in its entirety. From this process, I deemed Cleary, a composition student of at Brooklyn College, to be the best fit for this project, and I asked him to compose the music for this original work. Cleary and I had a good rapport from our first meeting.

2.1.4 Introducing the Libretto

Once Cleary and I agreed on a schedule and timeline for a finished product, I read the libretto to him, acting out the characters and discussing specific musical styles and voice types that I had in mind as I wrote the lines. I also suggested a general guideline for the skill levels necessary for each character: Mambo, Mom, Ruby, and the Chief being the most expansive musical scenes, could be written for advanced singers. Table 2.4, below, specifies technical skills that I requested for each character. The third column represents the skill levels I had in mind for each role.
Table 2.3 Vocal Skills to Include in Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Skills to Include</th>
<th>Skill Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mambo</td>
<td>High notes, coloratura, legato</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullies</td>
<td>Harmonies and rhythm</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnolia</td>
<td>Acting part, high note in ensemble possible</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom (Maple)</td>
<td>High notes, portamenti, legato</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmer</td>
<td>Acting part, sing in ensemble</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobbie or Bobby</td>
<td>Rhythm</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassy</td>
<td>Register shifts, chest voice</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandango</td>
<td>High note, fast, wordy, coloratura,</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammi</td>
<td>Rhythmic</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruno</td>
<td>High note, portamenti, legato</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>High note, legato, pianissimi</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary</td>
<td>Coloratura, large range</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Leaf Singer</td>
<td>High note, portamenti, large range, legato</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.5 Composing for the Case Study

Having established a clear artistic vision for the opera, I explained how the production would operate as the instrument for the case study. Cleary and I discussed three specific elements of the opera as it related to the case study: 1) the intended collaborative relationship with the performers, inviting them to request alterations to the libretto, musical lines and tempi in order to facilitate their successful performances; 2) co-mingling students with varying levels of performance experience and vocal skills; 3) orchestrating the show and providing audio tracks for rehearsals as well as performances.
While the singer-composer collaborative aspect would be limited in *Mambo*, it was necessary to address the possibility of necessary adjustments to rhythms and notes in order to promote each singer’s success. In his 2004 doctoral dissertation, “Collegiate Directing: Liberatory Pedagogy and Practice,” Jonathan Cole examines the topic of collaborative stage direction through existing textbooks. He quotes director Mel Shapiro as saying, “…Unless you are going to use puppets, you are stuck with actors,” when he discusses his approval for remaining flexible with performers. Cole expounds on Shapiro’s commitment to collaboration with actors in order to earn their trust and help them create their best performance.\(^\text{18}\) In her 2009 dissertation, Penny Prince takes Cole’s study a step beyond drama textbooks and examines the actual experience of the participants in a collaborative musical theater production.\(^\text{19}\) She credits “hard work, listening to one another and striving for excellence” as the recipe for successfully creating and performing a new musical theater work.\(^\text{20}\) Cleary and I were anticipating similar results from our open approach to the *Mambo* libretto and score.

Although a collaborative approach was important, equally important was my desire to combine students with varying degrees of skill. Istel makes the point that if the roles fit the performers skillsets, regardless of their individual skills, the show will be a success.\(^\text{21}\) This concept guided the entire creation of *Mambo* and allowed us to successfully blend singers with varied technical skills in the same production. As the


\(^{19}\) Penny Prince, “Co-Creating Cinderella: Examining and Documenting a Collaboratory Musical Theatre Process” (New York University, 2009), 19.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 138–39.

production progressed, it became clear that this added a psychological element to the rehearsal process for some of the singers.\textsuperscript{22}

*Mambo* was conceived as an opera with playback accompaniment from the start. The orchestrated accompaniment was created as a track to be used for performances instead of live musicians, to ensure an inexpensive and easily produced outreach opera for elementary school children. Elainie Lillios explored the complexities of writing for voice with electronic accompaniment in her doctoral dissertation (2000).\textsuperscript{23} In her composition, *Earth Ascending*, she balanced the sonic environment using a multi-speaker system and a single microphone for the vocalist who was amplified in the front speakers only in order to create a unified soundscape, yet maintain the visual environment in which the performer was on stage.\textsuperscript{24} I was interested in a unified soundscape with a multi-speaker system for *Mambo* as well. However, as we were using opera singers, we designed the sound to work without microphones for the singers. Two speakers were placed in front of the stage facing the audience and two speakers were placed behind the audience, facing the singers. The balance was adjusted throughout the performance, ensuring that each of the singers would blend naturally with their individual accompaniments. The light texture of the orchestration, acoustic instruments only, further aided in the blend of amplified accompaniment and acoustic singing.

\textsuperscript{22} The variations in skills and skillsets seemed to lead to increased peer support among the singers. It appeared that the absence of one featured “star,” enhanced the general morale of the *Mambo* company.


\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 4, 53.
In addition to the aesthetic advantages of orchestration, there were financial and scheduling advantages: there would be no need to hire or schedule around an accompanist. For the case subjects, there was also an opportunity to learn to perform with a soundtrack, a skillset many of the singers had not yet acquired. Cleary used Eastwest Orchestration software for *Mambo*, providing a studio-quality soundtrack for the show. For the performances, we had two computers ready in case there were technical difficulties. My laptop had the music in mp3 format, while Cleary's intention was to run the show directly from the Eastwest software on his computer.

2.2 Production Budget and Staff

The production had an original budget of approximately $7,000 including the Case Study Participation fees. After several attempts at securing institution-based funds, the project needed to be self-funded. I cut costs by adding the jobs of director and set designer to the other production positions I had already planned to fill: casting director, musical coach/director, and producer. The remaining production team consisted of a stage manager, a sound engineer, and a costume designer/builder. I acquired an intern as stage manager and Cleary’s composition professor, George Brunner, volunteered to run sound for the production. For the costumes, I hired Dan Bøhler, an animation designer/composer with whom I had worked in the past. See Appendix C for the entire production budget.

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25 Select subjects commented on singing to a track during their interviews, discussed in Chapter 4.
2.2.1 Costumes

The costumes for *Mambo* were paramount to the success of the production. According to psychologist, theater director, educator, and children’s playwright Moses Goldberg, the visual impression is an important component in children’s theater.\(^{27}\) He states “the audience absorbs much of the visual channels of communication… the design component of the production is extremely important in children’s theatre.”\(^{28}\) Moses also discusses the dramatic effect costumes have on the actors portraying fantasy characters from within a collaborative production: “Having a character actor refuse to wear his ogre costume until the others persuade him that they won’t be frightened unless he does, teaches the importance of visual elements of character.”\(^{29}\)

Though the characters in *Mambo* were written with familiar personality traits, they were written as leaves. My intent was to use vibrant costumes to help bring the characters to life for the performers as well as the audience members. As I was comingling students with varied levels of stage experience, I wanted to introduce the costumes as early as possible in order to aid in the rehearsal process. I anticipated that the singers with less stage experience would be shy in their physical approach to the characters. I discovered in the interview process that the costumes affected characterization, stage savvy, and breath support for some of the subjects.

Dan Bøhler and I began our search for material at Material for the Arts in Queens.\(^{30}\) Although we did not find the material for the costumes we wanted, we were

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 168.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., 105.
able to find thick cardboard he could use to create his costume templates. We then spent hours in fabric stores searching for material that would be stiff enough to maintain the leaf shapes and colorful enough to take on the cartoon quality we wanted for the show. Once we had the material chosen in the colors we needed, we had bolts shipped to Brooklyn College where Bøhler set up a costume shop in my office. The costumes comprised more than half the entire budget. See Table 2.3 for the costume budget.

Table 2.4 Costume Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mambo Production Budget: Costumes</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costume Designer</td>
<td>Dan Bøhler</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparkle Vinyl: 25 costumes</td>
<td>3 yards a costume @ $15</td>
<td>$1,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tights: dark brown</td>
<td>17 @ $8</td>
<td>$136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts: dark brown</td>
<td>17 @ $8</td>
<td>$136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slipper socks: dark brown</td>
<td>2 cases @ $40</td>
<td>$80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thread, needles, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>$3,502</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.2 Scenery

At a drama panel discussion held at Yale University, 1949, Frank Bevan conveyed the unity of scenery, costumes, acting and direction creates the style of a drama. Although the scenery for Mambo was very simple and inexpensive, it was paramount to the storyline. Goldberg discussed the effectiveness of simple scenery since

children’s imaginations are so fertile, stating “I have seen plays done for quite young children with simple painted blocks as the only scenery. A cube can become a chair, a mountain, a table, or a fountain.”

Given my budget constraints, Moses’ discovery was wonderful news. I was able to create a cartoon-style tree on stage, using stepladders wrapped in chicken wire and covered in material that looked like tree bark. The circular treetops were made from tubing purchased at Home Depot. I made hoops in various sizes and painted them bright colors. Using sparkly gift bags that I bought from the local dollar store, I cut fanciful leaf shapes and attached them to the tubes with fishing line. When the script called for the leaf characters to sing from the trees, the performers simply climbed the stepladders and sang from inside the frame of the circular treetops. The silliness of the set complemented the whimsical nature of the opera without detracting from the serious topic. The trees completed the visual element of for both the performers and the audience members, and enabled me to fulfill the directorial requirements of the drama. See Table 2.5 for the scenery budget.

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Table 2.5 Scenery Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mambo Production Budget: Scenery</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicken wire</td>
<td>Tree trunk</td>
<td>$30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bark fabric</td>
<td>Tree trunk</td>
<td>$45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step ladder</td>
<td>Tree trunk</td>
<td>$22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1” tubing and couplings</td>
<td>Tree tops</td>
<td>$65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$162</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3  Casting *Mambo*

I announced *Mambo* with a description of the case study to both the opera and chorus classes at the Conservatory. Those announcements were followed up with emails containing details of the rehearsal process and participation expectations. I made it clear that singers were welcome to participate in the opera without participating in the case study. The emails as well as the announcements contained the following disclaimer:

*Mambo* is part of my dissertation research for my DMA at the Graduate Center. I am researching the ways in which performance opportunities affect voice students’ techniques and other performance skills. You do not need to participate in the dissertation study as a subject, in order to perform in the show.  

I received numerous inquiries, most of which concerned rehearsal schedules and the dates of performances. As I had already cleared my rehearsal/performance timeline with the directors of the opera and chorus programs, as well as the concert office, I was happy to report to each singer that there would be no conflicts where the major ensembles were concerned. This process yielded sixteen participants from whom I requested the following information: a few arias or songs in each singer’s current repertoire; roles in

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the standard repertoire for which they believed, or their current voice teacher believed they may be appropriate; acting and/or dance experience; and a schedule of available times for rehearsals. Matthew Henry James investigates voice classifications and ensuing role assignments in his 1989 dissertation. In his fourth chapter, he focuses on professional singers who successfully ignored typical voice classifications assigned to roles, and sang roles based on their unique ranges and skills. James cites the famous bass, Ezio Pinza and his successful performance of the baritone role Don Giovanni. Although the singers in *Mambo* were all students, each student appeared to be particularly forthcoming with his/her technical level and stage experience. Some of them went as far as suggesting roles they believed would work for them. With the students’ explanations of their technical abilities in hand, I cast the show based on the skillsets necessary to perform each of the roles and established two solid casts.

### 2.3.1 Casting from Resumes

Foregoing the audition process was an important element of building this case study. I did not want the positive atmosphere to be tainted by audition anxiety or the complex social dynamics associated with casting in a small community. A 2014 article in *The Dartmouth* (a Dartmouth College publication) reports that anxiety before auditions

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36 I allowed one high school intern to perform in the opera as well. She was attending a performing arts high school out of state and joined us for the final two weeks of rehearsals.
can be more stressful for some performers than the final performances.\textsuperscript{37} My casting goal was to provide everyone with an appropriate role while maintaining a positive environment. Since my interest lay in the subjects’ perceptions of what they should be singing, not in \textit{my} perceptions of what they should be singing, I avoided audition process completely and allowed the singers to participate in assigning their roles. I had no doubt that this information would yield enough data in order to cast the show accurately and I hoped this casting method would set a positive tone for the rehearsals. My casting experience, the performance resumes, and the singers’ personal input provided the information necessary to assign roles, particularly with the broad casting parameters in \textit{Mambo}. I included a list of roles with vocal requirements in the email I sent requesting their performance experience (Table 2.2 above). The following response was sent by email and was typical of the information I received whether by email, phone or in person:

\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
Voice Type: Lyric Soprano \\

Roles, arias, songs: See resume. For the moment, I am more comfortable in repertoire that doesn't sit \textit{too} high. My teacher would like me to stay away from higher rep for now. Would prefer my role stays below A5. Probably any of the roles listed as "soprano/mezzo" would be fine. \\

Acting experience: Yes! Including lead roles in many straight plays (though not on my opera resume). \\

Dance (women only): Some (about 4 years lessons in HS) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Striving to provide everyone with a successful experience, I took the parameters presented by the students in each of their emails very seriously. For the purposes of this

study, the term ‘successful’ refers to the singer’s ability to meet the demands of the role, perform that role in front of a live audience, and express satisfaction with his or her performance. My desire was to give each singer equal opportunities. Only three of the singers specifically requested small parts due to other productions they were already involved in at the time. The others seemed eager to have more than one part. The two singers assigned to Mambo, the largest role, were not assigned extra roles, even though that meant they would perform in only one show.

Casting in this way allowed me to mix the ensembles, cover each part should someone become ill, and give all the performers an opportunity to work with both singers who were cast as Mambo. Additionally, I was able to ensure that one cast did not have more collective experience than the other. Finally, with most singers performing solo roles in each of the two performances, I was able to create an atmosphere of one ensemble cast. The original casting is shown in Table 2.6 below. In order to protect the singers’ identities, I refer to them by one of their roles and the number that corresponds to the performance in which they sang that particular role. Three singers did not participate in the case study due to scheduling conflicts and are referred to as “non-subject.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Performance 1</th>
<th>Performance 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mambo</td>
<td>Mambo1, tenor</td>
<td>Mambo2, mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townspeople</td>
<td>Ensemble with solos dispersed</td>
<td>Ensemble with solos dispersed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny BurOak</td>
<td>Fandango</td>
<td>Non-subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla CrabbyApple</td>
<td>Ruby2, mezzo</td>
<td>Hillary1, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol CrabbyApple</td>
<td>Non-subject</td>
<td>Mom1, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bossy Nova</td>
<td>Non-subject, soprano</td>
<td>Sammi1, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnolia Delight</td>
<td>Bobbie1, soprano</td>
<td>Non-subject, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom, Maple McFall</td>
<td>Mom1, soprano</td>
<td>Mom2, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmer Hawthorne</td>
<td>Elmer, baritone</td>
<td>Elmer, baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobbie/Bobby BoxElder</td>
<td>Sammi1, soprano</td>
<td>Bobbie1, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassy Sassafras</td>
<td>Sassy1, mezzo</td>
<td>Mom1, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassette</td>
<td>Mom1, soprano</td>
<td>Sass1, mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassette</td>
<td>Non-subject, soprano</td>
<td>Non-subject, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandango Fig</td>
<td>Fandango, baritone</td>
<td>Fandango, baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figlette</td>
<td>Hilary2, soprano</td>
<td>Hilary2, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figlette</td>
<td>Non-subject, soprano</td>
<td>Non-subject, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figlette</td>
<td>Bobbie1, soprano</td>
<td>Bobbie1, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammi Samba Silverbell</td>
<td>Sammi1, soprano</td>
<td>Ruby1, mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruno Butternut</td>
<td>Chief, baritone</td>
<td>Chief, baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Rubbertree</td>
<td>Ruby1, mezzo</td>
<td>Ruby2 soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Hickory</td>
<td>Hilary1, soprano</td>
<td>Hilary2, soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Leaf Singer</td>
<td>Chief, baritone</td>
<td>Chief, baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Leaf Puppeteer</td>
<td>Elmer, baritone</td>
<td>Elmer, baritone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4 Production Summary

I have recounted the steps I took in order to create the production for this case study. Each component of the production was carefully planned to allow for a wide scope of casting and performance scenarios. The entire opera production was in motion before the casting announcements were made and student inquiries were received. Table 2.7 below displays the production schedule leading up to the first rehearsal. This six-month process laid the groundwork for the production and enabled me to then focus on directing the show and observing the singers’ actions and interactions during rehearsals, which represented the fieldwork for this study.
Table 2.7 Production Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 4</td>
<td>Proposal sent to conservatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 3</td>
<td>Libretto complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 26</td>
<td>Material for the Arts for costumes and sets with Bohler and Brunner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 3</td>
<td>Character leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 5</td>
<td>Character leaves modified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 28</td>
<td>Character leaves folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 20</td>
<td>Piano reduction for score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 24</td>
<td>New budget sent to conservatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>Meeting for conservatory support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 1</td>
<td>Tree design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Glitter vinyl for costumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Casting notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>Casting notice 2 and 3 (opera and chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>New piano reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 21</td>
<td>Cast announcements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 22</td>
<td>Contracts sent with music (PDFs, some mp3s); scenes reordered; additional vinyl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 23</td>
<td>Tights and shirts ordered, searching for feet (ordered 3-4); contracts sent with tentative rehearsal schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 28</td>
<td>Scenes reordered; piano reduction edits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 1</td>
<td>Rehearsals begin; new rehearsal tracks received 1:18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5 Fieldwork Methodology

Every student who participated in the opera signed a contract, which was for the rehearsals and performances only (see Appendix D). This gave each singer an opportunity to approach the production from a new perspective at the conservatory.38 It also demonstrated my commitment to each of them as well as my commitment to the project. Although the contract was not a consent form to participate in the case study, the first paragraph stated the following:

a. **Performance**  Monica Harte has scheduled a production of Mambo, the children’s opera with music by John Cleary, to be performed as part of her dissertation research, in English at the place and times stated below…. The contracts set the stage for the data collection phase of my research.

2.5.1 Rehearsals

Harry F. Wolcott divides fieldwork into two categories: participant observation and interviewing.39 Even though I began the participant observations during the casting process (through emails and conversations), the major fieldwork for this study would begin with rehearsals.40 I scheduled the scenes based on the singers’ availabilities. My intention was to block the entire show within the first week. “Blocking” is the theatrical term for staging a scene.41 Below, a portion of the schedule for the first day of staging

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38 It is not customary for students at the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College to sign contracts to participate in performance opportunities.
39 Wolcott, *Ethnography*, 44.
40 Ibid., 41–44.
41 Kathryn Ann Hooper Prater, “Readers’ Theater Is ‘So Much More than Fluency’: Collaborative Work among Teacher, Students and Researcher” (Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin, 2003),
rehearsals illustrates the scheduling and timeframes I allowed in which to complete this task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>3/1</th>
<th>1:00</th>
<th>Leafy Brown Ensemble</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:00</td>
<td>I will go ensemble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:45</td>
<td>Bully Song &amp; Dialog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>Sassy and Sassettes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>Fandango and Figlettes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was my mission first and foremost to create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere in which the subjects could experiment theatrically, explore artistically, and expand their technical skills vocally. I anticipated scheduling challenges since Mambo was outside of the Conservatory curriculum, and all the subjects involved would have time constraints due to various combinations of classes, family, work, and social engagements. Complicating matters was the fact that we had only fourteen days in which to stage the show. Although my intention was to be flexible, I was concerned with the cast members’ perceptions of divergent levels of commitment resulting in discord from within the ensemble. Aware that the majority of my experience producing and directing has been in the professional music circuit, I explored methods for scheduling and managing rehearsals efficiently in extra-curricular theater settings. Two of the articles that I read were written by conductors/music educators. Charlene Archibeque, a choral conductor, and Richard Weerts, a band director, both addressed the importance of

communicating clear goals and expectations, positive energy, and effective time management. This was good behavioral advice, however, neither author addressed the complicated scheduling situation with which I was faced.

Upon further research, I found a study done by Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer. Lorenz-Meyer examined productive work environments from within a case study based on an international scientific conference. Her research explored the effects of divergent populations, atypical working schedules, and social atmospheres on productivity. She concluded that enhanced productivity was tied to a relaxed atmosphere as a result of minimizing frenzy. In order to obtain the atmosphere that would best reduce stress and increase productivity, the conference was organized in a manner that promoted social interaction by inviting family members to attend and scheduling around personal needs as well as social and cultural activities. These findings guided my decision to schedule rehearsals specifically around each cast member’s needs. This would result in extra rehearsals for me, but would hopefully result in a productive rehearsal environment.

The schedule I developed allowed the co-mingling of somewhat disparate populations in an equivalent learning environment with a rehearsal atmosphere conducive to social interaction, group and individual learning, and the pursuit of a collective goal. The populations consisted of undergraduate and graduate students studying private voice and pursuing degrees in performance or music education. Due to the differences in

44 The collective goal was the culmination of the singers’ individual successes in rehearsals leading to successful performances.
required courses, it is not uncommon for the music education majors and the performance majors to complete their degrees without having an opportunity to perform together or socialize in classes. In this setting, I was able to observe them together and log their individual behaviors with regard to their vocal technique and progress, if any.

Although each singer was engaged to perform lead roles appropriate for their voice type and level of experience, each role offered vocal and dramatic challenges. The vocal challenges typically encompassed high notes, register shifts, and phrases demanding specialized technical skills such as coloratura. The dramatic challenges encompassed skills relating to children’s theater acting styles such as pantomime, dance, and presentational dialogue. Children’s theater techniques were not new to me, as I toured for three years with a children’s theater troupe in high school. Yet, teaching children’s theater techniques to inexperienced singers was definitely a new undertaking. Goldberg’s work as well as the systematic textbook by Jed Horace Davis and Mary Jane Larson Watkins guided my methods for introducing these techniques.

I made myself available to the performers for as much private coaching as they needed in order to master the music, dialogues, staging and choreography. Those with less experience needed more time and I scheduled that time around their school schedules. In the book, *The Art of Theatre*, various scenarios describing mishaps during live performances are presented. Actors in live performance are required to think quickly and incorporate even the most awkward situations into the show when an

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45 The Hug High Harlequins performed for elementary schools in Reno and Sparks, Nevada. Two performances a week consisted of comic sketches written and directed by the performers under the tutelage of Eve Loomis.
audience is present. Within every private staging rehearsal, we rehearsed various scenarios including possible problems that could arise in performance and possible reactions for dealing with those problems. Some issues we addressed included memory lapses, unforeseen costume or scenery mishaps, and cell phones going off in the audience. For every private rehearsal session that I scheduled with a singer, I added time in the ensemble rehearsals in order to revisit what we practiced in private. This allowed the subjects to rehearse in front of their peers and to experience performance adrenaline in a safe environment. Zachary Marshall discusses the process of addressing performance anxiety by having voice students perform in front of their peers in preparation for larger audiences.48 He also states that anxiety can be diminished by repetition and experience, which I observed to be true during the Mambo rehearsals.

I relied on humor to maintain a positive environment in the ensemble rehearsals, particularly when working with less experienced performers in front of the more advanced performers. Kaplan and Pascoe found that humor in itself may not aid in the learning process, but humorous examples showed significant increase in retention.49 My typical approach to this effort was to make light of myself or put myself in an awkward position, drawing laughter and removing the pressure of “doing it right” from the student. Following these rehearsal segments, I would ask one of the more advanced subjects to join me in slapstick-like errors, giving the less experienced performer the heroic role of

saving the moment in real time. Garner’s study on humor in college courses revealed that not only does humor aid in retention, but also in comprehension. Garner concludes, “When properly used, humor can be an effective tool to make a class more enjoyable, reduce anxiety, and improve the learning setting.” The humorous examples and exercises I utilized in the Mambo production not only aided in comprehension and retention, but in building confidence and camaraderie between the cast members. This supportive atmosphere and increased confidence enabled the singers to experiment with their skillsets and break out of their comfort zones.

2.5.2 Singers’ Requests for Alterations

The performers were encouraged to express their concerns with regard to notes and words, and to suggest changes they felt would make their roles easier for them to perform. This gave me an opportunity to observe them as they experimented with possible options in the rehearsals. Many of them had never worked collaboratively with a librettist and/or composer and it was important to the study to constitute a constructive atmosphere. I spoke openly with the singers and Cleary regarding the score as well as the libretto. In her dissertation, “Co-creating Cinderella,” Penny Prince documents the sense of accomplishment her participants felt having contributed to the actual work. In this study, the purpose of contributing to the work was specifically geared towards the participants’ individual successes rather than the creation of the piece; however, the collaborative process was aimed at the same result, a successful performance.

As it was Cleary’s first opera—he was making his living writing music for video games at the time—he was making discoveries about writing for singers. One such discovery was the general panic of the performers who had no introduction to their solo pieces. Examples 1.2 and 1.3 below, illustrate two changes Cleary made to Hillary Hickory’s aria after the staging rehearsals began. The first was simply to add an introduction. The second involved coloratura. There was nothing wrong with Cleary’s original setting of the name Hillary Hickory. However the two sopranos singing the part found the syllable change in the middle of the sixteenth-note figure difficult and it actually slowed their coloratura down (see Example 2.1). By moving the second syllable of Hillary’s first and last names from the middle of the first sixteenth-note figures to the beginning of the second sixteenth-note figures, both Hillary’s negotiated the phrases effortlessly (see Example 2.2).

Example 2.1 Hillary Hickory's Entrance and Text Setting

![Sheet Music Example](image-url)
Example 2.2 Hillary Hickory's Revised Entrance and Text-Setting

The changes in the libretto were, for the most part, slight: one or more syllables were changed in order to accommodate high notes, but more often the syllables in the original text were moved. For instance, the tenor who played Mambo wanted the high C in “I will go” to be on an open vowel. So we changed the approach to the high C, allowing him to go up on the word “away,” with the high note on “a” instead of “to” in “today.” After rehearsing the change a few times, he altered the approach once again to hit the high C on the syllable “way,” ending with a quarter-half note combination on the word “today” with a sustained chord in the accompaniment (see the examples below).

Example 2.3 Mambo's Syllable Change for Tenor
As seen in Example 2.4 below, the mezzo who was singing the same part remained on the G, but otherwise made the same adjustments.

Example 2.4 Mambo's Syllable Change for Mezzo

The biggest change in the libretto was due to my casting situation. We had many more females than males, so I made Bobby BoxElder, Bobbie BoxElder and wrote a new first verse. Examples 2.5 and 2.6 show the changes in the libretto that were made to accommodate a female box elder leaf.

Example 2.5 Original Verse for Bobby BoxElder

Oh gee, I’m sorry.
I didn’t mean that.
It’s a natural reaction, like tippin’ a hat
When a pretty little leaf,
Who you’re looking at
Makes your heart go pitter pat.
So here, sock it to me… tit for tat!
Example 2.6 New Verse for Bobbie BoxElder

Oh gee, I’m sorry.
Did I punch you?
It’s a natural reaction it’s a thing I do
When any sort of leaf
Comes strollin’ through
It’s kinda’ unfair, since you had no clue
So you can punch me too!

By making accommodating changes early in the rehearsal process, I confirmed the cooperative atmosphere and paved the way for all the singers’ to make individual requests. Within the first few days of rehearsals, the performers’ texts and musical suggestions were met and the production moved forward.

2.5.3 Introducing Costumes

In his dissertation, “Collegiate Directing: Liberatory Pedagogy and Practice,” Jonathan Cole quotes George Black’s 1991 work “Contemporary Stage Directing” in which Black refers to costumes, scenery, and props as the kinetic life of a production and encourages directors not to forget these crucial elements when blocking.52 Introducing the costumes was a major event in this production. First, the singers were given bags with their names on them for storing the undergarments for their leaf costumes: dark brown tights, long sleeved shirts and slipper socks. We had a costume call specifically for trying the outer leaf on and called the singers in a timely and organized manner to ensure everyone had a leaf costume that fit. Bøhler, the costume master, made a list of alterations, which were complete by the first dress rehearsal. The singers were obviously excited by the costumes, laughing and dancing around in them as they tried them on.

I was able to configure the performance venue in such a way as to create a large backstage area that accommodated the leaf costumes. The undergarment bags were kept in the main dressing room. The costumes remained in the theater, each one labeled and organized by cast and scene. Once the costumes were done and did not require alterations, the stage manager was in charge of setting up the dressing room and backstage areas for the rehearsals and performances. The performers were able to rehearse on stage, whenever scheduled, in costume.

2.5.4 Introducing Scenery

The scenery was also important to the singers. Mambo had to fall from the tree in order for the story to work and the singers were happy to see the story come to life with each additional component. I designed and worked on the scenery when the cast was not there. Each new element was incorporated into that evening’s rehearsal. For instance, the performers were able to rehearse their staging with the trees when the trees were nothing but bare stepladders. This opportunity gave them a sense of the final product and an opportunity to provide input. However, they were never asked to help with the set, just as they were never enlisted to help with the costumes. Their responsibilities were to learn, rehearse, and perform their roles in the opera in a safe, positive and professional atmosphere. As their excitement grew, their singing and acting improved. The question I was faced with at this point was whether the improvement was due solely to the repetition during rehearsals; or if adding costumes and scenery, helped release their inhibitions thereby improving their performances. I addressed this question in the interviews.
2.6 Performances

The *Mambo* rehearsals culminated in two performances with varied casts. Both performances occurred on March fifteenth, one at 2:00 p.m. and one at 4:00 p.m. The opera ran approximately forty minutes, giving the singers a forty-minute window between the end of the first show and the costume call for the second show. I addressed the performers before between and after the performances with positive input. I also opened the performances with a three-minute introduction geared towards building the singers’ confidence and the audiences’ excitement by emphasizing the fun we had putting the show together and the skill and professionalism of the performers.

In each performance, unrehearsed variables occurred, yet audiences reacted with laughter and applause. The first performance boasted a larger children’s audience than the second, but both audiences were supportive. The break between shows was spent complimenting the singers for their work in the first performance and reminding them that anything that may have gone differently than planned did not in any way minimize the audience’s experience and should in no way affect their approach to the second show.

The second performance was followed by a cast party, held at the back of the performance venue. During the party, I was able to observe the singers socializing after having accomplished their goals with the production. This would be the final group observation until the recording sessions during the fall semester.

2.7 The Recording

The recording sessions were the catalyst for bringing the group back together to revisit their roles in a new setting. At this point, I invited only those singers who wanted to participate as paid subjects in the case study. These subjects were required to sign the
consent forms (Appendix A) allowing me to discuss my observations and interviews in my dissertation. Additionally, the participants agreed to three interviews conducted by me, the principal researcher, focusing on the entire production experience. Fourteen of the original sixteen singers volunteered to become subjects in this case study.

Once the business of signing the consent forms and scheduling interview sessions was complete, the recording sessions began. The recording sessions took place eight months after the performances. The goal of recording the production was to create an opportunity to revisit the roles each subject had prepared and performed earlier in the year; and to perform those roles again in a new environment. The intention was two-fold: 1) to give the singers an opportunity to experience a professional recording session; and 2) to mirror the experience of being hired to sing a role for a second time in a different production.

2.8 Data Collection

The data collection during rehearsals depended primarily on my ability to remember what went on during the rehearsals. Therefore, I filled out a new “observational protocol” each night, based on my recollection of the rehearsal earlier in the day. I focused on reactions and interactions, as well as the improvement of each subject on stage and vocally. The recording sessions were videotaped, however, and I was able to revisit those tapes while filling out my protocol sheets for that portion of the production.

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Although I have observational protocol forms for the interviews as well, the audio yielded more substantive information

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than the behavioral observations, as the subjects’ comments were the focus of the interviews. Additionally, the subjects were quite comfortable sharing their opinions with me at this point in the study and all appeared to be very relaxed during the interviews.

2.8.1 Data Collection and Observations

When I began filling out my observation sheets, I reported the singers’ moods, their ability to work together, and changes in their approaches to the project as rehearsals progressed. I noticed that as the singers became more confident, their singing became stronger and their stage presence became more natural. Some of this was due in part to the extra time we took to drill choreography and notes, but some of this improvement appeared to be related to their acquired confidence.

I created observational protocol forms for the performances as well, and noted behavior between the two performances as well as behavior at the reception following the second performance. This would be compared to the behavior observed during the recording sessions and interviews. My focus at this point was on their interactions as performers and whether they appeared to feel successful in their endeavors.

This entire process, although time consuming, allowed for a more accurate comparison of each subject’s behavioral patterns and resulting singing abilities in rehearsals, performances, and recording sessions. Behavior in the group setting appeared to be linked directly to improvement. The singers approached the production (rehearsals, performances and recordings) differently; and I observed corresponding variations in their rates of improvement.
2.8.2 Data Collection and Interviews

The interviews were conducted in an office and recorded. Each interview focused on different elements of the production and how each subject felt those elements affected, if at all, his or her skill as singer and performer. The first interview topics focused on rehearsal- and performance-related issues such as rehearsal atmosphere, time spent on individual staging, and support from peers. The second interview focused on the recording sessions and the subjects’ expectations regarding the process of revisiting a role, the process of audio recording, and how, if at all, the experience enhanced their singing or performing abilities. The third interview was designed once I recognized themes from the first two interviews and I was able to identify particular questions that emerged from the first two interviews.

2.9 Summary of Case Study Design

Creating the Mambo production enabled me to observe the vocal and acting growth of fourteen singers at the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College over a period of nine months. The show was carefully crafted to challenge singers at varying levels of vocal prowess, stage savvy, and experience. The campaign for attracting participants was successful, with positive responses from fourteen students volunteering to be subjects in the case study. In a fortunate occurrence over which I had no control, some of the least and some of the most advanced students volunteered to participate, with a fairly equal number of intermediate students rounding out the selection of singers joining the production.

The rehearsals, performances, and recording sessions were my principal sources of observational data collection. Any technical advance in the subjects’ vocalism, stage
skills, or professional demeanor was documented on observational protocol forms (Appendix E). Supplementing my observations were the subjects’ original self-evaluations given at the beginning of the production for the purposes of casting, and their self-evaluative comments during the private interviews held after the recording sessions. Additionally, the three full interview responses addressing the rehearsals, performances and recording sessions were coded in order to identify common themes.\footnote{Ibid., 264.} The analysis of the data will be discussed in detail in Chapters Three and Four.
CHAPTER THREE

Interview Methodology

This chapter illustrates the methodology I followed for the subject interview process. An enormous amount of data emerged from forty-one subject interviews and twenty-two days of observations from rehearsals, performances and recording sessions (Appendix F). I then coded the data for themes and organized the themes by context (rehearsals, performances, recordings). The observations would be used to corroborate and support the interview analyses and developing theories.

The interviews were divided into three topics: 1) the rehearsal-performance experience; 2) the recording sessions; and 3) technique and performance practice. The three sets of interviews were conducted after the recording sessions. Each of the interviews addressed learning behavior as it related to technique and performance practice for the singers. One singer in my focus group declined to complete the third interview, accounting for the forty-one completed interviews.

Using Creswell’s data analysis spiral as a model, I created an analysis spiral specific to this case study.¹ Figure 3.1 represents the procedure I followed in order to organize and manage the data collected. Each spiral represents a portion of the data management process. Creswell suggests using this spiral approach as it matches the contour of qualitative analysis:

The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project… One enters with data of text or images and exits with an account or a narrative. In between, the researcher touches on several facets of analysis and circles around and around.”

Figure 3.1 Spiral Data Analysis Procedures for *Mambo*

I took time to absorb the interviews after transcribing them as Creswell suggests. He quotes qualitative researcher, Michael Agar, instructing researchers to “immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts.” This approach is systematic and aids in the process of identifying themes. Once I assigned codes to collections of data, I was able to analyze the material, compare the material to my observations, and construct initial theories. For instance, Fandango had exhibited trepidation in his role theatrically and vocally until he had the costume and

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2 Ibid., 183.
staging that he felt comfortable with. In one of his interviews, he said, “When you don’t have the costumes you feel very naked on stage… costumes are meant to help us [the actors] and to amaze people. The costumes were very helpful.” In my memos about the costume call and subsequent rehearsal, I noted the following:

The March seventh rehearsal began with a costume call at 5:00 p.m. The environment was positive and joyful. Everybody appeared to love the costumes... The 7:00 p.m. rehearsal was for Mambo1 to review staging. Fandango remained as well, to review the new concept in the Fandango scene. Fandango loved his costume and the new staging. I believe it afforded him a better concept of the character and that concept had a positive effect on his vocal approach: increased depth and warmth in his sound.

Figure 3.2 below, illustrates my system for developing theories, based on my analysis of the data.

Figure 3.2 Coding and Analysis Diagram

3.1 Subject Interviews

The interviews were conducted in a relaxed setting with a conversational approach. In Gayle Jennings’ examination of interview techniques, she discusses the goal of case study interviews as repositioning the participant from respondent to informant
with the use of open-ended questions and question-order variations.\(^5\) This semi-structured interview style is used “to gain information regarding opinions, experiences, values and attitudes.” In order to establish a sense of conversation, I varied the order of the questions depending upon the singers’ responses.

I sent the subjects the questions for Interview III by email. This facilitated the interview process and allowed those subjects who were particularly difficult to schedule, an opportunity to participate in the final phase of the project. All but one of the subjects responded to the third interview in writing, stating time as the driving factor for this option. Hilary2 preferred a personal interview and I conducted that interview in the same location as the others, Boylan Hall 1234. Written interviews are used in qualitative research for numerous reasons, including identity protection, subject-interview familiarity, in-depth responses, and accessibility.\(^6\) In his book, *Researching Lived Experience*, Max van Manen explains, “lived-experience descriptions can be found in a multitude of expressions or forms: transcribed taped conversations, in interview materials; in daily accounts or stories; in supper-time talk; in formally written responses.” He continues, “Any lived-experience description is an appropriate source for uncovering thematic aspects of the phenomenon it describes.”\(^7\) The interview questions were carefully designed to invite expressive responses. Once formulated, I confirmed the absence of leading questions in order to gather information without prejudice.

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3.1.1 Interview I

Interview I was comprised of thirteen basic questions (Table 3.1 below). As stated above, when I conducted the interviews, I varied the order and some questions depending upon the subject in the interview. Components affecting the interview variations included the roles the subject performed, the relative experience of the subject before participating in the production, and the natural progression of the conversation.

Table 3.1 Interview I Questions

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3.1.2 Interview II

The second interview focused on the recording process and how revisiting the singers’ roles fit into their pedagogical experiences. The questions targeted the technical aspects of singing a role in a new situation after a substantial break. (See Table 3.2.)

Table 3.2 Interview II Questions

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3.1.3 Interview III

Interview III targeted vocal technique and learning behavior throughout the production. In addition to the subjects’ increased levels of technical acuity and performance practice, I was interested in increased levels of professional behavior. As stated in Chapter One, Colleen Skull discovered a correlation between a professional performance and the technical skill of the singer performing.8 In my study, I examined

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8 Skull, “Performance Excellence.”
the correlation between the professional approach and the performance opportunity. By investigating ways in which the performance opportunity was connected to each singer’s approach to *Mambo*, I sought to discover the degree to which a single performance opportunity could inform a young singer’s professional behavior. Learning professional conventions from within a production surfaced as an important theme in all three of the interviews, and was addressed directly in Interview III with questions regarding future preparation in questions four and five (Table 3.3, below).

Table 3.3 Interview III Questions

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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role? High notes, breath support, diction, language, coloratura, register shifts (chest to mix to head), performance practice (children’s theater, midi accompaniment, musical style)?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Did you feel a difference in breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production; and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?</td>
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9 Professional approach refers to the singer's commitment and behavior in rehearsals and performances including arriving at rehearsals and performances prepared and on time, rehearsing the staging in character (with full character attributes), and using rehearsals to improve technically and presentationally.
3.2 Subject Interview Coding

As I read and reread the interviews, I discovered that the interview responses uncovered certain themes that were consistent with the assumptions I presented in Chapter One, such as: it is possible to use arias and songs in lieu of vocal exercises to teach specific technical skills (coloratura, breath support, high notes); performance opportunities improve technique; and people perform best when they are confident. I compared the responses within each interview and across interviews in order to identify other relevant ideas being expressed.

3.2.1 Themes for Coding Purposes

Clear themes emerged during the interviews as illustrated in Table 3.4 below. Most of the subjects alluded to technical improvement in the first and second interviews. This was an important discovery since those interviews did not present direct questions referring to specific technical abilities. Only Interview III contained direct questions regarding vocal and performance techniques that the singers encountered in their roles. As I became increasingly familiar with the transcripts, I organized and condensed the themes.

Coding the interview comments allowed me to identify the substantive data. Due to the broad nature of the interview questions, it was not difficult to fit the important comments into a succinct list of codes. I anticipated some of the themes, such as diction and performance practice, if for no other reason than the fact that I asked specific questions pertaining to those issues. The themes I used to extract substantive data from the interviews are listed in Table 3.4, below.
Table 3.4 Interview Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Acting and Staging</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Peer Support and Collaboration</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Language and Diction</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Performance Practice</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Professional Behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Specific Vocal skills</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Observations

The data that I collected through my personal observations was documented on observational protocol forms and would eventually support my theories. The observations were written down after the rehearsals, performances, and recording sessions as simple phrases and sentences as I recalled the events earlier in the day. Creswell refers to this process as memoing, which when coded, analyzed, and compared to other data results in the formation of theories.

Memoing becomes part of developing the theory as the researcher writes down ideas as data are collected and analyzed. In these memos, the ideas attempt to formulate the process that is being seen by the researcher and to sketch out the flow of this process.\(^{10}\)

I recorded both visual and aural observations, including the vocal improvements I perceived. These memos were then transferred to the protocol forms, in order to log specific actions and interactions that I found pertinent to my study.\(^{11}\)

I revisited my observations after having transcribed and coded the interviews and organized them similarly to the way I organized the interviews. The protocol forms from the early rehearsals revealed four major themes: acting and staging, peer support and

\(^{10}\) Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 85.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 298.
collaboration, positive learning environment, professional behavior. The early rehearsals uncovered the most observational data as the subjects and I were becoming acquainted and learning about each other’s work ethics. For select subjects, the collaborative aspect was entirely unique and they were hesitant to comment verbally, however, their body language was informative and I documented every nuance I could recall after the day’s rehearsals. This “getting-to-know-you” stage of the Mambo production provided the meat of the observational data and would be crucial in verifying the interview responses, particularly those focused on professionalism and technical improvement.

3.4 Conclusion

The methodology presented in this chapter describes the protocol that I used in collecting and analyzing data, and in developing my theories and hypotheses regarding performance and vocal pedagogy. As stated in Chapter One, I began this research with personal assumptions gained through my own performing and teaching experiences. As Creswell states, “Researchers have an orientation to research and a sense of personal ethics and political stances that inform their research.”  

12 Although my personal history was the starting point for this inquiry, my goal has been to discover theoretical material I had not previously considered and to develop hypotheses based on all of the data that I have collected. The Singers’ comments combined with my personal observations constitute the foundation for my data analysis and theoretical supposition.

12 Ibid., 51.
CHAPTER FOUR

Subject Interviews

As noted in my introduction to Chapter One, guiding students from private lessons to public performances is a challenge every voice teacher confronts. As part of my investigation, I examined different elements of vocal pedagogy and the manners in which they were affected in a rehearsal-performance scenario to discover the importance of the performance opportunity itself as a pedagogical tool. Although numerous types of solo performance opportunities exist at the tertiary level, by observing the vocal and performance-related progress of fourteen students within a ten-month production (rehearsal, performance, and second performance), I was given an opportunity to investigate specific connections between growth and the solo performance opportunity.¹

The evidence in my study derives from a collection of descriptive data through interviews. This data revealed that performance opportunities yield a wealth of pedagogical tools. The elements in Mambo that subjects reported as beneficial included technique, language, diction, and performance practice. In this chapter, I present selections from the forty-one interviews which describe the pedagogical tools that the students found within Mambo.²

¹ Among the performance opportunities commonly available at the tertiary level are scene programs, choral concerts, master classes, studio recitals, solo recitals, operas, and musical theater productions.
² The complete interviews are presented as Appendix xx. The singers are referred to by their character names followed by the number one or two depending upon the performance they sang.
4.1 *Mambo* and Vocal Technique

Vocal technique was a concern for all of the subjects during *Mambo*. Each of them expressed a desire to improve as a singer during the production either by discussing a technical approach to a specific musical phrase with me or by requesting my input regarding the vocal execution of a particular phrase. Mambo2 put it succinctly in one of her interviews: “I felt in general that I improved as a singer because there were so many technical things in *Mambo* that I was working on in my lessons. That’s why I wanted to do it.” Ruby1 described her conscious decision to use *Mambo* as a tool for improving technically: “You could just go through and sing the numbers, but I really focused in on the technique of it.” In discussing the recording, Chief expressed his purpose for employing *Mambo* as a pedagogical tool when he said, “In my opinion the recording was easier than the show because I could focus just on vocal technique.” These comments revealed the fact that a primary objective for several participants was to improve as singers. The students were fully aware of this opportunity as a tool for becoming better vocal technicians. The technical skills most cited during the interviews were breath support, coloratura, and high notes.

4.1.1 Breath Support

Breath support can be difficult to define for various reasons including the fact that singers feel support in different ways. Coaches often refer to support when discussing line; teachers often refer to support when discussing high notes; some singers feel it as a tightening inward motion of the abdominal muscles; while others experience a down and
outward motion, and the list goes on.3 Regardless of a singer’s extent of breath
awareness, the ultimate goal for proper breath support (which can include various
techniques for breath intake, compression, and release) is to enable a singer to utilize
breath as a tool to attain the musical and emotional construct of a role, while
simultaneously engaging in the physical mechanics for proper vocal production.4 Singing
a role in an opera requires the addition of character-related components, such as costumes
and staging, in order to achieve this goal.

Singing in cumbersome costumes will affect a singer’s posture and movements,
which will in turn, affect his/her breath support. The leaf costumes added this
performance element, one that is not attainable in private lessons. Having grown up on
stage, I have experienced and witnessed the effect of the “wardrobe-factor” on singing
myriad times. I have seen seasoned professionals buckle under the weight of a Malabar
armored guard costume or remain unbelievably tense in a harem girl costume.5 Therefore,
I was aware when I chose the material for the leaves that the costumes would
undoubtedly call attention to the subjects’ bodies, movement requirements, and breath
support. Various singers commented on the weight of the Mambo costumes. Both Ruby1
and Ruby2 found that the costumes helped them with their breath support. Ruby2
credited the weight with “feeling more grounded,” while Ruby1 said the costumes,
“helped me make sure my posture stayed proper.” For Elmer, it was the pair of tights
underneath the leaf that “reminded me to involve my abdominal muscles in my breathing
and support.” These singers not only experienced the effects their costumes had on their

3 Miller, On the Art of Singing, 239.
in the opera world as top of the line costumes. They are meticulously built and often heavy.”
individual awareness of breath support, but also they identified the effects and the
positive ramifications of singing in their costumes.

The costumes in addition introduced the characterization issue which would affect
breath awareness in *Mambo*. The real personalities of the leaves began to unfold with the
addition of the costumes, producing a vocal-emotional bond that also could not have
occurred in private lessons for these young singers. Most professional singers have, at
some point, worked with vocal coaches in order to add finesse and musical-emotional
details to arias and songs in their repertoire. The *Mambo* production did not have a staff
coach, and therefore the singers leaned on the costumes, libretto, storyline, and any other
color character-building components in order to connect their vocalism to the music and the
audience.

Three of the subjects who discussed their vocal approach in connection to
color character and staging were Mom2, Sassy1, and Sassy2. Mom2 used the comforting
aspect of her character to choose a lyric approach to the vocalism: “It’s very lyrical and
soothing, almost like a lullaby, and I approached it in a soothing and comforting way
with longer, softer lines.” Her experience singing professionally and coaching operatic
roles enhanced her ability to identify the music as reminiscent of a lullaby without
realizing that the scene was inspired by the lullaby scene in Walt Disney’s *Dumbo*. Although Mom2 identified this musical approach without the aid of a coach or staging,
she experienced a performance opportunity that required contemplation, planning, and
practice in order to achieve the tender atmosphere called for in her scene. In other words,

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7 The Mom-Mambo scene was inspired by a scene in Walt Disney's animated feature *Dumbo*, in
which Dumbo (the baby elephant with enormous ears) is caressed by his chained mom through
the bars of a circus wagon.
Mom2 was provided with a professional experience to which she rose beautifully.

“Mambo My Mambo” employed long sweeping four-measure phrases that could be broken up if necessary into two-measure phrases given the breath awareness of the singer. As illustrated in Example 4.1 below, the tenderness of the Mom-Mambo scene required a more advanced singer not only for the extended phrases, but also for the dynamic control necessary to maintain the sensitivity and empathy of the mom. Establishing this musical atmosphere would not be possible without the technical skills to control the breath while maintaining healthy vocalism.

Example 4.1 “Mambo My Mambo”

In contrast to Mom2’s ability to decipher the musical details of her scene based solely on the sheet music, the two subjects that were cast as Sassy Sassafras needed staging in order to connect the vocalism to the drama. They both found Sassy’s character to be a surprising addition to the original story and neither of them understood the irony of the scene until I staged them in it. Sassy1 commented, “a lot of the sounds, like the chestier mix, became a lot more obvious once we added the flirty stuff.” This comment
confirmed Sassy1’s inexperience and connected the role that the staging played to her vocal and musical choices. Sassy2 gained confidence to explore vocal and musical possibilities once she saw Sassy1 make her personal vocal choices. Sassy1’s initiative informed Sassy2’s approach even though she sang the role differently, “It felt better because I added chest and mix, which I wouldn’t have done otherwise.” With this account, peer collaboration surfaced as an important theme for this subject as she may not have reached her potential without the group dynamic and the rehearsal process that informed her ultimate performance.

The range and style of Sassy’s number was intentionally bluesy. It did not, however, require a belt style of singing in order to negotiate the piece. I intentionally cast the part with a musical theater singer and an opera singer. The musical theater singer, Sassy1, had to practice moving from chest to head voice with a smooth legato sound, while the opera singer, Sassy2, had to practice moving from head to chest voice with the same smooth legato quality. (See Example 4.2 below for Sassy’s range.) Breath support plays a significant role in negotiating register demarcations. Richard Miller has stated that legato results from “a continuous flow of vibrant vocal sound,” and credits the ability to “maintain a coordinated and consistent flow of breath,” with good legato. In her book *The Art of Singing*, voice coach and therapist Jennifer Hamady notes that developing the technique to shift registers smoothly, requires a foundation of proper breath support.

As the example illustrates, Sassy’s music was a veritable chest-head vocalise. Each of the two Sassy’s found individual routes to utilize their breath in order to support the role’s requirements. Sassy1 used an abundant amount of pure chest voice throughout

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8 Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, 122.
the number, while Sassy2 depended on a chest-head mix to move smoothly through the song’s range of an octave and a fourth. The rehearsal process alone forced the two Sassy’s to practice the skillsets necessary to achieve a continuous line while shifting registers in this aria. Once again, Mambo subjects experienced technical advancements that would not have surfaced in private lessons alone.

Example 4.2 “I’m Sassy and I’m Fine”

4.1.2 Coloratura

Coloratura, a melismatic treatment of text with several notes articulated on one syllable, was found in the Mambo, Fandango Fig, and Hillary Hickory roles. As a singer who specializes in coloratura, I know from experience that this skill manifests itself differently with adrenaline triggered by a performance situation, than it does in

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10 Sean M. Parr, “Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera” (Columbia University, 2009), 1–2.
private practice and voice lessons. One component of singing coloratura that I have always found paramount to successfully performance is the emotional context. Melismas can represent a range of emotions. In Laure Cinti-Demareau’s voice treaty (published in Paris, 1849), she created and categorized coloratura exercises by emotive expression. Laughing, for instance, is commonly notated with fast *staccati*, a coloratura skill.

Attaching emotion to coloratura phrases is another skill often addressed by vocal coaches and represents an advanced approach to coloratura. In Estelle Liebling’s *The Estelle Liebling Coloratura Digest*, are published examples of these phrases with suggested arias for applying them to performance opportunities. The application of this skill in performance is essential to developing a solid coloratura technique.

While discussing coloratura in the *Mambo* interviews, I discovered that each singer who was presented with this technique found that negotiating the melismas while they were acting was challenging. Although one of the subjects had sung coloratura in previous performances, none had been faced with singing coloratura while executing choreography. Hillary2 and Fandango commented on the process of bringing the coloratura passages up to speed while moving on stage. Hillary2 stated, “When I would try to speed it up it was not working and I was getting more scared to sing in rehearsal. But when we were staging, I noticed I was doing a better job. So in performance I felt like I could do it if I concentrated on the acting, which was true.” Fandango noticed:

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11 Ibid., 36.
13 As documented in Sean Parr's dissertation, “Melismatic Madness,” Manuel Garcia II (influential vocal pedagogue of the nineteenth century), his protégé, Mathilde Marchesi, and her protégé, Estelle Libling were all proponents of applying vocal technique to performance opportunities.
I also felt like I was trying to be too clean. When I relaxed and would listen to my tape of myself, I noticed the notes were faster and cleaner, so I had to bring that into my staging. I learned a lot about the feeling and how it differs from other singing and also from the way it sounds.

Hillary2’s observation that acting was the key to successfully executing the coloratura revealed the physical tension she was incorporating in her private practice. It is not uncommon for young singers to tense up in their desire to speed up. In this case, staging played a significant role in Hillary2’s ability to improve her coloratura skills. Fandango reached a new level of awareness and professionalism by taping, listening, and adjusting his singing based on what he heard. Regarding coloratura, this opportunity became a direct extension of Fandango’s applied lessons. Both subjects used information they acquired during the rehearsals in order to achieve their goals in performance; and in doing so, they learned a technical skill they had not mastered in their private lessons.

Mambo1’s approach included the emotional aspect of the melismatic sections. Having performed coloratura before, he was aware of his character’s emotions as a holistic part of the coloratura passages. The expression on his face, the staging, and the vocal color all played into his goals for his vocal production: “The coloratura and high notes were definitely connected to Mambo’s feelings.” Mambo’s response to Hillary marked the first time in which he confronted a bully. In the staging rehearsals, he was directed to move towards her as he confronted her, stepping on the beat as he sang the passage in Example 4.3. Although this direction seemed simple, coordinating the steps with the articulation of the notes and syllables, while accommodating his awkward costume, required practice. This brief but important moment in the show depended upon
Mambo1’s ability (and Mambo2’s for that matter) to communicate his newfound strength and confidence through coloratura passages and staging.

Example 4.3 Mambo’s Response to Hillary

\[\text{Mambo steps towards Hillary on the beat}\]

\[
\text{You should be aware your behavior is rare, and leaves like me will stare.}
\]

\[
\text{Mambo provided an opportunity for select subjects to experience coloratura as a technical and musical device. As they learned their respective melismas, they also became aware of their bodies and the coloratura coordination. Additionally, some of them became aware of the differences in their senses. I considered Fandango’s discovery relating to the difference in the concept of sound and the actual sound of his coloratura, to be a huge breakthrough. The musical-emotional application of Mambo1’s approach to the melismas marked an advanced awareness, to which we added rhythmic staging that provided him with a unique coloratura challenge. The diversity of the subjects’ experiences illustrates the kinesthetic, technical, and emotional paths to singing this specific skill that Mambo offered.}
\]

One of my goals in writing Mambo was to present each of the singers with a challenge that would allow them to learn a skill they had not yet had an opportunity to
master. Hillary2, Fandango, and Mambo1 represent three different levels of experience faced with the same specific skill. Hillary1 discovered acting and moving as a way to unlock tension and channel freer singing. Fandango identified his desire to sing all the notes as the component hindering his ability to sing the coloratura passages. Mambo1 was able to incorporate the emotional intent of the scene in order to execute his coloratura passages, yet had to learn to execute simple but rhythmic staging during his coloratura. Each of these experiences resulted in enhanced technical skills. Without this performance opportunity, specifically the process of rehearsing for the performance, these singers would not have reached the individual levels of coloratura dexterity that they did. Therefore, Mambo presented technical challenges in coloratura to three levels of singers who overcame these challenges during the rehearsals: beginning (Hillary2), intermediate (Fandango), and advanced (Mambo1).

4.1.3 High Notes

Although a few of the female singers had difficulties with high notes in their roles, most of the female vocal parts were written in a lower range for diction purposes. Women’s diction can be difficult to understand when singing classically in their upper ranges in part because vowels become naturally modified at higher pitches; also, vowels are often modified further in order to produce beautiful tones on high notes; finally, consonants become secondary to clear, sustained high notes. Those female subjects who were uncomfortable with the higher notes in their roles, requested lower alternates, rendering previous high note issues irrelevant. Three of the men, however, had high notes that required covering, and none of them requested alternate lower notes. In The Art of
Singing, Richard Miller commented, “The term ‘cover’ is no more specific than is the term ‘support’. “¹⁴ Cover is the process men use to adjust tone by means of vowel modification and resonance shifts in order to maintain the integrity of the extreme portion of the upper range. It is a crucial skill for men to develop as open singing throughout the scale can be damaging, and the vocal range will be diminished without it. In Mambo, Fandango, Chief, and Mambo1 learned how to negotiate covered high notes that had previously presented problems for them.

Fandango’s musical number, “Are You Coming or Going” ended with a high F (F4). The baritone singing Fandango was still developing his cover technique and the F presented a challenge for him. For Fandango, Mambo offered a vehicle in which to practice his high F and test it in performance. His comment, “I had to practice it a lot because it was highlighted at the end of the aria,” referred to the staging, in which he stepped forward, assumed a comic operatic pose, and held the high F while the Figlettes pulled his “chariot” off stage without him (see Example 4.4). I changed the timing of the music in order to accommodate the character’s egotistical nature and spoof the importance of the operatic high note by moving the Figlettes’ final syllable and holding the accompaniment until Fandango moved to the cadence. The staging received laughs even in rehearsal, which motivated Fandango to develop the skills to sustain the F4 long enough for the Figlettes to reach stage left. Fandango’s motivation was directly related to the staging, the anticipated audience reaction, and the group dynamic, which ultimately resulted in the F4 becoming a part of his secure range.

¹⁴ Miller, On the Art of Singing, 10.
Mambo1 also had a high note that he did not feel completely secure with: the high C (C5) in the cabaletta, “I Will Go.” Although Mambo decided to leave the city of Leafy Brown under duress, the scene in which he announced his plans was very upbeat and cheerful. While discussing high notes during the interviews, Mambo1 commented that the connection between the music and Mambo’s emotions “also gave me the energy necessary to sing those parts.” The music, a march with a brisk tempo and dotted rhythm, suggested Mambo’s impending journey.\(^\text{15}\) As he sang the verse alone, he performed animated choreography while the chorus entered to join him in the final rendition before the climactic high C. The excitement of the number which infused Mambo1 with energy arose from the combination of the march, the dancing, and the chorus joining him (see Examples 4.5A and 4.5B below). These three elements would not have been exposed during private lessons. “I Will Go” informed Mambo1 that he needed to apply an

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\(^{15}\) The rhythm of a March is typically a basic duple meter with dotted rhythmic gestures as identifying features. Marches embody tempi reminiscent of the act of marching.; V. Kofi Agawu, Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music (Princeton University Press, 2014).
increased amount of energy in order to add the C5 to his range. The staging, the emotion, the communication, and the group dynamic were all aspects of his newly acquired skill.

Example 4.5 “I Will Go”

Example 4.6 Mambo’s High C

The Mambo rehearsals extended the lesson experience for these three singers by allowing them to practice and experiment technically with covered high notes. As noted by the baritone singing the part of the Chief Leaf, “The high G was really challenging. That’s a real high note for every baritone.” The high G (G4) was not an original option in
the aria. Chief requested the *ossia* specifically so that he would have an opportunity to develop a stable high G.\(^\text{16}\) Both the composer and I were happy to accommodate his wishes, as it worked beautifully with the melody and drama of the piece; and it allowed Chief, an advanced singer in the company, to overcome his insecurities with high G’s (see Example 4.6 below). This singer had experience performing leading roles at Brooklyn College and in young artist programs, as well as small roles with regional opera companies. His motivation to use *Mambo* as a tool for developing his covered high notes, was testament to his goal to migrate into the professional opera business: “It gave me the opportunity to feel I’m ready to sing a high G.” Without this note in his range, Chief’s audition options would be limited. His range was increased because of his work during the *Mambo* production.

Example 4.7 Chief’s High G

\[\text{Interpolated High G (G4)}\]

\[\text{will applaud you Mambo my boy.}\]

\[\text{Mambo, once again, offered pedagogical tools for disparate learning experiences.}\]

Three of the four men in the show had roles that contained covered high notes.

Fandango’s F4, Mambo1’s C5, and Chief’s G5 were problematic for these singers before

\(^{16}\) An *ossia* is an alternate to the original passage in a musical composition.
this production. Each of them overcame this challenge and walked away from the production with an increased range. For Fandango and Chief, gaining the additional note was connected to the opportunity to practice and experiment with cover and coordination during the rehearsal process. For Mambo1, achieving the high C was a matter of adding energy and breath, which happened naturally with the combination of the energetic music and choreography, also a result of rehearsing with his peers. Each of the subjects was aware of his vocal challenge and approached his high note issues technically. For Fandango, the goal was the audience reaction to the staging. For Mambo, the goal was to harness the energy he discovered in “I Will Go,” and apply it to other arias with high notes. For Chief, the goal was to move into the professional world, which would not be possible without a high G. These goals, attained in Mambo, were addressed in ways that would not have been possible in private lessons alone. Mambo offered the venue in which these subjects experienced the kinesthetic and emotional connections necessary for mastering the technical problem of cover and expanding vocal range.

4.2 Language

Singing in multiple languages is a requirement for every classical singer, and those addressed most often at the tertiary level include English, German, French, and Italian. There is more to the language component of singing than simply understanding each word: beyond the word is the phrase, and beyond the phrase is the text interpretation.\(^\text{17}\) In Mambo particularly, its subject matter of anti-bullying combined with the opera’s focus on children inspired all of the subjects to examine the contents of their texts and to strive to communicate the morals of the story clearly. Ruby1, a native

\(^{17}\) Chapman, Singing and Teaching Singing, 114.
English speaker, discussed an important aspect of language as she connected her interpretation and communication of the *Mambo* libretto to her interpretation and communication of vocal works in foreign languages: “It’s definitely a goal I’m working on: how to adapt something like singing in English, my first language, to singing in French, German, and Italian.” This was an important realization and one that all professional singers have made at some point. Classical singers must be able to communicate equally well in every language in which they perform. This is can be a difficult concept to impart to voice students particularly without the aid of an audience. The *Mambo* performance opportunity facilitated Ruby1’s realization as an extension of her applied lessons.

Four of the subjects involved in my study were not native English speakers and were faced with the very challenge Ruby1 referred to above. Although they all spoke English quite well, Mambo1, Fandango, Hillary2, and Chief were charged with performing in English well enough to communicate a story to children. This entailed translating unknown words, interpreting phrases that were written in verse, and reciting the lines with accurate inflections. Chief discovered, “after singing *Mambo* for children, I realized that the children understood me. I definitely feel more secure and will sing in English again.” *Mambo* opened doors for Chief by placing him in front of an audience filled with children who responded and reacted to his words. Without *Mambo*, Chief might not have considered auditioning for English repertoire opportunities in the future.

Fandango, despite not being a native English speaker who was very fluent in English, was not concerned with the audience’s ability to understand him. However, he was given a dialect challenge: “One of my characters was a prude who spoke with a New
England accent, and that was new to me.” I described Fandango’s character to him as snobbish, likened him to the Charles Winchester character from the old television show *M*A*S*H*, and requested he use that accent while performing Fandango. Large conservatories have classes in which various English and American dialects are taught, but this was Fandango’s first experience with an American accent, and he would not have had an opportunity to explore such subtleties without *Mambo*. Having been given a chance to elevate specific language skills from within the framework of the *Mambo* performance opportunity, Chief’s and Fandango’s skills advanced more directly than they would have without performing in this piece.

Mambo1’s approach to the language was completely motivated by his character’s emotions: “I had such a wonderful experience learning who Mambo was and what was his message and his goal in the story and for the audience was.” He had no predisposed fears or insecurities about communicating to the children and I believe that his unabashed approach helped his efforts. Mambo1 was consistent in requesting help with inflection and definition. His diction was never in question. It was impeccable, even if his pronunciation was wrong. The entire company worked with him during rehearsals to fix libretto issues. His grasp of the language by the time we arrived at performance was superb, due to his personal goal of communicating the anti-bullying message and the group effort to enhance his English language skills.

Hillary2, the youngest and least experienced subject in my study, was diligent in her preparation of the sung and spoken words in her roles. However, when speaking about diction (a closely related but separate topic) she commented, “Of course I wanted them to understand [laughs], but I never thought they couldn’t understand.” This remark

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18 *M*A*S*H* was a television series based on the 1970 film of the same name.
supports my statement above that the concept of communicating equally well in every language can be difficult to convey to students. It also presents the language element as a more advanced-level component of vocal pedagogy, at least conceptually.

Although language emerged as an advanced skill, a variety of experiences were described relating language skills and pedagogy within the Mambo production. For Ruby, Fandango, Chief, and Mambo the concept of language and communication was established in greater detail than before Mambo. The rehearsals became an extension of applied lessons for each of these singers as they explored communication from individual frames of reference.

4.3 Diction

The importance of diction in live performance cannot be underestimated. Proper communication of a story is the responsibility of the actors and singers on stage, not the audience members. Most of the singers in Mambo reported being attentive to diction specifically because children were in the audience. Among the complications inherent to English diction are frequent consonants and consonant clusters. Mom1 addressed this diction element in terms of the audience: “I made sure to enunciate more than usual, especially consonants and even shadow vowels, because kids would be in attendance and I wanted to make sure the message would get across.”

Demographics motivated Mom1 to contemplate diction and employ a specific technique, shadow vowels, to ensure the children could understand her. This is a clear example of Mambo working as an extension to applied lessons.

19 A shadow vowel is a short vowel added to the release of a final consonant to better define the consonant and increase audience comprehension; Kathryn LaBouff, Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer’s Guide to English Diction (Oxford University Press, USA, 2008), 137.
Two completely different methods were employed by Hillary1 and Sammi1 in order to ensure clear diction. Hillary1 said, “I would practice speaking the words in rhythm to get them into my brain, and then practice them on pitch.” Like Mom1, Hillary1’s method for dealing with problematic diction marks an extension of private lessons. She employed a clear method to the *Mambo* libretto that she most likely learned from her private teacher. For Sammi1, the diction traps were “with phrasing and finding the correct places to breath without cutting words off.” Timing consonants and breaths in fast musical numbers requires repeated practice. Sammi1 was my private student and I helped her with the phrasing and the specific timing of breaths in private lessons and rehearsals.

Mom1, Hillary1, and Sammi1 each applied distinct techniques for dealing with diction obstacles in *Mambo*. Whether the troublesome phrases were related to final consonants, tempo and tongue twisters, or phrasing and breath management, the singers engaged in practicing privately and in rehearsals, and employed diction skills typically learned in private lessons.

4.4 Performance Practice

The interview comments referring to performance practice in *Mambo* focused on the electronic accompaniment and the children’s theater acting style. As I stated above, one of my objectives with this case study was to present all of the singers with opportunities to build their technical and performance skills. Only two singers had sung in an opera with electronic accompaniment before *Mambo*, and only two singers
(different singers) had performed in a children’s theater production. Mambo delivered to fourteen subjects at least one new performance practice skill.\textsuperscript{20}

4.4.1 Electronic Accompaniment

Performing with a midi accompaniment takes practice and skill, particularly managing phrasing within a fixed tempo. The collaborative aspect of the production affected the accompaniment the most. Singers requested new tempi, new introductions, and new notes in order to feel secure with their musical numbers. Fandango was most concerned about the speed of his aria and said, “Thankfully, the composer didn’t mind changing the tempo.” Although we slowed the aria down, Fandango still had a complicated patter song that required proper singing, clear diction, and phrasing that worked with the fixed accompaniment. His role contained every trap a singer could possibly face with electronic accompaniment. After performing Mambo, Fandango was prepared for any future engagement with fixed, electronic accompaniment (please see Fandango Fig and the Figlettes, Appendix G).

Mambo\textsuperscript{1}’s attitude toward the midi was that “It takes some time to adapt and rehearsing to the tracks was a different experience… eventually things were changed on the track to help the singers.” Mambo’s most difficult piece to coordinate with the track was the beginning of “I Will Go.” The accompaniment consisted of held chords and the tempo was slow enough to get lost in the rhythm. Mambo\textsuperscript{1} and Mambo\textsuperscript{2} were staged to subdivide the measures in order to feel the entrance. They had five measures in which to

\textsuperscript{20} The most common avenue to professional singing engagements in regional houses is through children’s outreach tours. These performances require presentational acting and often use pre-recorded accompaniments.
become acclimated with the 6/8 subdivision. Example 4.8 illustrates the problematic entrance.

Example 4.8 Mambo’s Entrance in “I Will Go”

Staged with steps that subdivide measures into two, with underlying subdivision of 6/8.

Both singers performing the role of Mambo learned an essential tool for singing with an electronic accompaniment and both of them mastered this entrance. It is unlikely that either of them would have had an occasion to address this situation in a private lesson. Mambo heightened their performance practice skillsets by utilizing basic musicianship skills through staging.

When singing with a track, a performer must know his/her music accurately. I have discovered working at the tertiary level that young singers rely on accompanists to the degree that they do not thoroughly prepare their music for performance. The Mambo tracks encouraged the subjects to learn their parts to a greater degree than was typical for them to ensure seamless performances. Ruby2’s interview response reveals a level of learning commitment to Mambo that she had not made in the past: “I think I wasn’t sure what to expect using the track in the beginning… I was nervous beforehand that if we got off, that could have been really scary because there’s nobody to follow you. But
Fortunately we knew our stuff well enough that that didn’t happen.” Ruby2 learned the particular moments in the orchestration, subdivisions, and portions of Mambo’s music in order to identify cues, enter correctly, and blend during the duet. Without the midi accompaniment, she would not have reached the learning awareness she acquired during the *Mambo* production. All four of these subjects, Ruby2, Fandango, Mambo1, and Mambo2, gained experience, knowledge, and skills performing with midi accompaniments due to their participation in *Mambo*.

4.4.2 Children’s Theater

A children’s theater presentation is not unlike typical operatic performance practice, in that singers typically face the audience when singing in all styles of opera. However, the degree to which one speaks directly to the audience members is exaggerated beyond typical operatic acting, and the opportunities the audience members have to address the actors are generally nonexistent in standard operatic repertoire. In *Mambo*, the participants learned when and where to focus their attention and how to time the staging and dialogue in order to accommodate audience reactions.

Although more challenging for some than for others, the children’s theater presentation was a skill all of the singers wanted to excel at in order to convey the anti-bullying message to the children in the audience. Mambo2 identified this style as “a challenge because I had not done anything like that and it was completely alien.” This comment discloses Mambo2’s inexperience with outreach tours and the fact that *Mambo* offered her the first children’s performance documented on her resume. Additionally, Mambo2 gained valuable performance practice skills in presentation, regardless of the
medium. Ruby1 discussed the connection between the children’s theater style and her technique: “If you give them a big facial expression, they respond… It made me much more aware of my body, my actions, and my vocal action.” The *Mambo* presentation influenced Ruby1’s technique in performance, which she could carry into future performance opportunities. Presentational acting is a fundamental skill for opera singers and is used within full opera productions, opera scene programs, and opera aria concerts. Audience members lose volume and words without it. The exaggerated approach to this performance practice could not have been addressed so comprehensively outside of a full-scale performance opportunity and these subjects’ accounts illustrate the importance of the *Mambo* experience for these two singers.

Elmer was the most prolific performer in the company. He had performed professionally as a straight actor, a children’s theater actor, a puppeteer, a musical theater actor/singer, and an opera singer. I had very little to offer him with regard to “new” skillsets. However, his role did present a character type he had not yet performed: “I normally perform young roles and this role was a slower paced elderly leaf. So it was interesting to find the tone, arch of phrasing, and over all pacing of this role.” Even with this young but seasoned performer, *Mambo* opened an unfamiliar door and yielded a new awareness in Elmer of the physicality of age and how it affects the body and voice. Although the performance practice skills for Elmer were developed within the children’s theater style, each of the participants developed skills directly related to their work within the *Mambo* production.
4.5 Divergent Experiences

All of the subjects entered the interview process with positive energy. Each one appeared to have a desire to share at least one aspect of their individual experiences within the production. Yet, it is important to note that not all the singers had the same experience with this particular opera and pedagogical study. Appendix E depicts statistical data that helps to clarify the experiences of the individual singers. To illustrate the wide gamut of experiences as described by the subjects, I have selected three accounts regarding the question of technique during the recording sessions and one description that demonstrates a casting error on my part.

In the second interview, I asked the singers if their respective roles were easier technically due to the fact they had sung them already in performance. I received varied responses to this question. Ruby2 was clear that revisiting her role for the recording was easier technically during the recording process due to the time between the performance and recording, not due to having learned some aspect of the technique during the rehearsal-performance process. In her comment regarding the technical challenges she specifically stated, “but only because of the time separation… I was further along in my technique. So that made it easier.” When I asked Mambo2 if the recording was technically easier to sing because she had sung it before, she responded, “Because I had done it and for some reason, between the first and second time I had become a better singer… Also just my stamina had gotten a little better.” The last two points—between the performance and recording she became a better singer and her stamina had improved—denote Mambo2’s belief that her increased technical acuity during the recording was only partially related to the fact that she had sung it before.
In contrast, Ruby1 found the recording more difficult to sing than the performance due to her reliance on collegial support as well as emotions and staging. Ruby1’s response focuses entirely on her experience on stage with her peer. “[It was] more challenging. I noticed with Ruby when I was singing with Mambo, that I fed off of his energy.” These three responses demonstrate three unique experiences, none of which specifically credit performing Mambo eight-months prior with singing their specific roles more easily during the recordings. These experiences as well as the fact that they admitted to spending very little time, if any, preparing for the recordings, brings into question whether anything is gained by having a university student revisit a role. It is my analysis that consistently moving conservatory students into new roles is a more effective approach.

Hillary2’s experience during the rehearsal-performance portion of the study was very surprising. This young singer did a wonderful job through the rehearsals and performances. Her demeanor was always professional and I was unaware that she was not always having a positive experience. I learned during the interviews, that by double casting Hillary2 with a more experienced singer—a practice I previously believed to be advantageous for all students—I actually diminished her confidence substantially. During the first interview, Hillary2’s description was a revelation to me.

In the beginning, I was totally confident, and then in the end I had more doubts. The other Hillary, I think she did so great, so I just kept comparing myself with her… Fandango surely moved Mambo. And we kind of irritated him and probably changed some feelings inside him. But Hillary I think only freaked him out.

I then asked if one character was easier or harder to sing because of the character’s position in the show.
For Fandango, I thought that it was kind of a crucial moment for Mambo. So I knew exactly what I had to do. But Hillary was kind of out of place for me. I mean the character was out of place.

The significance of these answers lies in the fact that Hillary Hickory represents the turning point for Mambo. She is the first bully that he stands up to. Additionally, Hillary2 played the part of a Figlette (an ensemble part) in the Fandango scene. My analysis of Hillary2’s perception is that her inability to perform at the level she set for herself (she was actually enchanting and funny in the part of Hillary Hickory) was manifested in her dismissal of Hillary Hickory’s importance to the story. This realization will inform my future casting methods for solo performing opportunities. Additionally, my research methods will reflect this incident and I will hold interviews earlier in the process of any future study I conduct.

4.6 Additional Quantitative Analysis

A goal of this study is to present data that represents the perceptions of the participants with regard to vocal and performance techniques commonly included in the realm of vocal pedagogy at the tertiary level. In order to validate the study and honor the subjects’ ontological, epistemological, and axiological beliefs, the interview questions remained broad. The most specific question with regard to vocal technique was the first question in Interview III:

Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?
The answers to this question (Table 4.1 below) may or may not expand upon or coincide with comments made in previous interviews. However, they represent the technical elements the singers perceived to be important at the time of Interview III.

### Table 4.1 Responses to Interview III Question One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Technical Skills Addressed in Role(s) Interview III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hillary2</td>
<td>Coloratura, language, breath support, children’s theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby2</td>
<td>High notes, children’s singing, dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2</td>
<td>High notes, breath support, diction, language, coloratura, register shifts, performance practice: children’s theater, musical styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassy1</td>
<td>Register shifts, children’s theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>High notes, diction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby1</td>
<td>Diction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary1</td>
<td>Coloratura, breath support, diction, language, register shifts, performance practice: children’s theater, musical styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammi1</td>
<td>Diction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo1</td>
<td>High notes, breath support, diction, language, coloratura, register shifts, performance practice: children’s theater, musical styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom2</td>
<td>Breath support, diction, high notes, register shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmer</td>
<td>Diction and performance practice (playing an senior character)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandango</td>
<td>High notes and cover, coloratura, diction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom1</td>
<td>High notes, register shifts, children’s theater</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 presents technical elements discussed in all three of the interviews. The broad nature of the questions allowed the singers to introduce any technical element they deemed important to their roles in *Mambo*. The table represents the number of subjects who commented on a particular pedagogical aspect and the percent that number represents among the participants who were faced with that skill. For instance, five singers had coloratura passages in their roles. Since all five of those singers discussed it, one hundred percent of the singers presented with coloratura technique addressed the topic within the interviews.
Table 4.2 Subjects Addressing Technical Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Technical Elements Addressed</th>
<th>Percent/Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Acting and singing</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Breath support</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (of 5)</td>
<td>Coloratura</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dynamics</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Facial tension</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (of 8)</td>
<td>High notes</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Language and diction</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Musical line and phrasing</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Performance practice (children’s theater)</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (of 12)</td>
<td>Performance practice (musical style)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Resonance and placement</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (of 12)</td>
<td>Register shifts</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rhythm and tempo</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7 Conclusion

The pedagogical tools acquired by the subjects during the *Mambo* production represent significant advances in their technical and performance skillsets. The data collected from the interviews disclosed that whether the participants advanced within a particular performance practice, or developed a specific vocal technique, *Mambo* became an extension of their private lessons and aided in developing vocal aptitudes that were previously missing or incomplete. Therefore, we may conclude that this study confirms that the rehearsal-performance platform yields diverse pedagogical tools for students studying vocal performance at the tertiary level.
CHAPTER FIVE

Summary and Implications

I conclude this investigation with an enthusiastic desire to explore the many and varied derivative topics unveiled during this research. En route to these topics, I provide a summary of the case study and implications of my research. The summary includes the design, execution, and analysis of data that emerged from a ten-month performance project. Following my summary, I discuss the current implications for performance opportunities at the tertiary level and possible approaches for streamlining performances for large groups of singers. I arrive at the third section of this chapter with suggestions for future research in the vocal performance arena as it relates to vocal pedagogy. Finally, I offer an introspective narrative of my investigation into the process of building voices and developing young professional singers utilizing solo performance opportunities.

5.1 Summary

In order to discover tangible correlations between vocal pedagogy and solo performance opportunities, I have designed a case study around the children’s opera, Mambo, which I have produced at the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College. As a member of the voice faculty at Brooklyn College, I aspire to examine the significance of performance at the tertiary level, and to identify specific elements of vocal pedagogy that can be substantially and positively affected by performing. The related literature targets success as the core issue and includes two primary areas of research: the first focuses on the connection between performance and success; and the second focuses on the connection between vocal pedagogy and career accomplishments. My research examines
performance as a tool for building vocal pedagogical skills in order to attain future goals. My overall research question as stated in Chapter One is: Can elements of vocal pedagogy be addressed for students within a solo performance opportunity? The final sections in my first chapter describe my rationale for designing a case in which to investigate my research questions, as well as my investigative methodology.

Commencing the research study with the assumption that vocal and performance techniques do in fact improve with each performance, I suggest that the single most effective method for proving or disproving this assumption is to study singers from within a performance opportunity. The “opportunity” became the case in which I follow precise case study research methods as laid out by John Creswell and Graham Gibbs in order to establish concrete theories and validate my findings.¹

I describe the five-month process of building the case for my study (the *Mambo* production) in the first section of Chapter Two. This section depicts each stage in the case design from inception to fieldwork. The performance contracts signed by the participants mark the beginning of the fieldwork as I document in section 2.5 of the chapter. The rehearsals, performances, and recording sessions that I discuss in the remainder of the chapter chronicle the wealth of experiences that the subjects recounted in the interviews eight months later. These interviews furnished the basis of the substantive data that I analyzed in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Three, I define the methodologies for collecting, coding, and analyzing the subjects’ accounts as well as my observations. Having disclosed my assumptions from the outset of the study, I utilize my three months of visual and aural observations exclusively to compare to the subject interviews and support my theoretical analyses. With this approach, I avoid coloring my findings with my initial assumptions, but rather compare the results of the interviews with memos I have documented during my fieldwork. Creswell’s and Gibbs’ instructions for tenable data collection and analysis procedures informed my fieldwork methods.²

I reveal my theoretical analysis in Chapter Four. I have developed *Mambo* with the help of Cleary and Bøhler, as a performance opportunity specifically for singers at the tertiary level, and included technical skills as well as acting skills that are typically addressed in applied voice lessons. Quoting each of the subjects in my study, I respond substantively and positively to the fundamental research question posed in Chapter One: Can elements of vocal pedagogy be addressed for students within a solo performance opportunity? The interviews provide me with sufficient data in order to develop meaningful theories which I support with observations. I uncover specific instances in which movement encourages freer singing, and communicating thoughts determines particular approaches to breath support. Students have described their learning experiences in detail, noting observation and support of their peers as significant elements affecting their growth during *Mambo*.

The subjects’ descriptive accounts correlate with my observations and prove my assumptions that vocal pedagogy can be taught through solo performance opportunities. Moreover, solo performance opportunities, if available, can become a pedagogical

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² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*; Gibbs, *Analysing Qualitative Data*. 

extension of private lessons. *Mambo* was designed specifically as a low-budget model for addressing the performance needs of a group of singers with widely varied levels of theatrical experience and vocal technique. This model addresses concerns select pedagogues may have regarding their beginning students’ abilities to succeed in performances by providing roles that focus on rhythm or stage presence and do not require solo singing. Low budget productions can provide numerous singers with opportunities, while sparing institutions exorbitant costs typically associated with opera and other solo performance mediums. By implementing performances as components of the vocal pedagogical curriculum, conservatories and music schools can give voice students the competitive edge they need to succeed as performers in today’s professional arena.

5.2 Implications

The assumptions that have inspired my study were developed through years of experience in the opera and vocal pedagogy fields. As a professional singer, producer, and director, I have observed countless young artists attempt the transition from college careers to professional careers. This difficult and dubious evolution requires a singer’s ability to maintain vocal technique during performing engagements. Marshall’s findings, that performance opportunities enhance success at the undergraduate level, support the evidence disclosed in the *Mambo* case study that performances can become extensions of singers’ applied lessons. The implications of the findings from this study reinforce my theory that the rehearsal-performance process can strengthen singers’ current skills and develop new skills. Further implications suggest that a series of performances at the tertiary level would increase the singers’ abilities to learn constructive rehearsal
techniques in addition to vocal and performance techniques, and can positively influence a singer’s approach in the professional operatic landscape. Therefore, it is a fair assumption and further implication that if performance opportunities at the tertiary level experience a conceptual shift from goal to requirement, voice departments within conservatories and universities would presumably increase the numbers of graduates who embark on successful professional careers.

5.2.1 Increasing Performance Opportunities

In order to increase performance opportunities, music department and voice department administrators would require processes for providing appropriate works for the students enrolled in their programs. These additional performance opportunities could be secondary to any main stage productions and therefore, produced with modest budgets. *Mambo* provides university and conservatory administrators with an excellent model for increasing performance opportunities for singers by developing collaborative ties between voice and composition departments. Collaborative efforts such as these could provide numerous works catering specifically to current voice departments’ needs while offering composition students the opportunity to workshop an original opera or musical theater composition. This could become a viable collaborative learning arena through implementing residencies and internships, assigning master’s theses, or developing specified courses for this purpose. However, if this route is not advantageous for select vocal programs, alternate possibilities exist that may also fill a performance opportunity provision for voice departments. Having experimented with various processes for organizing student performances at the Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music, I have presented a few possible approaches for consideration below. Each of the
operas discussed below represents an opera I have directed or produced at the tertiary level.

One-act operas with piano are relatively easy to produce as long as a pianist is available and within specified budget limitations. Offenbach’s one-act opera *Le mariage aux lanterennes* (The lantern marriage) is a good example of a comic opera that calls for tenor, mezzo, two sopranos, and actor.³ This opera is very funny and requires modest costumes, props and sets. If double cast the opera furnishes roles for two mezzos, four sopranos and two tenors.

*Sweet Betsy from Pike (A Horse Opera)* is a clever one-act opera written by composer Mark Bucci who scores the opera for clarinet, percussion, piano, and cello; or for two pianos.⁴ However, the show works beautifully with one piano and I have performed, directed and produced it with one piano numerous times. This opera is a wonderful example of sophisticated music combined with slapstick humor including a pantomimed “bad guy,” Dirty Dan. The costumes suggest western attire and the scenery consists of a piano bench and podium (a music stand will suffice). The cast includes Betsy, a soprano with a high C (C6); Narrator, a soprano or mezzo; and Ike, a tenor or baritone. An operatic satire, this show within a show is popular with all audiences.

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including children. Although it is accessible to audiences, it requires intermediate musicianship skills as the rhythms are complicated and the harmonies are challenging.

*Little Red Riding Hood* composed by Seymour Barab in 1962 for soprano, mezzo, and baritone is widely performed by regional opera houses and considered standard repertoire for outreach programs. Therefore, if presented as a solo opportunity as an extension to vocal pedagogy, it is conceivable that the students may be engaged to revisit the roles in young artist programs during the outsets of their careers. The opera appeals to audiences of all ages and works well with piano accompaniment and modest scenery and costumes.

*The Three Little Pigs* was developed as an outreach production by Syracuse Opera in 1991. The show is one of six children’s operas based on musical scenes written by Mozart, Donizetti, Rossini, and Offenbach. One advantage of this opera is that it provides young singers with opportunities to perform popular scenes from standard operatic repertoire. This further addresses the component of *Mambo* that examined the process of revisiting a role. Although the text and stories are different than in the original scenes, performers who sing these children’s operas will have addressed the technical vocal requirements of the very scenes they are likely to revisit later in their college or professional careers.

One-act operas or abridged operas with electronic accompaniment are financially advantageous, particularly for reoccurring productions or tours. The Cologne Opera Box

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in Cologne, Germany worked with Fauxharmonic Orchestra to create an abridged version of Englebert Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel* in 2012, which is now part of their standard repertoire. In a music department setting, a midi orchestral version of one-act operas or abridged operas would allow singers to learn standard repertoire and perform the show annually with the opportunity of graduating to more advanced roles in subsequent years. For instance, a singer who performs the role of Sandman as a freshman could graduate to Dew Fairy as a sophomore. As a junior, the same singer could perform Gretel, Mother, or Witch depending upon the voice type of the singer. Using midi enables singers an opportunity to learn the performance practice of working with electronic accompaniment and the rigors of learning a role well enough to perform without the luxury of an empathetic accompanist. Accompaniment tracks also ease the pressure on department instrumental ensembles, allowing them the freedom to focus on the main stage performance and other productions. An additional advantage to an annual performance is the venue for grant-seeking case studies documenting the effects of graduating roles for voice students.

Although one-act operas originally written with electronic accompaniment fall into the contemporary genre, they are not necessarily inaccessible musically. Some examples of electroacoustic children’s operas that I have produced include three operas by composer Christian McLeer. *G Train the Musical, House*, and *Shot* have been produced nationwide by regional opera companies as community outreach and touring

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programs. Each of these operas was written for five singers: three men and two women. Although written for professional singers, the operas contain optional notes and phrases for less advanced singers. Similar to *Sweet Betsy from Pike*, they are accessible to audiences, but contain complicated rhythms and harmonies for the performers.

Composer Dan Henry Bøhler was commissioned by Nevada Opera to write *Jack and Beanstalk* based on the fairytale of the same name. This is an opera I have produced at the tertiary and professional levels and represents a self-contained work with animated scenery and an eighteen-foot giant. Bøhler crafted his opera for four female leads and one male lead in addition to the giant. The bass, who sang Giant on film, granted Bøhler the rights to the video for producing and licensing purposes. This opera works best in the college setting if it is double cast, since the singers can alternate as chorus members when they are not playing the leads. The scenery, like the Giant, is also a video component making the opera almost completely self-contained.

It is important to note that performances do not have to be main stage performances in order to positively affect singers’ technical growth, as *Mambo* demonstrated. It is the process of learning, rehearsing and performing a role for an audience that becomes the extension of private lessons. *Mambo* is also evidence that the size of the role is not a factor in pedagogical benefits. Additionally, the repertoire need only to present skills addressed in private lessons. The period or popularity of a particular opera is not indicative of the opera’s effect on singers’ vocal and acting skills. As long as

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the role assigned challenges the voice student in some aspect of vocal pedagogy, the opportunity will be advantageous for that student.

The operas discussed above represent diverse styles of musical theater that can be produced in music programs implementing solo performance opportunities as extensions of vocal pedagogy. If double cast, six to fourteen singers can be granted opportunities to perform solo roles in these operas, and experience the rehearsal-performance setting that is vital to students’ vocal technical growth.

5.3 Future Research

Integrating solo performance opportunities into the vocal pedagogical process presents numerous challenges. Producing opera at the tertiary level requires excellent organizational skills as well as in-depth knowledge of production conventions. Common considerations include the show or shows to be produced; casting, double casting, and understudies; acquiring props, costumes, and scenery; and rehearsal schedules and venues. All of these components are addressed in *Mambo* and each of them present areas worthy of further research.

5.3.1 Choosing the Show

A comparative study could be presented in which skillsets addressed in standard operatic repertoire are contrasted with those in contemporary works. The results might be used to identify which works are best suited for beginning, intermediate, and advanced level singers. A compilation of one-act operas categorized by technical skills and organized into beginning, intermediate, and advanced level categories of singing techniques would be invaluable to music educators researching possible productions.
The effect of dance on future success is an area worth investigating, as dance is an important skill in classical and contemporary opera as well as in musical theater. Dancing helps to create body awareness that can have a positive effect on vocal and theatrical techniques. Additionally, the ability to dance could be the skill that gives a singer a competitive edge in auditions. An investigative series of interviews with young up-and-comers as well as seasoned professionals could inform university and conservatory administrators’ decision-making processes when considering innovative curricula.

The role and implications of historical recordings as components of vocal pedagogy could be examined through a case study similar to the *Mambo* study. There exists a vast wealth of technical and musical information on old operatic recordings that many young singers today are not aware of. Learning to listen and identify what a singer has done physically in order to perform a particular phrase in a particular way is a valuable skill. Many wonderful recordings of the worlds’ greatest singers exist, providing insight into their techniques, styles, approaches, and choices (as well as those of their teachers, coaches, and conductors). These audio documentations of vocal technique and musicianship comprise a priceless pedagogical treasure. A study could include a case in which students are taught what to listen for, how to compare singers, experiment with imitation, and compare the recordings to their individual impersonations. Examining the differences between what a singer hears when imitating and what a singer hears when listening to his/her imitative efforts was addressed in the *Mambo* interviews by Fandango. It is an important moment in a singer’s growth to identify the discrepancy between sounds inside and outside one’s body. I believe recordings offer pedagogues as well as students additional support in the learning process. Research into the practicality
of this approach could influence future conservatory curricula and inform pedagogical procedures of voice teachers.

Comparing the effect of affect on vocal pedagogy is another possible area for case study research in which specific pedagogical advantages of singing comic and serious literature are investigated. Does comedy allow for freer singing? Does immersing oneself in a tragic aria allow for better communication? Are the effects personal or universal? Do either of the affects have specific advantages? A case study researching these questions could inform and support voice teachers choices for particular students.

5.3.2 Casting

Due to the numerous casting possibilities in *Mambo* I was able to double cast almost every role while assigning multiple roles for each of the singers who expressed interest in learning more than one part. Select subjects performed roles that were written in different styles and could be considered different *fächer*, for instance Mom (lyric soprano) and Sassy (cross-over); while others requested very specific vocal parameters for their role assignments, and explored different styles of music (rap and lyric singing). The effects of broad casting parameters, such as those in *Mambo*, draw attention to related areas of research.

Will the existence of understudies and double cast members may affect preparedness, commitment, and professionalism at the tertiary level? Will students behave more professionally if a viable understudy is in the wings? Each of the *Mambo* singers commented on the production schedule and how quickly we moved from the first rehearsal to the performance; yet, they all knew their music. As I noted above, most of
them were double cast. I have directed college productions without double casting and observed less conviction, which leads me to believe that in addition to the producers’ piece of mind, double casting and assigning understudies may affect singers’ learning behaviors in conservatory settings. An investigation into this possible phenomenon could encompass interviews and surveys as well as observations. The observations could be documented during a production (such as *Mambo*) in which some roles are double cast and others are not. Another possible approach could encompass two consecutive productions: one with double cast members or assigned understudies, and the other without double cast members or assigned understudies.

Another area of vocal pedagogy that may benefit from further research is an examination of the following question: Is performing more important than performing in *fach*? In other words, is it more important to sing a role, even if it is not an ideal role for a particular student’s voice type, than to dismiss the opportunity since the role does not fit into the student’s probable future repertoire? It is my assumption as I pose this question, that performing is more important than performing in *fach* as long as the role will not vocally damage the singer. During the *Mambo* interviews, Mom1 discussed the differences in her two roles. She described her comfort with the music written for Mom because it was familiar to her and fit more seamlessly into her. Sassy, however, was foreign to her, yet she learned to sing it by observing her peer with whom she was double cast, and experimenting with vocal approaches. Identifying parameters that could help voice teachers with the issue of casting outside of a student’s typical *fach* could be valuable for pedagogues, singers, and directors hiring young singers. The research could include which roles in standard repertoire would not be damaging even if out of, and
attempt to discover and document the reasons. For instance, the mother in *Hänsel and Gretel* may be approachable by a young lyric if the venue is small and the orchestration is minimal (such as a piano). However, an eighteen-year-old coloratura should not attempt the Witch in the same production as that could be theatrically, musically, and vocally disastrous for the singer as well as the audience.

Evaluation of students’ growth from solo performing opportunities over time could be studied in an annual production using case study methods. The *Mambo* study presents growth findings within an eight-month period. However, a three or four-year study would present an opportunity to document a group of undergraduate singers as they proceed through a music program. Performing together in an annual production could reveal long-term implications of solo performance opportunities within a single group dynamic. Also worthy of examination is the effect of moving from understudy to small role to lead on a student’s self-confidence.

The role of Broadway material in the classical technical arena is an important contemporary concern in vocal pedagogy as cross over singing and literature is increasingly important. *Mambo* proved that performing a role, whether operatic, musical theater, or straight acting enhanced at least one element of vocal pedagogy. Many opera companies are requesting that singers include musical theater or cabaret pieces in their audition repertoires. Research into the specific technical advantages of adding Broadway and cabaret literature to a student’s classical repertoire would be a great help to many classical pedagogues. One specific element of technique that could be enhanced by the introduction of musical theater into the pedagogical landscape is diction. Working on musical theater repertoire, in which diction is so crucial, can have a positive effect on the
singer’s approach to diction in classical music as well. Examining the role that the Broadway method of moving from straight tone to vibrato as a climactic vehicle could play in classical technique is intriguing since a similar technique is already used in some systems of pedagogy in order to negotiate crescendi and decrescendi. Additionally, straight tone is often used to aid in controlling young singers’ vibrati. Another compelling question would be whether the Broadway vocal range could strengthen the classical middle and lower ranges. A case study in this area could illicit data which could inform the process of assigning performance opportunities to singers.

5.3.3 Production Values

The Mambo subjects overwhelmingly concurred that the costumes and scenery had positive effects on their character portrayals. Select subjects commented on vocal improvement with the addition of the costumes, and in my observations I noted the general excitement as the subjects tried their costumes on and practiced their staging as leaves. Many of these students commented in their interviews on the prerequisite of costumes for a show such as Mambo. The very idea of performing a leaf character without a costume was ludicrous for these subjects. However, I believe there may be an approach in which the production design emphasizes the absence of costumes and sets, and can therefore act as a learning tool that explores advanced theatrical conventions for opera singers.

The effect of production values on young singers is worthy of investigation, including if and how a group dynamic changes with the introduction of costumes and scenery. If the group dynamic changes, how will the change affect professional behavior and vocal technique? This study would be an extension of the Mambo case study since
the introduction of costumes and scenery proved to change the individual and group approaches of the singers involved. A new comparison of two groups of singers, one with full production values and without costumes and scenery, could provide enough substantive data in order to measure the importance of costumes and scenery in the learning environment as well as a tool for measuring the psychological effect of performing without costumes and scenery due specific reasons. Will singers feel differently performing without costumes and scenery due to budget constraints than they do if the production is a “concept” specifically excluding these production values? Since the more advanced singers are able to communicate without the costumes and scenery, is it possible to alter the perception of importance, and change the goals for students by featuring the advanced level production as an avant-garde performance piece all in black or all in white?

5.3.4 Rehearsal Processes

Producing Mambo in the middle of the semester before any of the Conservatory’s ensembles were ready to perform enabled me to monopolize the concert hall. The majority of the rehearsals took place in the performance space. I believe that rehearsing in the performance space is an important production component for young singers. Measuring the importance could have a substantial effect on rehearsal scheduling. If data is collected supporting my assumption that rehearsing in the performance hall can have a positive effect on singers’ performances, that data could inform rehearsal schedules.

A relevant finding from my interviews was the importance of rehearsals to technical improvement. Two subjects commented on learning through observing their
peers, while two additional subjects discussed the difficulty they had progressing during their private practice. Those two described their abilities to learn in the rehearsal arena even though their attempts to learn the same material in private practice sessions were unsuccessful. This presents an interesting problem I would like to investigate further.

How do we teach students to practice? Students who have studied instruments or physical activities which require hours of private practice (practicing hitting a ball in a batter’s box or shooting hoops for instance) have an awareness of methods for learning specific techniques in solitude. However, if a student waits until they’ve gone through puberty (as many voice students do) before entering the world of music as a serious pursuit, they may not have learned how to learn a physical skill in private. I feel that identifying these students and teaching them how to practice could alter their success rates in both their college and professional careers.

5.4 Concluding Thoughts

As I embarked on this case study, I combined three facets of my professional life in order to formally study one aspect of my most rewarding work: teaching voice. By writing the libretto, producing the opera, and directing *Mambo*, I immersed myself in the parameters in which I investigated my research question: Can vocal pedagogy be addressed from within a performance opportunity? The assumptions that led me to this question were derived from years of experience as a voice teacher, yet I had no tangible evidence to prove my theories before this project. The process of learning to sing involves the experience of singing. This inarguable factor leads to an exponential degree of importance placed on experience in vocal pedagogical discussions. Singers and singing teachers witness improvement during productions. However, observational descriptions
outside of case studies are not acceptable as scholarly evidence. On one hand, this presents a fundamental problem for performers pursuing doctorate degrees as it excludes the wealth of knowledge they have acquired through experience as evidence in their assumptions. On the other hand, it yields copious research projects in which to collect substantive data to support performers’ assumptions that have grown out of direct experience. I entered into this research project with experience-based assumptions which comprised passionate pedagogical beliefs. However, by following strict qualitative research protocol and by committing to the goal of collecting substantive data, I learned elements of pedagogy I had never considered. For instance, rehearsals may be the only tool select students have for learning how to practice. This is a significant finding and could develop into an important research project as I stated above in my suggestions for future research. Before the *Mambo* interviews, I did not consider children’s theater as a route to understanding the importance of communicating in foreign languages. During Ruby1’s interview, her description of this realization made complete sense, and will inform my future teaching. Examples such as these prove that experience-based assumptions are not blinders, but rather starting points for meaningful discoveries.

As a performer who literally grew up in an opera house, and who has spent more time on stage than in a classroom, I learned the value of qualitative research through the *Mambo* case study. The interviews with the fourteen young singers who did not grow up in theaters and who did not have the stage experience I was granted unveiled rich descriptions and insights into their thought processes, learning behaviors, and intended paths to career success. This study piqued my curiosity and I developed an appetite for investigating the “why” and the “how” for many related topics I had simply taken for
granted in the past. The case study approach has been an exciting journey for me. Observing from within a production has always been part of my pedagogical approach, however, I never had the opportunity, or took the opportunity, to investigate other participants’ feelings and thoughts about a production. Due to my experience with *Mambo*, I feel comfortable recommending the case study approach to other performers embarking upon research projects. Performance-based research provides a natural extension of vocal pedagogy and will inform my future research. It is my hope that the findings in this study will offer vocal pedagogues and future researchers substantive guidance in their pursuits.
APPENDIX A

Participant Consent Form
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title of Research Study: Solo Performance: An Extension of Vocal Pedagogy

Principal Investigator: Monica Harte, Doctoral Candidate

Faculty Advisor: Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, Chair, Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College

Introduction: You are being asked to participate in a research study because you were part of the Mambo Production, now the case study, and are working towards a degree or certificate in Music Education or Performance and your applied instrument is voice.

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to ascertain the function of learning and performing a role in general vocal pedagogy.

Procedures: If you volunteer to participate in this research study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Record portions of the production Mambo:
  - Record the roles you prepared and/or sang in the production last May.
  - The recording sessions will take place in Studio 312.
  - The recording sessions may be video taped for research records.

- Participate in interviews with Principal Investigator. Up to four private interviews will take place. These interviews may occur before or after the recordings, or at separate times between November 10 and December 20, 2015. The private interviews will take place in either Boylan Hall Room 1234 or Roosevelt Extension Room 201RE. The times are flexible. If necessary, the interviews may be conducted by phone.
  - Questions for the interviews will revolve around the rehearsal, performance and recording experiences and your feelings about the production in general.
  - Questions may include requests to describe your feelings regarding any vocal or performance development during the production/recording experience and what part of the experience you found most productive.
  - Questions may also ask for your opinions on ways in which to better facilitate a production or recording of a new work.

Time Commitment: Your participation in this research study is expected to last for a total of three or four interviews not to exceed one-hour, and two or three recording sessions not to exceed two hours, with possible longer recording sessions for group recordings. No group recording session will last more than two and one half hours.

Potential Risks or Discomforts: There are no risks to your health where this case study is concerned. If at any time you feel discomfort or emotional stress discussing other experiences with stage directors, musical directors, voice teachers, or other professionals in the operatic field, you may redirect the interview immediately.
**Potential Benefits:** The final edited recording will be available to you in the form of a CD for your public or private use and to aid in your career endeavors.

This research project will be used to identify better and more efficient procedures for creating performance opportunities for students studying voice at the tertiary level. In addition, this case study will identify vocal and performance skills that can be gained, if any, by performing roles at the tertiary level.

**Payment for Participation:** Each participant will be paid a total of $100 for participating in the case study, paid by the Principal Investigator from personal funds. The payment will be delivered after the final interview (there will be no more than four interviews).

**New Information:** You will be notified about any new information regarding this study that may affect your willingness to participate in a timely manner.

**Confidentiality:** Principal Investigator will make every effort to maintain confidentiality regarding any information that is collected during this research study, and that can identify you. Information will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

The Principal Investigator will protect your confidentiality by using code names in the descriptions of the process and interviews. The data collected will be stored on thumb drives and computers in locked offices: Boylan Hall 1234, Roosevelt Extension 201RE and the Control Room in Studio 312 as well as on the Principal Investigator’s personal computer stored in her home office. No one will have access to the personal data except the Principal Investigator, the Research Team. The musical recordings will be accessible to the *Mambo* Recording Engineer, (George Brunner).

The Research Team—the Principal Investigator (Monica Harte), her Dissertation Advisor (Stephanie Jensen-Moulton) and her First Reader (Penny Prince)—authorized CUNY staff, and government agencies that oversee this type of research may have access to research data and records in order to monitor the research. Research records provided to authorized, non-CUNY individuals will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

**Participants’ Rights:** Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your participation or non-participation in this study will in no way affect your grades, your academic standing with CUNY, or any other status in the College. You can decide to withdraw your consent and stop participating in the research at any time without any penalty. Early withdrawal will result in the forfeiture of any payment not yet delivered.

**Questions, Comments or Concerns:** If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, feel free to contact the Principal Investigator:

Monica Harte: mharte@gradcenter.cuny.edu or monica@monicaharte.com, cell: (917) 582-7327

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or you have comments or concerns that you would like to discuss with someone other than the researchers, please call the CUNY Research Compliance Administrator at 646-664-8918. Alternatively, you can write to:
Statement of Consent: “I have read the above description of this research and I understand it. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions that I may have will also be answered by the principal investigator of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study, and will allow a transcript to be made of all interviews to be included in the resulting document.”

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant _____________________________ Date

Individual Obtaining Consent

Printed Name of Individual Obtaining Consent

Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent _____________________________ Date

Principal Investigator

Printed Name of Individual Principal Investigator

Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent _____________________________ Date
APPENDIX B

Mambo: Original Book
Mambo

By: Jovanna Castagnola
Mambo

By: Jovanna Castagnoli
Not too long ago, close to the river Leaky-flo, was a small quaint town with the populants of Leafy-brown.
The people of this place did not have the typical fare. Many are donned with a hue of different shades of anything but blue.

You may start to contemplate why a town would have such a fate. It may be hard to believe, but this town is made of leaves.
In this town of Leafybrown,
All the leaves can walk around.
All must fall from a tree
in order for them to be free.
Each little leaf leads a life
and with any luck there is no strife...
until...
A little leaf fell to the wall, who was none other than Baby Mambo Leaf McFall. Mambo was the larger kind and others always seemed to mind.
Smaller leaves would stop and stare.
And most didn’t even seem to care.
Some would say “you’re too big!”
Others liked to call him “Mambo-Rig.”
Mambo. Rig!
Mambo had the biggest heart, always willing to do his part. He never found the might to tell the others it wasn't right.

Mambo tried to ignore this but still he found there was no bliss. He decided to pack his bags and move on out to the City of Flowertags.
On his way to the town made of flowers, he came across a leaf with great power. This little leaf was so unique that baby Mambo's curiosity was peaked.
Nice to meet you!
This little leaf was so tiny that most would assume he was very whiney, but in fact this little leaf happened to be a very great chief.

Baby Mambo stopped and asked him, just what his secret was to his passion and how the tiny leaf could be such a great chief.

The great chief gave a reply in a voice not so squeaky and high, "My friend Mambo, all my life as a leave, there have been times of great grief and although it caused me pain, I held my head up, knowing it was not in vain."
I began to learn that the respect I yearned was locked inside me and all I needed was the key.
The key is inside...
Mambo was very confused, for he thought he solved his issue, but he now understood that the answer was in front of him, right where he stood.
Mambo's face lit up with a smile that many could see from miles and miles. It did not matter if he was large or small. It just mattered what was inside them all.

Mambo thanked the little chief. He turned on his heels headed back to his leaves. He was eager to show his gratitude and more than ready for his new attitude.
As he walked through the town,
Some of the leaves began to come around.
As they all started in on names,
Mambo came quickly to his fame.

Friends, I am not a chief,
but simply a leaf.
We are all different shapes,
colors and sizes.
And we all walk around
without the aide of guises.
It shouldn’t matter to us all
if we are pink, purple, large or small.
It is only the inside that matters
or else our town will fall in tatters.
We all must recognize
that the beauty is on the inside.
All the leaves stored in arrangement Mambo had made such a great achievement. Each and every leaf had seen the light and quickly decided to honor Mambo for his might.

And ever since that day, not one leaf began to say a mean or hurtful thing to any of the town beings.
### APPENDIX C

**Production Budget**

#### Mambo Budget for March 15, 2015 production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study Staff</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musical &amp; Stage Director</td>
<td>Monica Harte</td>
<td>$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo Performers 16 singers @ $20</td>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>$320.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording &amp; Interviews: 14 @ $100</td>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>$1,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,720.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production Staff</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costume Design &amp; Building</td>
<td>Dan Bøhler</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Manager</td>
<td>Pricila Castillo</td>
<td>$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair/Make-up Design</td>
<td>Monica Harte</td>
<td>$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Manager</td>
<td>Keith Raysor</td>
<td>$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set design/creation</td>
<td>Monica Harte</td>
<td>$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Design</td>
<td>George Brunner</td>
<td>$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Production Costs</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costume Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparkle Vinyl: 25 costumes</td>
<td>3 yards per @ $15/yd.</td>
<td>$1,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under Leaf tights/shirts: 17 @ 2 @ $8</td>
<td>Brown - Men’s &amp; Women’s</td>
<td>$272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slipper socks</td>
<td>2 cases @ $50</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set Materials Purchased</td>
<td></td>
<td>$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken wire</td>
<td>Tree trunk</td>
<td>$30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bark fabric</td>
<td>Tree trunk</td>
<td>$45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 step ladder</td>
<td>Tree trunk</td>
<td>$22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&quot; tubing and couplings</td>
<td>Tree tops</td>
<td>$65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing: programs, posters</td>
<td>Ink cartridges + paper</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,759</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Total Production Costs**                    |                   | $5,479|
APPENDIX D

Performance Contract

Monica Harte

This agreement is made this day of ________________, between the Monica Harte and ("Artist").

The parties to this Agreement, each intending to be legally bound, mutually agree as follows:

a. **Performance**  Monica Harte has scheduled a production of Mambo, the children’s opera with music by John Cleary to be performed as part of her dissertation research in English at the place and times stated below:

   Place: Roosevelt Extension, Room 312, Brooklyn College Campus

   Dates and Times:  Sunday March 15, 2015 2:00 pm
                   Sunday March 15, 2015 4:00 pm

b. **Engagement**  Artist agrees to the role(s) of ________________________ in the performances of *Mambo* on the date and times stated above and to render such additional services as are customarily rendered by Artists in the music industry. Artist agrees to have learned and prepared his/her featured role(s) by the date of the first rehearsal. Artist also agrees to perform his/her featured role(s) in both performances should illness prevent the double cast artist from performing.

c. **Rehearsals**  The Artist agrees to attend all required rehearsals as scheduled by Monica, which includes all musical and staging rehearsals. Artist agrees to arrive at least ten (5) minutes prior to all scheduled rehearsals and at least one (1) hour prior to all scheduled performances. The rehearsal period will be from March 1 through May 14, 2015.

d. **Recordings**  All audio and video recordings of the performances will be available to artists.

e. **Performance Clothing**  The Artist agrees to supply his/her own shoes and underclothing appropriate for a performance.

f. **Compensation**  In full consideration of and appreciation for the Agreement above Monica Harte agrees to pay a small honorarium to Artist of **$20.00** following the last performance on March 15, 2015.
The Artist shall return to Monica Harte:

**One signed original** of this Agreement, and agrees by signing, that Artist has kept a signed copy for him/herself.

Agreed and accepted by:

**ARTIST**

---

**Print Name**

---

**Signature**

---

**Address**

---

**City/State/Zip**

---

**E-mail**

---

**Mobile Phone**

---

**Date**

---

**DMA CANDIDATE**

---

**Print Name**

---

**Signature**

---

**Date**

---

2/23/2015
APPENDIX E

Observational Protocol Forms
### Observational Protocol 1

#### First Rehearsal – 1:00pm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Room 208 – general excitement.**  
Approximately 1:15 before everyone arrived (only ten of fourteen made it).  
208 where sound and stage setup – began ensemble rehearsal 1:25. Ran opening and ending.  
Mambo1, Mambo2, Mom1, Hillary2 solid with ensemble words and music. | • Everyone listened intently to opening comments and explanation of rehearsal process  
• Surprised sound and stage were set up and ready  
• Confusion as to whether they should bring chairs  
• Several seemed concerned they would “make a mistake” or do something wrong. Very hesitant to move without invitation to move.  
• Excuses to pre-empt any poor singing. They all appear to feel they need to prove to me and to their peers they should have the job.  
• They seem surprised I taught them ensembles line by line with no derogatory comments about their lack of preparation. |
| 2:10 I will go ensemble – Ran with both Mambos. | • Singers seemed to have fun with this “Romberg” style aria/ensemble.  
• Mambo1 concerned didn’t know it well enough, but good-natured.  
• Mambo2 very serious. |
| Opening and ending ensembles-assigned and rehearsed harmonies extensively.  
I sang with them to help.  
Worked each solo line in Leafy Brown, ensuring costume changes would work with timing. | • Everyone went for melody.  
• All Subjects nervous about solo lines  
• Noticed surprise I was already contemplating costume changes. |
### Observational Protocol 1

**Bully Song & Dialog 2:40-3:30**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled for 2:30 – began 2:40</td>
<td>• Singers had a lot of fun with this!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsed musically (difficult rhythms) for 20 minutes – then staged</td>
<td>• Some shocked at how mean bullies lines are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Really let go of inhibitions for these characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Some were concerned about rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enjoyed staging right away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Appeared confident with instant success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fandango very agitated about rhythm, relaxed with positive input.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Observational Protocol 1

**Sassy & Sassettes 3:30-4:30**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal began 3:30</td>
<td>• Singers had fun with this too, Sassy1, Mom1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explained model: Bugs Bunny in What’s Opera Doc – cartoon silly-sexy OK</td>
<td>• Laughed at bluesy quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musically easy – staged right away</td>
<td>• Sassy1, movement difficult – no dance- great singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sassy’s and 2 Sassettes (Sassy1 is Sassette when not Sassy and Sassy2 is Sassette when not Sassy)</td>
<td>• Choreographed walk, arms, hands – singers very awkward – no dancers and no experience moving in character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sassettes related better when I mentioned dancing to bluesy rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Everyone said they would “work on it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tried to keep everyone laughing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mom1 much more operatic in her approach – very nice. Also moves better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Notes</td>
<td>Reflective Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 began on time</td>
<td>• Fandango and Bobbie2 very concerned about not knowing music well enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsed musically (difficult rhythms) for 20 minutes</td>
<td>• Hillary2 a Figlette – knew all music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– then staged</td>
<td>• All Subjects inexperienced staging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praised everyone’s work</td>
<td>• Staged rhythmically to help guide musically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mood lightened with staging and positive input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Everyone loved Fandango character and concept behind scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Everyone left happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fandango assured me music would be learned by next rehearsal. Assured Fandango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not concerned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rehearsal 3-2-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol 2</th>
<th>Mambo1 and 13 2:00-5:00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflective Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio 312 where we will perform</td>
<td>• Mambos excited to be there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No composer in room, just myself and two singers</td>
<td>• Mambos seem nervous about staging and holding scores at beginning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocking rehearsal</td>
<td>• Mambo1 confident enough to request help from the start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo1 cheerful and requested help right away</td>
<td>• Mambo2 seems very eager to please and almost nervous I may not be happy. She seems afraid to make mistakes. I think her approach is too serious and she will have more fun when she gets used to the presentational style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 listed her stage experience before starting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternated staging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialog run – I read other parts</td>
<td>• Mambo1 diction great, but syllable/emphasis needs coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mambo2 reads well, needed more declamatory but otherwise great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>• Mambo1 moves awkwardly – but fun, bouncy approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mambo2 dances so we worked on more cartoon approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>• Both Mambos sound great. Both nervous I wouldn’t think so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo1 caveat “tired”</td>
<td>• Both sound great! Both will be great! My demeanor and willingness to change words and notes seemed to make them relax. They will begin to trust my approach once they work with me more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 caveat “been sick”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo’s requested word and note changes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rehearsal 3-3-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol 3</th>
<th>4:00 to 8:00 Studio 312</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflective Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 Dialog Mambo1, Mambo2, Mom2, Mom1, Bobbie2 Began with staging</td>
<td>Mambo2, Mom2 jumped up to begin. They may be a good pair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:20 Mom-Mambo Aria/Duet Advanced Singers</td>
<td>Bobbie2 (Magnolia) needs most stagecraft guidance, very nervous and talkative. We will work privately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mambo1, Mom1 second run of dialog – quick and easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mambo1 &amp; Mom1 stayed up for aria duet staging- nice working relationship, calm, easy to work with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mambo2 &amp; 1 followed. Mom1 very professional. Mambo2 nervous about singing but staged well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All singers sound great!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:45 Boxing Rap Sammi1 didn’t show, Bobbie2 there for Bobbie Gave Mambo 1 &amp; 2 a break – worked alone with Bobbie2</td>
<td>Bobbie2 needs a lot of time – took hour with Bobbie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choreographed very specific moves, practiced slowly then faster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mambo2 showed frustration with Bobbie2’s inexperience. I lightened the mood by stepping into the part while Mambo2 was on stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45 Sammi Samba Dialogue in rhythm Then solo/duet Sammi1 called, emergency car trouble, Ruby1 (also Sammi) showed Staged with Mambo2, Mambo1 &amp; Ruby1 Ruby1 caveat “not in good voice”</td>
<td>I know Sammi1 and hope this does not become a habit. Was very disappointing to Mambos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruby1 (the other Sammi) was happy to have the extra rehearsal however.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruby1 very easy to work with, but very awkward on stage – I believe she’s shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mambo2 and Ruby1 seem to have connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mambo1 took longer to stage, more specific dance steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Much laughing by end of staging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruby1 singing very well – just nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:45 Dialogue Aria Advanced singers Chief caveat “need to warm up”</td>
<td>Mambo1 and 13 both run dialog with Chief easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All very professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief great with comedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief and Mambo1 great rapport – very comic and they get irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief and Mambo2, good rapport – scene easily staged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief very concerned with high notes but sounds great. He wants to add high G which I approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:15 Chief Leaf Dialog &amp; Aria Advanced singers</td>
<td>Chief discovers stage persona is puppet and singing will be off stage into mic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Much laughter watching puppet as operatic singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All become very laid back, comfortable, singing well, they all love this particular music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music, laughter seem to affect confidence and behavior in positive way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rehearsal 3-6-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5:00 Hillary</strong></td>
<td>• Hillary2 very little experience but knows music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo1, Mambo2, Hillary1, Hillary2 present</td>
<td>• Hillary2 easy to stage but errors in stagecraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 &amp; Hillary2 begin. Hillary2 taps Mambo2 too hard – not well-received</td>
<td>• Mambo2 very frustrated and not responding well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 unaware of staging protocol. Addressed all singers (so as not to single her out) to focus on their own staging and refrain from instructing their peers. I promised I would address all the issues and if I miss something, please come to me privately.</td>
<td>• Hillary1 did not know music but tremendous stage experience. Fierce on stage!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I am concerned about Hillary2’s reaction to Mambo2’s frustration. Hillary2 young and inexperienced. Put lot of extra time into Hillary2 for confidence. Paired Hillary2 with Mambo1 for confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mambo2 better with Hillary1. Will try put together in performance, definitely stage together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hillary1 and Hillary2 professional in demeanor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **6:00 Ruby-Mambo** | • Mambo2 less combative, may be better without other singers in room |
| Mambo2, Ruby1 (Ruby2 absent and Mambo1 left) | • Ruby1 very sweet, easy to work with, does not know music yet but a pleasure to be around. The more positive I was, the better she sounded and the more secure she was with the words |
| Sing through first – both sound great | |
| Staged – Ruby1 not great on stage, but good rapport with Mambo2 | |
Rehearsal 3-7-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol 5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4th Floor 400C 3:00-5:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Studio 312 5:00-7:00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3:00  | Sammi 1 gave performance of second role, Bobbie, to High School Intern. Mambo absent, I stood in for Mambo | - Sammi1 able to concentrate on Sammi and did well. Knew music and words, very funny and very good on stage  
- Sammi was fun to work with and has great stagecraft skills. Easy to anticipate. Went very smoothly  
- Sammi1 and I laughed a lot, had a good time |
| 3:15  | Elmer                                                                                                    | - Elmer complete pro on stage and off  
- Read dialogue like Shakespeare.  
- Got it – aged voice and understood premise  
- Very little time to devote – we discussed staging that would allow words… holding hat with dialogue inside due to his scheduling demands |
| 4:15  | Bobbie                                                                                                   | - Bobbie2 better, complete private time. Appeared to be very appreciative! Worked very hard!  
- Bobbie2 never did a solo before – “always in the back of the chorus” |
| 5:00  | Solos                                                                                                     | - Mambo1 – worked detail with Mambo Solos  
- Easy to work with, cheerful, funny, open, gives 100% |
| 6:00  | Fandango                                                                                                 | - Fandango seemed to love the cart idea. The two Figlettes were having fun as well  
- By end of rehearsal, everyone happy and laughing  
- At end of rehearsal, everyone wanted to stay and do it again. They really love this scene now. |
| 7:30  | Ruby & Mambo                                                                                              | - Ruby2 mentioned worried about singing, but open about concerns – no excuses  
- Mambo2 has good rapport with Ruby2. Will try to pair for performances. Both of them responded to positive input in this rehearsal. They developed a really nice relationship on stage. |

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**Observational Protocol 6**

**Studio 312 5:00**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:00 Review Solos Mambos Mambo1 come with very specific questions and requests. Addressed them all. Mambo2 still concerned with high notes but is not taking lower options. Mambo1 just sings and sounds great. He’s a natural with a beautiful voice and easy personality.</td>
<td>• Cheerful and comfortable, music pretty solid • Mambo1 needs work dialog but having a lot of fun. • Mambo2 sounds great and I feel as though her concerns about notes are really requests for positive input, which of course I gave her. She sounds wonderful. • Reminds me of Puffer’s line: You can’t take the personality out of a person’s singing. Mambo1 is a joy to work with and a joy to listen to. Even when the staging is wrong, he’s a joy to watch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 Costume Call Excitement all around Everyone ran to find their costume even before we called for them Dan took notes for necessary adjustments Also, set on stage – not done</td>
<td>• Incredible amount of excitement. This was definitely the highpoint of the production thus far. • The mood is so positive. The hats are not done, but Mambo1 put his on and ran around with it. Everybody was laughing. The costumes brought the silliness of the characters to light. • Excited about standing in the trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 scheduled but started 3:40 due to costumes Final Scene needs musical Reviewed opening and staged final scene Tried to choreograph, but not enough experience on part of singers as an ensemble. Reduced staging to a bounce in rhythm. Composer late with music to final scene. Finally got harmonies at this rehearsal.</td>
<td>• Review took extra time so final scene very simple • No guarantees for bounding together. They will need serious training in movement to follow simple choreography. Not enough time spent on stage. • As ensemble, most failed to learn music even though very simple and short: less than 4 minutes. They have had since Feb 22nd. This is problematic as I have gone through every line with them a number of times. It is a question of not practicing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rehearsal 3-8-15 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Ran show twice for all singers | - Mambo1 was fantastic  
- Hillary2 still intimidated by Hillary1, but Hillary1 very supportive and friendly  
- Both Hillary2 & Hillary1 received big responses from cast. Both better coloratura. Big improvements!  
- Bobbie2 better, much improvement with rhythm, staging, and presentation  
- Mambo2 better with children’s theater presentation and inflection  
- Sammi1 very funny, good job, costume made difference. Better in lower middle  
- Ruby2 very cute, high notes much better. Wonder if costume makes her less self conscious affecting breathing positively  
- Chief very funny as Bruno and high G sounding great in Chief, got big response from casts  
- Mom1 intimidated by Mom2, but very professional and sounds beautiful, high note beautiful and Sassy (other part) much smoother register shifts. Also moves better with costume. Negotiates Mom’s and Sassy’s costumes very well.  
- Mom2 sang beautifully. Surprised she had trouble with costume. Took practice but very good-natured. Played with dynamics in aria. Singing on stepladder seemed to be issue.  
- Ruby1 much more confident, singing much better – projection and dialog stronger, movement still weak but better.  
- Elmer there first time – big response from cast and Elmer worked puppet for Chief. Entire company responds to Elmer. I would love to work with this performer again.  
- Sassy1 good singing, nice mix in rehearsal, hope she can sustain this instead of pure chest all the time. High notes better and staging & choreography better. Costume makes her more confident, but not smoother on stage. Appeared to be very proud of herself in a very endearing way.  
- Fandango seemed to be having a great time, really into character and sang better than ever. Also better stage presence. More depth in sound than I have ever heard from him. Character or costume or concentrated practice have made a difference… or all of the above |
Rehearsal 3-9-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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</table>
| **5:00 Cast 1**   | • Mom1 pianissimo high Bb – first time  
| Scheduling snafu – no large rooms available. Using gym on 4th floor by practice rooms (empty). Some showing shyness at being in open space.  
| Mom1 “Is Sammi1 coming to rehearsal?"  
| Sammi1 absent – I knew 10 minutes advance  
| Ruby2 absent – I knew 2 days advance  
| Elmer absent – I knew well in advance and Chief read part – professional and well done | • Appear to take my lead – playing accompaniment tracks and singing parts as if we were in theater  
| • Fandango huge improvement vocally, coloratura clean, depth in sound  
| • Mom1 huge improvement, sang both runs beautifully, no high note issues and diction clearer  
| • Mambo2 seems calmer in this space – possibly less threatened, maybe distracted. Good effect on performance. Movement less awkward and sounds freer.  
| • Subjects showing frustration with those that are late or absent – making comments. I believe they are committed and frustration comes from desire to produce a professional show. |
| **6:30 Cast2**    | • Mambo1 great job! Knows show and now playing with line readings and musical choices  
| Mom2 came late, but we waited  
| Adjusted rehearsal and kept everything moving  
| Hillary1 “Wow, most directors would be screaming by now” regarding late and absent singers  
| **IMPORTANT** | • Most Subjects began to jump in for anyone not there, sometimes 2 at a time.  
| • Finally achieving a positive “ensemble” atmosphere  
| • Noticing people who did were not previously acquainted chatting and socializing when not on stage (undergrads-grads, music ed. performance majors). Good camaraderie  
| • Always positive whether singers there or not. Singers not used to flexibility and keeping the rehearsal going. Clearly never worked union.  
| • Beginning to look like a show |
Rehearsal 3-11-15

### Observational Protocol 8

Studio 312 (originally 400-C but Studio 312 became available)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5:00 Cast 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Subjects wearing costumes</td>
<td>Bobbie2 Huge improvement in rhythm and staging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some holdups while they figure out costume changes.</td>
<td>Mambo1 ready for performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary2 wanted video of her performance to study and make changes.</td>
<td>Hillary2 great job, but not happy after seeing Hillary1 in role. I suggested she work in front of a mirror instead of video. Reiterated “great job”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hillary1 coloratura very clean. High notes in ensemble beautiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fandango very funny, clear patter, depth in voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief added high note - beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sammi1 great job, funny and sounds strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singers applauding each other and giving positive reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6:30 Cast2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Actual start time 7:00 due to costumes</td>
<td>Mambo2 much better. Sounds great, better high notes and diction, more animated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruby2 very good job. Not flat, good high notes. Solid even though absent before. Ruby2 &amp; Mambo2 good rapport.</td>
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<td>Elmer great job – complete professional and memorized, no need for hat with words</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mom2 beautiful and great with staging, better movement with costume and I like musical choices. More honest and diction clearer.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fandango outstanding, still depth. Coloratura accurate and clean. Good high F</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Singers applauding each other and giving positive reactions</td>
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## Rehearsal 3-13-15

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<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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</table>
| **7:00 Cast 1**   | • Every singer has improved either vocally or musically (rhythmically), and presentation universally better. Connections between acting and singing or performing (Bobbie – no singing).  
                          • Dialogues smooth and clear. |
| Ran show in 40 minutes.  
All singers on time (6:30)  
Great Run | |
| **8:00 Cast2**    | • Took 20 minutes to rehearse final ensemble  
                          • Singers much improved. All high notes sound good, coloratura clean, no obvious register issues, breath support seems to be one with staging, dancing better…  
                          • Nice show |
| Started with final ensemble rehearsal  
Ran show in 40 minutes  
Great Run | |
### Rehearsal 3-14-15

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<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol 10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio 312</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00 Call</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 Cast 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Began with ensemble rehearsal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costume and prop check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ran show in 40 minutes</td>
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</table>

| 7:00 Cast 2               | • Best run for this cast                                  |
| Ran show in 40 minutes    | • Singers excited!                                       |
| Mom2, Mambo2, Ruby1, Bobbie2, Chief, Sassy1 asked if they sound OK… | • Performance nerves                                    |
|                           | • All singers better in every way. Smooth dialog, high    |
|                           | notes sound good, coloratura clean, register shifts      |
|                           | smooth, diction great                                    |
Rehearsal 3-15-15 Performances

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol 11</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Studio 312</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:00pm cast</td>
<td>• Cast excited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big audience</td>
<td>• Sammi1 has stage experience and I cannot figure out why she was not more professional. She left character before she left stage. This is tough for me! Don’t ignore your audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief’s high note not great</td>
<td>• Chief sounded good but high note not great. BC Opera Director in audience and commented on it – did not try high note in 4:00pm show. Disappointing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammi1 made mistake and broadcast it to audience</td>
<td>• Between shows, reminded singers the audience does not know the show, mistakes do not matter. Live performance have fun in second show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience reactions very big and positive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kids loved Hillary Hickory and told Mambo where she is</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4:00pm cast</td>
<td>• Great Run after tech difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Smaller Audience only 2 kids</td>
<td>• Singers nervous at first but really got past it and did great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical issues at start – made joke of it to audience and they laughed. Restarted.</td>
<td>• Everyone did well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00pm Reception</td>
<td>• Hillary2 still felt not good enough. Could not change her opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I put together reception for casts</td>
<td>• Everyone appeared to feel very professional and pleased with performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They turned in costumes and signed for their checks per the contract</td>
<td>• Many rehearsal stories involved choreography. Fandango, Bobbie2, Ruby1, Sammi1, Sassy1 all relived specific choreography moments in the rehearsal process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some audience members there laughing and talking to them</td>
<td>• Ruby1 and Ruby2 discussed how much they loved playing particular characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo1, Mambo2, Mom2, Mom1, Fandango, Hillary1, Ruby2, Sammi1, Bobbie2, Elmer, Chief, Ruby1, Sassy1 relived moments in rehearsals. Hillary2 left to study for exam.</td>
<td>• Much laughter and hugging. Seems they don’t want to leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom1 discussed vocalism with Chief and high notes in the show.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All thanked me for the opportunity Hillary1, Ruby1 and 2, Bobbie2, Sassy1 asked if we could do it again.</td>
<td></td>
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Rehearsal 11-8-15

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol Form for Recording Session 11-8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio 312</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bruno and Chief 4:00 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Descriptive Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief very excited to record.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmed up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practiced high G several times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounded great. He listened to the recordings very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remained to talk afterwards.</td>
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<td></td>
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Rehearsal 11-10-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol Form for Recording Session 11-10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Studio 312</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4:30 Ruby1 as Sammi</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby1 was extremely comfortable with the recording, but did pace quite a bit. She exhibited more energy than the performance. She appeared to be having a lot of fun and took the experience very seriously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflective Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her actions were interesting. I believe she was pacing in order to stay loose and free vocally. She was very focused and prepared.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Studio 312**                                          |
| **5:00 Mom1 and Mambo2 Mom Mambo duet**                 |
| **Descriptive Notes**                                   |
| Mom1 not warmed up. She had trouble with the high note, but didn’t seem to mind. Mambo2 concerned about her cold. These two did not work together in the performance. |
| **Reflective Notes**                                    |
| Mom1 very relaxed. Did not sound great, but seemed comfortable with her performance. I don’t know if Mambo2 was really sick or if she was just nervous. But she did sound beautiful. Very professional with one another. |

| **Studio 312**                                          |
| **9:00 Mambo1 and Ruby2 Duet**                          |
| **Descriptive Notes**                                   |
| Mambo1 and Ruby2 made a perfect pair as Ruby and Mambo. They had an immediate connection even though they did not work together in the performances. They watched other during the recording in order to follow each other. Funny moment with dialogue as Mambo1 misspoke and said Ruby was not cute. We all laughed hysterically. |
| **Reflective Notes**                                    |
| Mom1 very relaxed. Did not sound great, but seemed comfortable with her performance. I don’t know if Mambo2 was really sick or if she was just nervous. But she did sound beautiful. I think Ruby2 actually felt bad for a moment, but then genuinely laughed. They recorded well together. When they listened to the recording they both expressed contentment with the results. |

| **Studio 312**                                          |
| **9:30 Mambo1 and Mom2 Mom-Mambo duet**                 |
| **Descriptive Notes**                                   |
| Mambo1 and Mom2 also worked beautifully together. Mambo1 watched Mom2 and looked thrilled to be singing with her. The recording was great! |
| **Reflective Notes**                                    |
| I believe Mambo1 is very empathetic and as long as he knows his part, he can work easily with anyone who also knows his or her part. They were both calm and professional. |
Rehearsal 11-11-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol Form for Recording Session 11-11</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Studio 312</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 Bobbie2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobbie2 had been sick and still felt the remnants. She was concerned even though she did not have to sing. She said she could not concentrate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflective Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe she did not go over the part and was covering for not practicing. But she did well once I stood in for Mambo. She held on to the rhythm, which is a big break through.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Studio 312**                                          |
| 7:30 Hillary1                                            |
| **Descriptive Notes**                                   |
| Hillary1 arrived said she was very nervous. She sang through it then we did a second take just to make sure we had a good take. |
| **Reflective Notes**                                    |
| I believe she was still nervous about the coloratura. I find it interesting that she didn’t practice, even though she was nervous about the coloratura. The coloratura wasn’t as clean as in the performance, but the singing was better. |

| **Studio 312**                                          |
| 8:00 Hillory2 as Hillory2                              |
| **Descriptive Notes**                                   |
| Hillory2 arrived completely prepared. She sang well and the coloratura was perfect. |
| **Reflective Notes**                                    |
| I believe Hillory2 made huge strides in her singing. It was much freer and bigger than in the performances. She seemed very happy with her recording. |

| **Studio 312**                                          |
| 8:30 Fandango and Hillory2 Fandango                    |
| **Descriptive Notes**                                   |
| Bobbie2 said she was too sick to sing the Fandango scene so I suggested she go home and rest. Hillory2 arrived prepared to sing both the melody and the harmony for the Figlettes, which she did. Fandango arrived unprepared, but with a few takes, was singing it very well. He sounded good and high F was better. |
| **Reflective Notes**                                    |
| It appeared Bobbie2 was not as sick as she said. I think she did not practice. Hillory2, on the other hand, arrived prepared to sing both parts and was completely professional. She sounds better and has grown as a performer since March. Fandango is a bit lazy. He simply doesn’t practice. So he did not grow as a professional, but he did grow as a singer. He sang it as well, without practice, as he sang it in performance. |
Rehearsal 11-15-15

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<th>Observational Protocol Form for Recording Session 11-15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio 312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 Elmer as Elmer Hawthorne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elmer is a pro. He came in ready to work. His part did not include singing, but he was just as concerned with the rhythm and flow of the lines as the singers were.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio 312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 Sammi as Bobbie and Sammi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammi1 was very nervous to record. She sounded great! And she recorded Bobbie (the character she did not actually perform on the 15th). After recording Sammi in one take, she was excited to record Bobbie. The engineer commented on how well she did.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Rehearsal 11-17-15

#### Observational Protocol Form for Recording Session 11-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio 312</th>
<th>4:00 to 5:30 Sassy1 and Mom1 as Sassy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflective Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassy1 and Mom1 both recorded Sassy. Mom1 went first. She sounded great and the style was outstanding. She was calm and just stood in front of the mic and sang.</td>
<td>Sassy1 does not plan her singing yet. She needs to learn to take time and decide what she wants to do. But her singing has improved. When she went back for the second take, she used a mix and it sounded better than the performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom1 was nervous, and resorted to pure chest for the first half of the number. It didn’t really work so she revised it for the second take and used more mix. The two were still very supportive of each other and used each other’s presence for strength and confidence.</td>
<td>I think Mom1 has an extraordinarily beautiful voice. I get the feeling she has been looked over, but I believe this experience gave her confidence that she is worthy of leading roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The two recorded the Sassettes together after their solos. They each performed a Sassette when the other was Sassy.</td>
<td>They had fun singing it together, which they never got to do in performance. These two developed an amazing collaborative friendship. They were playing with it and they both sounded amazing.</td>
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#### Studio 312

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9:00-10:30 Ensembles and Bullies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The singers in Opera Workshop arrived around 9:00 p.m. after class. We recorded the Bullies first. They laughed and giggled and put a lot more energy into it than they did even for the performances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ensembles began a little shaky. Some of them had looked at the ensembles, and some clearly had not. We rehearsed for twenty minutes, and then we took the harmony out of the final ensemble. Finally they got it and we recorded. The first two ensembles were great! The final ensemble was acceptable.</td>
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</table>
Rehearsal 11-18-15

Observational Protocol Form for Recording Session 11-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio 312</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:30 Mambo2 and Ruby1 as Mambo and Ruby</td>
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<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 announced she is still sick. Ruby1 seemed happy to be there and very energetic.</td>
<td>I believe Mambo2 really was sick. She was disappointed in her singing although she sang very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 and Ruby1 sounded good together. Ruby1 watched Mambo2 to ensure she was following her. We rehearsed a few things that Mambo2 did differently than Mambo1 and they recorded well together. They were both prepared and knew their music.</td>
<td>Ruby1 has come out of her shell. She is more confident than I have seen her. She really approached the recording as a professional, as if she had done it many times before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both singers sounded wonderful and Ruby1 made tremendous improvement since March. She commented on how much easier it was.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Studio 312</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30 Mambo solos and solo dialogue</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 was not happy with any of her recordings. I told her she could come back the next night and record before or after Mambo1 does his recordings.</td>
<td>I believe Mambo2 has not recorded much and is distressed by the sound of her voice. I think tomorrow will be better. She will be more used to it. I think she sounds better than in the performance.</td>
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Rehearsal 11-19-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Protocol Form for Recording Session 11-19</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio 312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 Mambo1 Mambo solo and dialog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 came early to hear Mambo1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo1 had no problems recording. He was tired, but new the material and sang beautifully. He was also thrilled to record and hear his improvement.</td>
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<th>Studio 312</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 9:15 Mambo solos and solo dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambo2 redid a few of the solo parts. Again, she sounded beautiful. She is a good singer. She seemed to feel a little better about tonight’s recording.</td>
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APPENDIX F
Complete Interviews

Hillary2

Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

HILLARY2. From you in the Opera Theater Class. That was the first time hearing about it and I wasn’t sure what you were talking about. But you officially announced it.

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

HILLARY2. It was a really good opportunity I think. For me it was really a wonderful experience. I wanted to be in something and that’s why I did it. I thought it was really great that I’m doing something new that’s by a student and I'm participating.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals and how did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsal process?

HILLARY2. There were a lot of people and I think it went pretty well. It was much better than the opera we were doing. I think it was really organized.

INTERVIEWER. Can you compare how you felt in first staging rehearsal to those in final rehearsals?

HILLARY2. I was less confident. In the beginning, I was totally confident, and then in the end I had more doubts. The other Hillary, I think she did so great, so I just kept comparing myself with her.

INTERVIEWER. I thought you were hilarious. You did not think you were doing a good job?

HILLARY2. I was doing my best but I was a little less confident with what I was doing.

INTERVIEWER. That’s interesting because everybody thought you were fantastic.

HILLARY2. Really?

INTERVIEWER. In fact, everybody told me you were perfect for the part.
HILLARY2. Oh [smiled].

INTERVIEWER. You had a small audience, and your audience was not as active as the first audience. The first audience had several children.

HILLARY2. Yes, but just my feeling. Not after the performance, but before the performance.

INTERVIEWER. I did not realize it because I thought you were doing such a great job.

HILLARY2. That’s good.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances and how did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

HILLARY2. The same.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why?

HILLARY2. I mean, it was a huge cast. So everybody has to wait for each other. And that’s understandable. But the rehearsal was pretty well organized I think. .

INTERVIEWER. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

HILLARY2. The costume was not professional that I had. But it was cute. But the hat wasn’t finished and I think it could have been ready. I felt bad that he didn’t finish the hats.

INTERVIEWER. How did it inform your feelings about your character? Did it help, or make it harder?

HILLARY2. It was a little harder to move around, but you’re engaged in the costumes, so it helped with the part.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot. How did you feel your character fit into the show?

HILLARY2. [Shrugged-did not understand.]

INTERVIEWER. For instance, this character was important to move the plot forward, or this character was fun and was more like a break in the show?
HILLARY2. Fandango surely moved Mambo. And we kind of irritated him and probably changed some feelings inside him. But Hillary I think only freaked him out. And I think he figured out that there are a lot of strange people in the world.

INTERVIEWER. Did that have any effect on how you performed it? Was one character easier or harder to sing because of the character’s position in the show?

HILLARY2. For Fandango, I thought that it was kind of a crucial moment for Mambo. So I knew exactly what I had to do. But Hillary was kind of out of place for me. I mean the character was out of place. I didn’t know how I should conceive her.

INTERVIEWER. Oh, OK. That is my fault. As the director, I should have made that clearer to you. But I want you to know that even though you were very different than the other Hillary, you were equally funny. You were very cute.

HILLARY2. Thanks [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?

HILLARY2. I mean it was already in me actually, because we rehearsed a lot and I practiced. So when I looked at the score, there wasn’t much I had to do over again. But, it became much more comfortable. Before I had to think about the notes and everything, but now it was still in me and I reviewed it. But there were parts that weren’t perfect. Parts I didn’t review enough.

INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

HILLARY2. There were a lot of words and the pace was really fast. For some reason when I practiced it, I felt difficulty singing it. But when I got to the actual stage, I forgot about it and it came out. So that was really interesting.

INTERVIEWER. Did you find that there were opportunities during rehearsals to actually practice some of the difficult parts vocally? Were you able to change your approaches vocally when we repeated sections of the staging?

HILLARY2. Yes, and we actually did change some words so I could sing it easier. I think we changed notes as well.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances?

HILLARY2. Yes. Yes rehearsals and performances.
INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

HILLARY2. People showing up late, but that’s an every day problem. I wished some people could be more prepared so the rehearsals could proceed better. There were people who weren’t ready.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

HILLARY2. During the collaboration between Fandango and the Figlettes, that was really the moment that I felt fulfilled.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

HILLARY2. So, when I practiced I had lots of worries and nerves about everything. But during the rehearsals I was too busy doing acting, and moving around the stage as well. So I kind of just released everything and that kind of helped. Like with coloratura. When I sang it slowly I could get all the notes, but when I would try to speed it up it was not working and I was getting more scared to sing in rehearsal. But then when we were staging, I just sort of sang it and noticed I was doing a better job. So in performance I felt like I could do it if I concentrated on the acting, which was true.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances?

HILLARY2. Hillary was the first role I ever sang by myself on the stage, in front of people.

INTERVIEWER. Really? I didn’t know that. Good for you!

HILLARY2. And the rehearsal too. That was my first time.

INTERVIEWER. After you did that, did you feel you had more confidence? Or do you think it would affect your next role?

HILLARY2. Yes, I would be a little more confident to sing another role by myself.

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.
HILLARY2. “Oh my God that was such a long time ago [acting amazed].”

INTERVIEWER. So how would you describe that? Nervous? Surprise?

HILLARY2. I knew there was going to be a recording. But I wasn’t too worried about it because the piece was not difficult. And I had time to prepare for it.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to the actual process?

HILLARY2. When I prepared it, I did not use my full, best effort. But during the actual recording it came out [laughs]. There were spots I missed. But it went really quickly.

INTERVIEWER. And did you feel good about that?

HILLARY2. Yes, but still I could do better.

INTERVIEWER. Hopefully we can always improve. I do hope you allow yourself to feel good sometimes even if you think it isn’t perfect.

HILLARY2. Yes I felt good. I enjoyed it. It was really fun. But still there were feelings that [laughs] I could do better. But I felt good.

INTERVIEWER. [Laughing] OK. What were your expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel the music would come back easily?

HILLARY2. “Oh my gosh, it’s going to be like starting over.” But as I said earlier, the music was already in me.

INTERVIEWER. So you weren’t worried about that?

HILLARY2. Not too much, but the accompaniment kind of sounded a little awkward. Not awkward but a little unsettling.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had enough time in the recording session to feel comfortable?

HILLARY2. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved?

HILLARY2. It was really great. Not much really.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it and how?
HILLARY2. Yes of course [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. How? Were they easier? Was it different?

HILLARY2. On the stage, I could make more mistakes

INTERVIEWER. Oh, I see.

HILLARY2. But the recording had to be perfect right?

INTERVIEWER. Well, except we could do multiple takes.

HILLARY2. Yes, so that made me more kind of aware when we did recording. On the stage I was more focused on the acting. But during recording I was focused on the music.

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it?

HILLARY2. Yes, the lower part.

INTERVIEWER. Oh yes that’s right, of course. And thank you for doing that by the way because I didn’t even think about it or I would have had to go in and add that part myself [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

HILLARY2. I was just with you, two guys and Fandango. So it was friendly and more comfortable. I didn’t have to get too nervous about it. My mind was much more relaxed compared to the performance.

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?

HILLARY2. Less challenging. Especially the coloratura.

INTERVIEWER. So technically it was easier.

HILLARY2. Yes, I don’t know why.

INTERVIEWER. I know when I am repeating a role I have sung, I am able to apply things I learned about the music the first time I sang it.

HILLARY2. Yes, it’s true for me.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel support of your peers?

HILLARY2. Only Fandango and I were there.
INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you were supported?

HILLARY2. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel there were any awkward moments?

HILLARY2. I am thinking…

INTERVIEWER. OK.

HILLARY2. No everything just went as I expected.

INTERVIEWER. OK, were there any incidents, remarks or responses to the recording that made you feel successful?

HILLARY2. Oh actually I kept it forward. That’s what I thought. And it was really strange recording actually.

INTERVIEWER. It’s a skill unto itself. The more you do the better you get. It’s very different from performing.

HILLARY2. Yes it really was.

INTERVIEWER. Did you like it?

HILLARY2. I really liked it actually. I found myself confident when I recorded and thought, “Oh that’s how recording feels like.” So I could get a sense of it.

INTERVIEWER. Oh great! Can you describe the difference if any, in confidence for rehearsals, performances, and recording? So did you feel any difference in confidence as you went through the process?

HILLARY2. Yes. For the first rehearsals I was more of a freshman mind, like a baby. I only learned the notes. So I learned it technically. But for the recording I felt more professional.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

HILLARY2. Coloratura, language, breath support, children’s theater.
INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

HILLARY2. Yes actually, it was much easier because I forgot about it.

INTERVIEWER. You felt the costumes or moving around helped?

HILLARY2. Moving was more limited than being totally naked of course. I think you’re more engaged in the costumes.

INTERVIEWER. The costumes help?

HILLARY2. Yes they help.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while you were singing during the production?

HILLARY2. Actually when I did it, I didn’t really know about the importance of diction and now I started to learn about it. Back then I never really cared about diction.

INTERVIEWER. When you were performing in front of people, were you thinking you wanted them to understand?

HILLARY2. Of course I wanted them to understand [laughs], but I never thought they couldn’t understand.

INTERVIEWER. Well I believe good diction is affected by your desire to be understood. That is probably why your diction was so good.

HILLARY2. It was?

INTERVIEWER. Yes I thought so.

HILLARY2. Oh good [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?

HILLARY2. I think solo is much more personal and the ensemble was much more about interaction. When I did the Fandango scene, at first I thought I would just sing my part and that’s it. But it was not actually, so we had to get together for a few times to breathe together and that was fun, actually.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?
HILLARY2. Before, my singing was much more inside myself, but now I get to enjoy it with other people. I can see why conductors try to conduct a certain way. Fandango, Bobbie2 and I were really working together, you know conducting and breathing together. And now I can see it from the opera conductor’s point of view.

Ruby2

Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

RUBY2. You came into one of our studio classes.

INTERVIEWER. Studio class?

RUBY2. Yes and you told us about it and I sang for you.

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

RUBY2. I was really happy to have a performing opportunity.

INTERVIEWER. Did your commute affect your decision-making process?

RUBY2. Yes, but the fact that you were flexible with the schedule and were working around us helped me to be able to participate.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals and how did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsal process?

RUBY2. My expectations lined up with what happened I think [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. Can you compare how you felt in the first staging rehearsal to those in final rehearsals?

RUBY2. I think in general when you have the first rehearsal of a show you’re a little more nervous because you’re trying to make a good impression. I wasn’t sure how you work with people or how much direction and feedback we would be getting. And I think you actually probably gave us more direction than I expected. That comes from some of my past experiences. Sometimes you get nothing, right? So that was actually good. I liked that, that you had a vision and that it guided us.

INTERVIEWER. How did that make you feel in the final runs?
RUBY2. By the end of it, I felt pretty secure in knowing what I was supposed to do.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances and how did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

RUBY2. I think I wasn’t sure what to expect using the track in the beginning. It turned out to be fine but I was nervous beforehand that if we got off, that could have been really scary because there’s nobody to follow you. Do you know what I mean? But fortunately we knew our stuff well enough that that didn’t happen. Then just in terms of the rest of the performance, I think it all turned out as I expected. I mean you never know the audience is the one factor. I mean I never expect large audiences anyway with this kind of thing, but it was expected that the audience was kind of small. The first one was large actually and we had a lot of kids and that was really nice.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why?

RUBY2. I missed some rehearsals. But I think if you were doing this again and had people with more free time, then more time to do character work with each other would be really cool, and some movement work, especially for something like children’s opera. I don’t really know what the physicality of leaves is, but more movement-based work would have been fun. That’s one of the things that singers sometimes forget about. It’s not always part of the curriculum, you know what I mean?

INTERVIEWER. Yes, you’re right. That’s a really good point. Thank you for that. How did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

RUBY2. The costumes and set, definitely the whimsicality of them, helped me get in character and helped me just have more fun. And I think it made it feel like a fairy tale. All the bright colors and everything.

INTERVIEWER. Can you explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot? How did you feel your character fit into the show?

RUBY2. I loved my character because she’s just super sweet and also very honest. She’s somebody who’s not afraid to show her true colors, at least around Mambo. So that was really fun to just be like her. And obviously I was playing someone who’s younger so it allows you to be less self-conscious because the character you’re playing is not self-conscious. I think that’s what’s fun about playing kids in a show. And in terms of advancing the plot, I think my character sort of helped Mambo see that there are people he could fit in with and that could appreciate him for who he is. And I’m sort of a love interest and I think that’s a
confidence boost for him. I think Ruby provides him with a sense of belonging that he was not getting from his fellow leaves in Leafy Brown.

INTERVIEWER. Did her character affect the way you sang her?

RUBY2. Yes. I mean because she’s younger I probably went for a more youthful face and that changes the way you’re holding your facial muscles and I think it brings more of the chiaro in. It feels wrong to use too much of the womanly depth. So those things definitely brought a lighter, brighter quality to my voice.

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?

RUBY2. Well, I certainly am in a different place technically than I was eight months ago. I think whenever you revisit a role and your technique is still developing as mine very much still is, you have certain habits that are still there from having sung it before. Then you have something else to reach for. So I had to bring some of the new stuff I’ve been getting a better handle on into the role and re-practice the role for the recording. I think it can be frustrating because there are some things that are really hard. Especially because we didn’t have a ton of time before we found out about the recording and some things are hard to undo.

INTERVIEWER. But everyone knew about the recording from the beginning, and that we would record in the fall, right?

RUBY2. Yes, but I didn’t look at it until you sent us the email [laughs]. But it was cool to see how certain things were now easier. And also having done all the character work was still there so I just had to rework some things technically. But I think the character has time to sort of settle and then it’s less conscious. You know what you’re doing character wise and it sort of just happens. The first performance of the role you’re working harder on the character while you sing; it’s not just there.

INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

RUBY2. Yes. Higher notes are harder for me than my middle range in general and some of the ways certain words sat in the passaggio area. Some of the words weren’t super friendly for singing up there. Like the word "this" on an A♭ is a little awkward. But yeah, that was the main challenge for me, the passaggio stuff.

INTERVIEWER. Did you find that there were enough opportunities during rehearsals to practice some of the technically difficult elements? Practice vocally, I mean?
RUBY2. Yes, I think I definitely became less shy. I wasn’t afraid to sing it in public. I was able to feel like I can at least do this each time and I could rely on being able to do it.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances?

RUBY2. Oh yes definitely! Everyone was really supportive. Mambo2 and I would even find time outside of rehearsals to run dialogue or walk thru the blocking. So yeah, everyone had a nice collaborative spirit.

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

RUBY2. Not that I recall.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

RUBY2. Yes probably, I mean I don’t remember anything specific. I just know that after the performances, people said it was great and everyone was very supportive.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

RUBY2. Yes, definitely after the performances for sure. I felt most successful when I was really in the character when I was performing. And I felt very much after the performances as though I gave a real performance and I was really involved with the acting part of it. That made me feel really confident and like this is something I can do!

INTERVIEWER. Can you explain the difference in confidence you felt after the Mambo performances?

RUBY2. Yes definitely. It had been a little while since I’d been in a show and so I think afterwards, I felt like, “Yes I can still do this! This is something I’m good at and this is something I should keep doing.”

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.
RUBY2. I was excited because I don't think I’ve ever done a professional recording project. So I was really excited about having that experience.

INTERVIEWER. How would you describe that? Nervous, surprised?

RUBY2. I think, I mean I expected it to be pretty much like it was. I thought we’d have opportunities to do multiple takes. I wasn’t sure how the track was going to work. Whether live or speakers, or headphones with one ear covered.

INTERVIEWER. I considered the best way to do that for the cast. But I wanted it to feel as much like a performance as possible. So I thought that recording with the track playing in the hall would be better than having one ear covered.

RUBY2. Yes and that could be weird.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

RUBY2. The same [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. What were expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel music would come back easily?

RUBY2. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel it came back easily because you actually performed it as opposed to having learned it?

RUBY2. Oh, yeah I think anytime you perform something, there’s a level of knowing it that has to be greater than just working on it. So, yes definitely.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved and why?

RUBY2. Not singing in 312 [laughing].

INTERVIEWER. Why? What is the problem with 312?

RUBY2. Because it’s so dead.

INTERVIEWER. Ah, I see. But aren’t recording studios dead?

RUBY2. Yes, that’s true. I didn’t think about that [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. You commented on recollection, but do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it in other ways?
RUBY2. I think, yeah, having performed it; it was definitely easier vocally. Having performed it was also easier to have the recording be expressive because you had the physical memory of having acted it on stage.

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing live?

RUBY2. I think the hard thing about recording compared to performing is it’s hard not to listen to yourself. Whereas performing, you just kind of let it happen, hopefully. That was one thing that was hard. Not to listen and just to try to remember to sing it and concentrate on what I’m saying.

INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

RUBY2. Well you have a chance to do it over. That’s probably the only thing though [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges in your role, were they as challenging, less challenging, or more challenging for recording?

RUBY2. Less, but only because of the time separation. As I mentioned before, I was further along in my technique. So that made it easier.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel support of your peers?

RUBY2. Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel awkward moments?

RUBY2. [Laughs] Well when Mambo1 said I wasn’t cute (referring to a line mix-up).

INTERVIEWER. Oh my gosh, that was hilarious.

RUBY2. [Laughing] I think mostly Mambol had the awkward moment.

INTERVIEWER. It is actually quite amazing that he could do this role since he is not a native English speaker. An entire role in verse is a challenge for native speakers. But that moment was hilarious.

RUBY2. Oh I know [laughing]. Yes it was. I laughed a lot about it.

INTERVIEWER. Were there incidents, remarks or responses that made you feel successful?

RUBY2. Yes, it went really quickly and we got to listen to ourselves and I felt good about it.
INTERVIEWER. Can you describe the difference in confidence for rehearsals, performances, and the recording?

RUBY2. I think definitely I felt most confident in the recording because I felt more confident by then as a singer. And I think, that aside, I feel more confident in performance than rehearsals just because it’s different. Hopefully you’re not critiquing yourself as much. You just do what you can in the moment. Whereas in the rehearsal you’re thinking about, "How can I get this better?" That’s what rehearsals are for. So with my singing I was most confident in the recording, followed by the performances, followed by the rehearsals.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

RUBY2. Performance practice – children’s theater, high notes, and blending with Mambo in the duet.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

RUBY2. Definitely. My character's thing is bouncing around, and it was tricky to be able to stay grounded in my support after jumping around. Fortunately it was staged so I wasn't doing any bouncing while singing. The costumes were heavy, but in some ways that may have been helpful in feeling more grounded.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?

RUBY2. Yes, definitely. For example, I had the word "like this" on relatively high notes and had to make sure to keep the tongue dental on the "l" of "like," and to keep the vowel bright on "this" so it wouldn't pull down into my throat.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?

RUBY2. I think it just reminded me that it's necessary to work on ensemble music with the same technical diligence of solo music.
INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

RUBY2. I think in the future I would set up more of a game plan for myself. For example, I would note the trickiest areas in my music and have a plan for how to approach each part individually, since different takes of different sections of a piece can be recorded in isolation and then spliced together.

Mambo2

Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

MAMBO2. The master class that you did with us.

INTERVIEWER. That’s right you sang Rossini, right? I actually thought about making Mambo a pants role because of you.

MAMBO2. Oh thank you.

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

MAMBO2. It was lovely. It was very lovely. It was a lot to do in two weeks but it was very lovely.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals and how did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsals?

MAMBO2. I figured I would have to be there a lot. And I was. It reminded me honestly a little bit of the summer programs that I had gone to only because I was spending so many hours every day in rehearsal and so many hours a day singing, which I was very grateful to have. Just for also giving me the sort of stamina I needed to do this in the amount of time that we had. Because I’m used to taking, especially with a role that size, a lot of time. And I’m used to doing very meticulous work throughout the process, which takes a little bit longer. But I couldn’t do that, but that was fine because I could sort of pull this other way of working out of my pocket and then try.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances and how did those expectations compare to the actual performances?
MAMBO2. I just hoped that I could sing all my notes and say all my lines where I was supposed to say them and not mix up the cues for the different songs.

INTERVIEWER. You had the predominantly adult audience. Did that change anything for you?

MAMBO2. Yes. But from the beginning I knew I would have to be very, very solid because I couldn’t run off stage and say “Oh yeah, that’s what I’m supposed to say,” so I hope I did that. That’s what I was aiming for.

INTERVIEWER. Yes, you were great!

INTERVIEWER. Can you compare how you felt as a singer and performer in the first staging rehearsal to how you felt as a singer and performer in the final run-throughs?

MAMBO2. Yes, I never created a role before in my life. It was really fun and at the same time it was a little bit intimidating. I’m used to learning something then listening to other people do it. And that wasn’t an option so it forced me to work a lot differently just right from the beginning. But I was sort of amazed at the end that I managed to do it all in the time that we had.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel the production timeline was a bit of a push?

MAMBO2. Yes, but if that was the only thing that I was working on it wouldn’t have been a problem. But I also had Traviata and I had a recital and I had all these things that I had to try to juggle. But I figured out how to do everything and I was doing everything that I loved and was training for in school.

INTERVIEWER. Like a working singer?

MAMBO2. Yes [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why? Don’t worry; you won’t hurt my feelings [she laughs].

MAMBO2. I think not a lot, because I happen to think it went great. I guess the only thing is that because there were different levels of experience in terms of what different people needed to do to learn, I just remember panicking about the fandango chorus and things.

INTERVIEWER. That was a difficult ensemble.

MAMBO2. Yes [laughing] which I don’t think any of us realized until we started doing it. So maybe for the comfort of everybody to tackle something like that or at the beginning to just have a sing-through of that first. So then we would
know oh this is actually harder than I thought or this is actually easier than we thought. So it could be a little more adjusted that way.

INTERVIEWER. Yes, that is a good idea. We actually did have a sing-through. Several people did not show up for one reason or another, but that was our first rehearsal.

MAMBO2. Oh yeah, that’s right. We did sing through everything twice for both Mambos.

INTERVIEWER. That’s all right. Feeling a need for more rehearsal is very valid. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

MAMBO2. I couldn’t move in that costume. I really couldn’t. It was funny because I remember walking around in it and just banging into things because I didn’t realize how wide it was, which is usually not my problem. And I was thinking, “OK, so this is probably how my character feels. Just totally like a klutz.”

INTERVIEWER. So did that help the characterization for you?

MAMBO2. Yes [laughing] I guess it did. In the scene after I fall and am lying on the ground, I was thinking, “I actually truly cannot get up.” I remember having a little trouble getting the style of the show. The children’s theater style was a challenge because I had not done anything like that and it was completely alien. That was a big challenge. It’s good because I wouldn’t have done it ever, otherwise probably.

INTERVIEWER. Some of the opera outreach programs call for that skill. You might look into Barab’s Little Red Riding Hood or The Three Little Pigs.

MAMBO2. Yes, I will.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the character you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot.

MAMBO2. I approached it a lot differently from the beginning to the end. In the beginning, I approached it as an actor. But I had to change my interpretation completely through the rehearsal process. I felt I was putting too much drama into it. It was not actually a big acting job in terms of creating a huge big character. And I had at least to try to simplify things a lot.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you were working in reverse?

MAMBO2. Yes.
INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?

MAMBO2. It was easier. Which was nice because my brain is sometimes very slow to catch up to what my voice can do. So if I go back to something that I thought was hard after a break, I realize, “Oh this is nice. I can do this thing that I wanted to do before.”

INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

MAMBO2. The end.

INTERVIEWER. Oh, because of the tessitura?

MAMBO2. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. With that in mind did you feel you had enough opportunity to make the role work for you? Did you feel by the performances that you weren’t struggling to make yourself into something else?

MAMBO2. I remember there were a few things that were written more for Mambo1: because he’s a tenor. But we found different things that I do also. So it was just really the end and I had to sit in a room and sing it a lot to figure out how and also to pace myself throughout the show so I hadn’t sung myself out by then.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel that you had enough opportunities to run it in rehearsals for the vocal/technical elements to improve?

MAMBO2. Yes

INTERVIEWER. And you felt comfortable playing with all those things during rehearsals?

MAMBO2. Yes

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances?

MAMBO2. Yes

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

MAMBO2. No. Well, when the computer stopped working I was a little nervous.
INTERVIEWER. Yes that was awkward. But it can happen with that kind of show. Did you feel the audience was understanding and jumped back into the show?

MAMBO2. Yes, oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

MAMBO2. Firstly, I felt great that I was given a role. Everybody was very sweet. I remember a lot of times when we had started running Mambo and everybody watching would say, “Oh, good job!”

INTERVIEWER. Did you experience feelings of success in Mambo on a professional level?

MAMBO2. Yes, it was a combination of a bunch of things because I had this and I had all the other things I was preparing at the same time. And I wasn’t working, as much at the same jobs that I usually do so it was just nice to just be able to sing and not really worry about other things. It feels like when you reach that level of performing where that’s just what you do.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

MAMBO2. Yes I guess – the entire process was so fast but it was one of those things where you finish and it was like “did I do this? What did I just do?” But it was lovely. I think also because I practice so much for a performance that when it comes time, I open my mouth and it just comes out. I don’t have to think a lot about it. But I remember being surprised at how quickly the show was going. We got to the Chief duet and I was thinking, “I’m already here.” It felt great afterwards when I didn’t have to focus and could just enjoy doing it, as opposed to doing it and still be working. Does that make sense?

INTERVIEWER. I’m not sure I understand.

MAMBO2. I love singing and that’s why I want to do it, but at the same time there’s still a lot of work. So, I always enjoy myself after the work because it’s not mixed in with, “OK this is great but I have to do this,” or “I really like singing this but I can’t sing this today.”

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? If so, can you describe the difference?

MAMBO2. Yes because I hadn’t been given a project like this before so it was nice firstly to be given it, but also to prove to myself through the process that I could do it. So that helped a lot.
Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

MAMBO2. Yay recording. [Laughs] Yay I did a good enough job to be asked to do this a second time.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

MAMBO2. I thought it would take a lot more time than it was. I thought the whole thing would be spread out a lot more. That the duets would be done 1 day and then the ensemble, I don’t know, I just thought it would have taken more time than it did, which is nice. I wish wasn’t sick for it [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. I promise you, nobody could hear it, and you sounded great. What were your expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel the music would come back easily?

MAMBO2. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved and why?

MAMBO2. None

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel support while you were there?

MAMBO2. Yes

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it and how?

MAMBO2. Yes because it wasn’t something that was completely new, which was nice. But I could make a bunch of little changes from the first to the second, which was also nice. Some of the things I was kind of aiming for the first time, for whatever reason I wasn’t able to manage. So I was able to improve from the first time to the second time.

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it?

MAMBO2. The chair.

INTERVIEWER. The chair?
MAMBO2. The chair [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. Oh the chair… the squeaky chair – that was funny.

MAMBO2. Having to be so mindful of any and all extraneous noise. Coming from my audition, I took my shoes off because they made noise and I didn’t want to not be able to move around. Just really those little things.

INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

MAMBO2. I liked being able to do things a few times.

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging, less challenging, or more challenging for the recording?

MAMBO2. Less.

INTERVIEWER. Why? Because you had sung it before, or because you had done it in performance?

MAMBO2. Because I had done it and for some reason between the first and second time I had become a better singer. So especially the higher parts where I have the notes but I can’t always connect them the way the music says I should. That became easier the second time. Also just my stamina had gotten a little better.

INTERVIEWER. You recorded some with the ensemble and some without, right?

MAMBO2. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel peer support from the crowd when you were up there?

MAMBO2. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel awkward moments?

MAMBO2. The chair! [Laughs]

INTERVIEWER. Were there any other awkward moments?

MAMBO2. No. [Laughs]

INTERVIEWER. Were there incidents, remarks or responses that made you feel successful?

MAMBO2. It was nice just, well, nothing really specific but just the atmosphere in general. OK we’re just sort of jumping in and we’ll see what
happens now. I mean nobody likes messing up the first time, but if you did, it was a recording so we could go back. I always find in recordings there is a little less pressure than in performance because there’s that option. So it was nice. It just seemed very low key and everybody was enjoying themselves.

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe difference in confidence that you felt during the rehearsals, the performances, and the recording?

MAMBO2. The first day I was just happy I had sound. Then I was happy I had the notes I needed to sing relatively decently.

INTERVIEWER. You mean during the recording?

MAMBO2. In the recording, yes. It was weird because I wasn’t sick anymore but all the swelling still hadn’t gone away. So just because of that it improved throughout the whole process.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

MAMBO2. All of them!

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

MAMBO2. Not that I can remember.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?

MAMBO2. I had to negotiate the finale, but that got much easier once we changed the words.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?

MAMBO2. The majority of my work was solo for this production. But I try to treat everything like solo material anyway. To me, the only difference is that you might have to adjust volume or breath to your scene partners, but it
depends on the rep. Mostly I always try to balance singing easily and being heard.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

MAMBO2. I prepare for performances and recordings the same way. I like being able to play and do multiple takes in recording but I also like having to do as few as possible, because that means I am prepared and I have practiced enough that I know what I am doing. The main difference is that we have to be careful of extraneous noises so I try to work barefoot or wear quiet shoes.

Sassy

Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

SASSY1. [Laughing] Well my awesome voice teacher was putting it together and asked me if I would like to sing on it and I said OK. [We both laugh.]

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

SASSY1. OK – at first I was a little nervous because I was talking to some people that are students that had also done some shows with you and they said, “Yes it's a lot of work,” and so I got really nervous [laughs]. But then I was really excited because I hadn’t done a show in a really long time and I love performing and I love acting, and I love dancing even though I’m terrible at it [smiling]. I was just really, really excited.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals and how did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsal process?

SASSY1. I wasn’t really sure what to expect. I guess I expected them to be pretty straightforward. We got a list of what rehearsals we had to attend and I sort of expected them to be as they were. Kind of like you learned your music on your own and then you came in and got your scene staged and then you went home, memorized that, came back in, etc. It definitely went that way. But I didn’t expect to meet as many people as I did. And I don’t think I would have met as many, especially graduate students. I didn’t know any graduate students before we did Mambo and now I know a couple of those.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances and how did those expectations compare to the actual performances?
SASSY1. I was expecting less of a turnout than showed up. We had a big audience; a lot of kids were really into it. I was kind of nervous about technical difficulties because I knew we were doing it with a recording track, but actually that all went really well. There were no huge mistakes or technical things. I thought it went pretty well.

INTERVIEWER. Can you compare how you felt as a singer and performer in the first staging rehearsal to how you felt as a singer and performer in the final run-throughs?

SASSY1. [laughs] The first time I sang through the piece in front of everybody I was coming from the beach and I was so tired and I felt like a hot mess. And my voice was all over the place. And I was thinking, “Oh my God, look at all these grad students, they’re going to think I’m so stupid.” And so I felt really all over the place. But by the end I felt really good. I felt like I was doing a good job. I like the music; I liked the people I was working with and I had a lot of fun.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why?

SASSY1. OK, I guess some of the ensemble stuff. Because that's the one thing that I felt was weak when we actually did the performance, at least for me. I didn’t know a lot of the ensemble things as well as I should have or could have. So maybe just working the ensemble things a little bit more. Maybe just having a stand up rehearsal and then like a staging rehearsal – I think that would have been helpful.

INTERVIEWER. Do you mean a second musical rehearsal for the ensembles?

SASSY1. Oh, yeah, I think I missed the first read through. But yeah.

INTERVIEWER. OK, that’s good advice. Thank you. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

SASSY1. Moving in the costume was really hard [laughing], but I actually felt like a leaf probably more so. It was hard to imagine how all the characters would come together without the costumes [laughing]. The first time we did it, because, at least Sassy was supposed to be very fluid, once I had the big leaf costume on I was felt like it was a lot harder than I thought it would be [laughing]. And then the steps I had to take were a little smaller once I had the socks on because I’m the clumsiest person that I know, and I’ll just fall straight on the floor. I did that while I was observing a class, I just fell on the floor in the back [laughs] and it was really embarrassing. So the first time we did it with the socks and the whole leaf, it was really hard. I especially liked Mambo’s costume when he did the fall, it made a lot more sense [laughs] because you had the big leaf. I liked the sets. I thought they were simple, I liked that they were simple.
INTERVIEWER. That wasn’t by design [laughing].

SASSY1. Oh I know [laughing] but I liked it. I feel like it draws more attention to the actual people performing. Even when I go see a Broadway show if there’s so much glitz and glamour in the back, it kind of draws me away from what’s going on, on stage. And so I liked it.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot.

SASSY1. I wasn’t the most direct bully in the show. You kind of hate the bullies at the beginning because they’re really awful. I kind of liked each character he met on the way back home. They aren’t necessarily bully characters, but they kind of are. It kind of reminded me of Alice in wonderland when she’s going down the rabbit hole and runs into Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum and then the caterpillar. They’re not necessarily bully characters, but they kind of are. And so I felt watching Mambo stand up to each one, he goes from being all the way down here (you can’t see this on the recording, I’m pointing to the floor) [talking to the computer I was recording the interview with] to slowly stepping up a ladder with each person he meets. He gets a little more out there with his responses too. With my character, he’s not really quite standing up to me at the end, but by the next one and even the one after that, the coloratura one, he finds his strength.

INTERVIEWER. Hillary?

SASSY1. Yes, he’s like actually standing up to Hillary. I thought each one was really...I thought it was cool to see that.

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you? In Sassy, you did a lot of chest, but not necessarily in the opening ensemble part. Which ensemble character were you?

SASSY1. I was one of the soloists in the ensemble. I was one of the couples.

INTERVIEWER. That’s right. So how did it feel to sing those after the break?

SASSY1. It was actually, at least for the belty one, it was actually easier. I felt like I got better as a singer by the time we came back from the break and it was a lot easier. The ensemble stuff, well there is a big difference between singing a lot in chest and then going into the mix. But that seemed a lot easier too; and a lot less stressful because we kind of just stood there with music in front of us. But yeah it also felt pretty good. It was super familiar and stuck with me.

INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, can you describe them?
SASSY1. Sure [laughs], not so much when I sang it the last time, but within the first maybe two or three times of singing the song, I was having trouble figuring out where I wanted to place it in my voice. If I wanted to do it in a chest mix the whole time or if I wanted to do it like in a head mix part of the time. The first time I sang it, I did it in a head mix and it was really hard for me to sing. So I started to sing it with more chest in the belt mix, which was easier. Some of the higher stuff was harder, but the meat of the song was easier. But it was definitely much easier when we came back eight months later. Everything was in the right place and it lined up a lot better.

INTERVIEWER. What opportunities to practice one or more specific vocal technical elements during rehearsals did your role present? For instance, were you able to play with the mix in rehearsals?

SASSY1. Yes, there was one specific rehearsal where I think I did play with that a lot and it was when we were in Room 208. We ran it a few times because we were changing out the choreography and we got to sing through it a bunch of times. I thought I got to play with it lot then. Once we added the staging I feel like I got to play with it a lot more too, because then everything kind of fell into place.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel the staging made a difference in your vocal technique?

SASSY1. Yes, definitely. It definitely made a difference. Like all the walking across and even just the holding hands and turning, that thing that took us forever to learn [laughs]. I thought it made a big difference.

INTERVIEWER. Why? Do you think it focused you differently?

SASSY1. Yes I think it focused me differently. Also part of my problem a lot of the time is overthinking things vocally. Like I’ll overthink a skit or a high note. And I feel that once we added the staging everything was kind of moving. So it was easier for me to just move instead of overthinking every sound that was coming out. And a lot of the sounds, like the chestier mix, became a lot more obvious once we added the flirty stuff.

INTERVIEWER. Are you saying that the staging informed your musical choices too? Your technical and musical choices?

SASSY1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances?

SASSY1. Oh definitely?

INTERVIEWER. Yes?
SASSY1. Yes!

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe in which ways? You said you were nervous going in.

SASSY1. Yes, well everyone was a lot nicer than I originally thought they would be [laughs]. Everyone was a lot nicer and also, when I wasn’t rehearsing a scene, I would sit back and talk to all the people. Everyone was so complimentary and it didn’t seem like anybody was in it for themselves. I thought I was going to go in there and everyone was going to be a bit of a diva, but everyone seemed like a team player. I got to make a lot of Music Education friends too.

INTERVIEWER. Did you think at any point that the other singers may have walked into the production with the same concerns of a diva atmosphere?

SASSY1. Probably [laughs]. I think a lot of people walk into a new performance rehearsal kind of like that. I don’t ever remember walking into a first rehearsal with people I didn’t know and not feeling stupid. Because even if you know that you got picked to sing something because you were good enough to sing it, that’s generally how people get picked [laughs], I think it’s still really stressful. Especially for me when I’m working with graduate and undergraduate students. I know they’ve trained beyond where I am classically. But it was just super nice and complimentary.

INTERVIEWER. One of the things I found interesting from observing, regardless of how nervous some of the music education majors were that one of their peers would notice a little vocal issue here or there, they fell into the children’s theater presentation easier than some of the performance majors.

SASSY1. Yes our majors have a lot easier time being silly because we work with kids. We’re used to being in a classroom and singing a stupid song and doing a dance. I think we kind of like it. I love doing silly things. So I feel like I don’t feel as silly as somebody who has never gotten on stage and had to do a twirl in front of a bunch of people.

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

SASSY1. I think towards the final run-through when we ran through Leafy Brown and I think it was awkward because a lot of people weren’t singing all the right words and harmonies. Probably we just didn’t know them well enough.

INTERVIEWER. What do you think about that? Why do you think people simply didn’t bother to learn their music?

SASSY1. I don’t know. I mean I looked at it a bunch of times, and it was kind of just hard in context too. Everything moved a lot faster than I had
originally anticipated in my head. It was during finals and people were preparing for juries and the opera and a lot of stuff.

INTERVIEWER. Actually it was March 15th. It was right after midterms.

SASSY1. Oh yeah. That’s why a lot of us could do it. I think people just place a lot more emphasis on their solos than what they’re doing in an ensemble, which makes sense in your head but it doesn’t actually make sense in practice. It’s also a lot easier to memorize something that you’re singing solo than it is something that you’re singing in a choir setting.

INTERVIEWER. So do you think that the experience would inform your process the next time around?

SASSY1. Yes. Afterwards I was thinking, “Wow, I really should have practiced Leafy Brown a lot more than I did.” [Laughing] I definitely think so. I think for everybody it was a bit of a learning curve with that one. That’s just the one that sticks in my head because that was the one that we always hash tagged, when in doubt Leafy Brown. Because all of us were the leaves in the Leafy Brown number.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

SASSY1. Yes, I think so. I think there were a lot. I think people were really nice. I remember after our final run-through, the high school intern’s mom said, “Wow you had such a great stage presence.” And I said, “Well that’s musical theater,” and she said, “I could tell.” I felt pretty good after that. I think everybody kind of had that, I mean when people would come off after doing a scene I would compliment them and everyone else would compliment me. I think there was a lot of that.

INTERVIEWER. Good, so general peer support?

SASSY1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Is that a success-gage for you?

SASSY1. Yes. I love peer support. And then also you sort of know when you’ve done a good job or if you could have done better. When I walk off stage I kind of know what went really well and what I could have done better. Just performing in front of an audience, having them appreciate something, I think is really what drew me to look at theater when I was younger. The first time I sang a solo on stage and like walked off and stage I thought, “WOW!” It was like being on another level. But I definitely think my favorite part is always interacting with the rest of the cast.
INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

SASSY1. OK...

INTERVIEWER. In other words, were there moments in which you just felt, “OK I’ve got this! I’m a singer and this is my job!”

SASSY1. I think that the final run-through was like that because everything went really smoothly and I felt really good about it. I had a lot of fun. I didn’t feel stupid [laughs]. I had a good time.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? If so, can you describe the difference?

SASSY1. Yes, I mean it was the first show I’ve done here and so I felt good after I walked out. I didn’t feel like “I can’t do any more shows because I suck so bad,” [laughs]. I really felt pretty good.

INTERVIEWER. Good.

SASSY1. Yes!

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

SASSY1. It was really relaxed. And I got to see people that I hadn’t seen in a couple of months and that was nice. It was just really familiar and was just really comfortable. I wasn’t sure how comfortable it would be. But I wasn’t nervous. It went really fast.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

SASSY1. Every recording I’ve ever done has been long. Sometimes you go up and you sing and it won’t be what you expected you’d sound like for whatever reason and you think, “OK, well I don’t like this.” Sometimes you’re just not in the right place. But it was so fast and everybody felt good about it. We didn’t really need to do anything more than like twice, so it was, it was really clean. It was so nice.

INTERVIEWER. What were expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel music would come back easily?
SASSY1. I mean for the Sassy song, that was just in my head on and off throughout the summer and into the fall semester. It was my [laughs] shower jam, so I wasn’t really worried about it. I was a little worried about the other ensemble stuff. Once we had the music in front of us, I thought everything, like the recording, everything kind of came back. It wasn’t too nerve-wracking. I thought, “They know I can sing.”

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved and why?

SASSY1. This isn’t anybody’s fault, it just happened to be the time that it was happening. Because everybody has a lot going on, if there were specific slots for everything that would good. I feel like there were, but I guess if the slots were more specific or if people showed up on time there would have been less waiting. That’d be the only thing. I thought everything went really fast and really well.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it? If so, can you describe how?

SASSY1. Everybody had a clear image of what their character was and what they wanted to do vocally. At least for me it was a lot easier because I had done the role and when I came back I knew what I wanted to do, I knew how to place everything. I knew what the character was in the story. Even when other people were performing their thing and I was in the back I was picturing Mambo walking down the ladder, falling on the floor. So I thought that made it easier.

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it?

SASSY1. Well there were a couple of score changes. They didn’t really throw me off too much though. The only thing that really threw me off, but that happened during the performances too, was just the ending of the Sassy number for whatever reason. It’s just really hard. The other part went well. I didn’t think it was too much of a problem.

INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

SASSY1. Yes, you don’t have an audience.

INTERVIEWER. That made it easier?

SASSY1. A little bit because you don’t have in the back of your head, “Wow there are all these people and if I screw up they’re going to see it.” But recording it with just the cast there, if I screw up, these people saw it. We’ll just record it again. So I feel that made it a lot easier. At least for me, it’s easier recording. I mean I love performing, I do, but I think it’s easier to record because there’s always the erase button and the re-record button.
INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging, less challenging, or more challenging for recording?

SASSY1. Definitely less challenging. It went a lot better. And when I was done, MOM1, Sassy2 said, “That was really good.” And when she finished, I said, “That was really good, too.”

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel the support of your peers during the recording process?

SASSY1. Yes, but it was different. I didn’t necessarily need the peer support at that point. It was more laid back. Everyone was supportive and everyone was thumbs up. But I think everyone was also tired so it wasn’t like a big family group party. But it also didn’t need to be.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel awkward moments?

SASSY1. I don’t think so. Everything went really smoothly from my perspective.

INTERVIEWER. Were there incidents, remarks or responses that made you feel successful?

SASSY1. I love when things get recorded in one take. We recorded a lot of stuff in one take and I was thinking, “No more six takes for a number!” That felt really good. And I just felt good after it was done and I felt like I didn’t make any big mistakes. I remembered everything. I felt good about it.

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe the difference, if any, in confidence for rehearsals, performances, and the recording?

SASSY1. I think I was most confident for the recording session. But I also think I was most warmed up for the recording session because I had just been singing. We had guitar ensemble concert and I was singing our pop set there, which is a lot of chest mix stuff. So by the time we did the recording, I was kind of already in the place I wanted to be. Whereas like I feel like, one of my biggest things that I need to work on is when I warm up and then have a half hour of not singing (because you can’t sing back stage when somebody else is on stage) I always feel there’s a huge curve for me to get warmed up again when I get on stage. Almost a bigger curve than if I had just never warmed up. And so in that sense, I always feel super anxious right before going on stage. After a half hour of singing then a half hour of not singing and going back on stage I think, “I don’t know if I can make sound [said in a whisper].” For the recording session I just felt really confident.
Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath Support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register Shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance Practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

SASSY1. Register shifts (chest to mix to head) and performance practice – children’s theater.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

SASSY1. I definitely felt a difference in breath support once we had staging and costumes. It became a lot easier to have support (at least for me). I tend to overthink things when I sing. When we added the other elements to the performance, I stopped overthinking my breathing and other technique and started just doing.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?

SASSY1. The piece I sang was in a really good range for me, so I didn’t really have to alter anything word or vowel wise. I did make the words a little closer to their true American pronunciation (to get a more “musical theater” sound, as seemed appropriate to my character) and made sure to enunciate well.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?

SASSY1. This experience has definitely taught me that I have to put more effort into learning my ensemble parts. The ensemble parts were a lot more difficult than my solo stuff, yet I think psychologically we always put more weight on our solo stuff. Since nobody put as much into the ensemble stuff, it was hard to put it all together and no one felt 100% good about it. In the future, I’m definitely going to put more time into ensemble pieces.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

SASSY1. The recording actually went really well, at least the day I came in. In the future I would probably come more prepared, with all of my music in order and markings and such. In the future I would probably just come more prepared in terms of that, and warm up beforehand. This time I was lucky, I had a performance right before, but if I hadn’t I would’ve needed a warm up.
Chief

Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

CHIEF. At school in the opera class.

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe your feelings about participating?

CHIEF. I wanted to of course.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals and how did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsals?

CHIEF. It’s like a professional opera with my colleagues. I really had a professional experience. Everyone knew their music.

INTERVIEWER. And that’s what you expected?

CHIEF. Yes. I always expect that my colleagues know the music and we can just enjoy the rehearsals and not spend them learning music.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances? How did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

CHIEF. We were very well prepared. I expected everything to be great and we had a great audience.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why? And you won’t hurt my feelings.

CHIEF. I thought it was good. Everyone was prepared and we just did the work.

INTERVIEWER. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

CHIEF. For Bruno, the costume really helped me create my role and it made me connect with my childhood.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot.

CHIEF. The Chief really touched me because it was such a powerful role and he showed how powerful you could be even though you’re not a big or tall
person. And it’s encouraging how the power is inside of us and it is not a physical thing.

INTERVIEWER. You have a lot of performing and singing experience. Can you tell me if you felt your characters personality traits and words affected the way you sang?

CHIEF. Definitely! I told that to the composer. As a singer, I experience insecurity. Now I remember when I was recording the Chief and I was singing, “the key is in your heart.” That helps me.

INTERVIEWER. Oh that’s nice. After the eight-month break did singing your characters in Mambo change for you?

CHIEF. On the second time I let myself be more engaged with the words that I was singing. And I am pretty sure this will show in the recording. If I had to make a comparison of the real performance and the recording, I think the second time I was more engaged emotionally.

INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role?

CHIEF. The diction in English is challenging because I’m not a native English speaker.

INTERVIEWER. And what about the high G you added?

CHIEF. Yes. The high G was really challenging. That’s a real high note for every baritone.

INTERVIEWER. So did you feel that you had enough opportunities to run it in rehearsals and practice that?

CHIEF. Yes. I had a chance to grow and practice in the rehearsals and try it for the first time in performance and again in the recording. It gave me the opportunity to feel I’m ready to sing a high G.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances?

CHIEF. Yes absolutely.

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

CHIEF. No not at all.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks, or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?
CHIEF. Definitely. Every time I sing I go with the same attitude. Even if I’m going as a professional or not I really go with the same attitude. I don’t sing less because I’m working with people that don’t have as much experience as I have.

INTERVIEWER. That’s great. Did you feel you had success with the role?

CHIEF. Absolutely. There was the second time that I worked with a composer. The first time I was nervous to rehearse music with the composer because I worried, “Was it bad?” No actually, this was the second time I could rehearse comfortably with the composer because I did that here at Carnegie Hall. So it was actually the third time total.

INTERVIEWER. Oh right!

CHIEF. Maybe that question doesn’t fit that much because I actually have done a lot of premieres – maybe I shouldn’t say that.

INTERVIEWER. Do you like that experience?

CHIEF. Yes, with you I have done three shows of modern music, G Train, Carnegie Hall and this one. The three times I have had opportunities to work closely with the composers. Unfortunately in most opera, we won’t have the opportunity to have the composer with us. It definitely is a great experience I will keep in mind. Being able to have the voice of the composer and what he wants.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? You’re a fantastic comic actor and singer, but was there anything in this performance that felt new and gave you a new sense of confidence?

CHIEF. Absolutely, the English language was challenging. I have always been afraid to go sing in public in English. But after singing Mambo for children, I realized that the children understood me. I definitely feel more secure and will sing in English again. And I feel more secure to sing high notes.

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.
CHIEF. It was a great opportunity for my voice to be recorded so I could have a chance to listen to my singing, taking me to some other opportunities.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to the actual process?

CHIEF. Well, not to be cheesy, but I pretty much expect the same professional thing that I always had working with you, Monica.

INTERVIEWER. Oh, that’s nice. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it?

CHIEF. Yes absolutely. Absolutely!

INTERVIEWER. In which ways, was it harder, or a faster process?

CHIEF. We had a great show and great performances. We had a great crowd and that helped us. So everyone was in a position to record.

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it? Or did you find it was easier?

CHIEF. Since I already performed the role, singing was definitely easier and I felt more confident.

INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

CHIEF. If there were vocal challenges in your role, say the high G or even the English, did you find them to be as challenging during the recording or did you find them easier in the recording? In the recording I found it easier. I was able to concentrate on the vocal technique instead of being an actor and a comic guy, so I was just concentrate on the vocal part so it was easier.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel support of the people around you?

CHIEF. Yes, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe any difference in confidence for the rehearsals, the performances, and the recording?

CHIEF. During the recording we didn’t have the public. It was just Monica, the engineer, and me so I felt more relaxed. But in the same way I had a new experience. So I didn’t really get that nervous. The performance was a comic theater production, which is maybe the best thing I can do as an actor and singer. But recording definitely I felt more confident as a singer. Yes definitely it was easier and I felt more confident.
INTERVIEWER. Were there any moments during the recording in which you felt successful? Did you ever feel, “That was good I feel great about it”?

CHIEF. Yes. When I was singing the Chief part, you actually told me, “I don’t know what you are doing, but it sounds great! I don’t know what you changed.” I really connected with the words. I felt the words and the power of it.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

CHIEF. High notes singing the CHIEF and diction.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging in your costumes while singing?

CHIEF. My roles were pretty much singing in place so I didn't have much problems using my breath support.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production.

CHIEF. Yes, specifically when I had to sing many words in a fast rhythm.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble and solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?

CHIEF. It was different because I had the opportunity to work with the composer, so I could ask how he wanted his music to be performed.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experienced informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

CHIEF. In my opinion recording was easier than the show because I could focus just on vocal technique since I didn't have to act and there wasn't an audience.
Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

RUBY1. You had come into Opera Workshop one day and advertised it and I thought, “That sounds really interesting,” especially since I wasn’t cast in the opera that semester. And to be honest, I had never heard of children’s opera before and thought, “This is something different. Let’s take advantage of this.”

INTERVIEWER. You had never done any children’s theater before?

RUBY1. I had done children’s dinner theater in high school and that was so much fun. The kids were really responding well, especially from the 3 different elementary schools we had. It was so much fun. I love doing things for kids. And in Mambo, They were yelling, “Oh, she’s right behind you.” You know, I love the interactive things.

INTERVIEWER. Yes it is fun. You already addressed this somewhat, but can you describe your feelings about participating in the Mambo production? You can discuss any moment of the project.

RUBY1. It made me more aware of expression. I mean, when you look at classical music specifically, it kind of tells you “you need to crescendo, decrescendo, move faster, slower” and it gives you so much. But in children’s stuff you have to amp it up more for them because they really react more. If you give them a big facial expression, they respond with, “Wow, she really is doing something about this,” or “she really is scared about this.” It made me much more aware of my body, my actions, and my vocal action.

INTERVIEWER. You and I had never worked together before…

RUBY1. No, I had seen you at juries and was like, “who are all these people.”

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the rehearsals and how did those expectations compare to the actual process?

RUBY1. I think my expectations were just like they are for any rehearsals where people come in knowing their music. The questions will be answered during the rehearsals and then you have a standard set from the director and everyone needs to come up and surpass that. And I think that in throughout the process we all did exactly that. And we had questions, especially when I had questions about getting one of the notes particularly, you said “oh we can change that” and trying to help us and it was really wonderful. So it was really nice getting the hand of the director helping us one on one personally.
INTERVIEWER. Can you compare how you felt as a singer and performer in the first staging rehearsal to how you felt as a singer and performer in the final run-throughs?

RUBY1. At first I was very uncomfortable because there were no recordings to listen to where if I were singing an Italian art song or a French aria where I have some reference, but for this OK it's up to your interpretation and you're the one creating this and it's very unsettling. And then when you get to the end of the process, especially during the final dress rehearsals and actually being in the performances I could really take the characters and do whatever I wanted and am very confident with it. And know that if it is bad someone will say, “maybe pull back a little bit or maybe do this a little bit” and I felt very comfortable with that. Where for at first I was sort of scared to do it.

INTERVIEWER. That’s true, I have done a lot of contemporary music and I find that being the first one can be addicting. What were your expectations regarding the performances and how did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

RUBY1. My expectations for the performances were that everyone would be super interactive. The kids would be very into it. And definitely I think for the first show they were a lot more responsive than the second show. But I think it was just the size of the audience for the second show. So I think my expectations that both audiences would be like that personally were off a bit. Cast wise I think my expectation was that we would all just have a lot of fun and that's exactly what happened. I think that’s the most important. It’s like even if it’s just a show that someone’s seen a million times or if it's a new show, if you’re having fun they’re going to have fun.

INTERVIEWER. Was it disarming that the second audience was small and the kids were shyer and a smaller crowd?

RUBY1. I think so. I mean I know me as a child and I was like “Ha ha ha ha” [big expression and voice], the same way I am now [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel like they enjoyed it just as much anyway?

RUBY1. I do. You could see some of them because the lights were up a little on the audience. So you could see their reactions and they would turn to their parents. The second audience was small, but you could see that they were enjoying it.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why?

RUBY1. I’m trying to remember.
INTERVIEWER. You can think about it. We can always come back to this.

RUBY1. Yes, I think that as a whole they were planned out very well. I think maybe something I had for all the rehearsals; we tried to map out what people should be there at what time. And it’s always hard when you have kids that do graduate level classes at certain times of day and undergrads who have classes all day long. Maybe just if you insist they have to be here at 5:00 o’clock and the rehearsal’s going to go this way and we can’t jump back to get you into it. If you’re not there that day, sorry we’ll go over it the next day we do the scene. I think that’s it. Because every time that I was there I felt like I was getting something out of it for the three characters that I played. So for me personally, each rehearsal worked well for the chorus part or Sammi or Ruby.

INTERVIEWER. That’s good. That’s actually really interesting to note that jumping back was problematic for some of the singers. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

RUBY1. I wish we had more sets. The costumes I absolutely loved. And it was a really cool idea. And I think the kids really liked them too. I wish we had more sets though, especially for the bullies, when they make fun of him. It would be cooler if we had them be on a higher pedestal to make it more obvious Mambo is on the ground and everyone else is in a tree. But I totally understand that it costs money. But I absolutely loved the costumes. I thought they were absolutely adorable [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. For you, more sets would have made it even more fun?

RUBY1. Yes, definitely. Definitely!

INTERVIEWER. So, a little side note, there’s a company trying to raise money to have a backdrop with trees so the leaves can come in and out of the trees throughout the show.

RUBY1. Oh that would be awesome. Because then you could see the reactions and Ruby, who has a crush on Mambo, could react to everyone throughout the whole show. Especially because she only comes in at the end.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot.

RUBY1. The chorus, personally I felt was a nice touch to open up with. I thought it was nice to have the big group open to say, “Hey, this is a nice introduction of what you’re going to see.” Sammi I wish could have been in the show more. It’s just a funny interjected piece. She could be a satire kind of a character to just come in and out. She could be a little comic relief who says, “Oh yeah, Bully! Ha ha! I’m just going to dance around you for a second!” It’s like having that comic relief once in a while. Ruby…
INTERVIEWER. Oh, you mean throughout.

RUBY1. Yes, exactly. Just something even for like two seconds. There were a lot of parts where Mambo is wandering around. It would be cute to have them cross paths but never actually interact with each other. And then, when they do, he would say, “Oh… I’ve seen you before but I’ve never actually put two and two together.” It would be like super cute [laughs]. Ruby I liked her involvement how it was very delayed. I thought it was a nice little pick-me-up. It was a nice happy ending to it and I thought it was super cute.

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?

RUBY1. I applied a lot more of the techniques I’ve been working on personally. Especially singing something like Ruby’s because it has sort of a range to it. The first time singing it thru I felt like it was more difficult I was conscious of the tongue things and mouth things I was working on so it was a lot easier. For Sammi I thought it was kind of insane, where I it was like I was just like channeling her fun side like “Oh and I’m singing this, I should be thinking more continuously but I was just “Oh it was just really fun!”

INTERVIEWER. You felt more confident?

RUBY1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. I always feel that way the second time around too. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

RUBY1. Yes definitely in the Ruby. When we originally had it written it was going to an A. It was nice how the chord was written so we could make it an F. And I thought it sounded really pretty. Once I sang it a couple times through, I felt very confident and comfortable. I like that we could make that adjustment to our comfort level, personally. I think that’s really important.

INTERVIEWER. I think that change is a good change. I like it better and I wouldn’t change it back.

RUBY1. Oh yeah, I thought it fit very, very well.

INTERVIEWER. Did you have opportunities to practice one or more specific vocal technical elements during rehearsals? (For example: high notes, coloratura, legato, low notes).

RUBY1. Absolutely. I got practice everything. That’s another reason to show up to rehearsal, so you can practice the singing with the staging.
INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances? In which ways?

RUBY1. Definitely. Everyone was really nice and supportive. I didn’t know like 90% of those people going into it. So I had like my core group of friends that I started out with and by the end of it, we were all making jokes and bouncing fun quirky ideas off of each other. In the opening chorus scenes, where we were all being overly animated towards the end of it because we all knew each other and didn’t care if we looked like doofuses [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. That’s great.

RUBY1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

RUBY1. Two of them I guess. The first, whenever I sing something even though I want to be a singer and I am, I always feel uncomfortable if I don’t have a recording to listen to. I worry, “Is this what they want? Is this OK?” I’m afraid someone else is going to judge me like “she’s not singing in key or she’s not doing this right.” So it can be very uncomfortable personally. Something else awkward, I think that would just be it like on a personal level, when we were first going through the music and we hadn’t made the changes yet, I was worried, “Oh this is going to come out badly. Please don’t judge me.”

INTERVIEWER. OK. Well of course you didn’t know me yet.

RUBY1. Yes!

INTERVIEWER. I know all the singers were nervous about making a bad first impression.

RUBY1. Yes, even though we already had the job, exactly [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer – made you feel “OK I got this! I’m a singer and performer, this is what I do!”

RUBY1. I remember a little girl came up to me afterwards and she said, “Wow, you and Mambo are so cute together.” I think that is really awesome to see that kind of response from someone so young. Because like, I had never sung with MAMBO1 and having someone who was so friendly and was so very talented to sing with and perform with and act off of was really nice. I think even just the encouragement from all of my friends: especially my friends who are in studios with me. In the opera they were all saying, “Oh you seemed so much more animated and you seemed so much more into this than what we see in opera class.” I felt it was a very free-spirited environment. Whereas, when I’m singing
Puccini, I have to have like a particular stance and everything else whereas, when I’m singing something totally new, I can be totally into it. So now, adapting that is the next big step.

INTERVIEWER. Do you think you can approach everything like that now? Or, would that be a goal?

RUBY1. It’s definitely a goal I’m working on: how to adapt something like singing in English, my first language, to singing in French, German, and Italian. I want the comfort level to be the same. I don’t want an expression on my face that says, “I’m singing in a language and I know what I’m saying because I studied it, but it’s still different.” and then to be able to interpret it. “OK I’m singing a Schubert art song. How am I going to interpret it the same way I sing a Quilter art song?” I don’t know. Does that make any sense?

INTERVIEWER. Aside from what you were just saying as a performer, were there any moments when you felt a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? If so, can you describe the difference?

RUBY1. Definitely. A couple weeks prior we had a lot of rehearsal time and I think it was week three when we were going through the last touches. I remember we were practicing up on the fourth floor and I remember there was a point when I got done singing Ruby and I thought, “That was actually really musical.” It wasn’t just me channeling the character; I was focusing on what I’d been working on, like posture and breathing. You could just go through and sing some of the songs, but I really focused in on the technique of it. It’s nice when you have all your friends there that are at different technical levels than you. You can see they’re not doing something specific with their jaw, so you focus in on that. Or, they’re not breathing properly, so you focus in on that. And especially when I tried to do that in the final performances, I realized it was putting all those things together and it was helping me. When I was doing something as simple as standing and singing, I was focusing in on the breath and the placement of my tongue and I was a lot more conscious of technique. So now, eight months later, I’m more conscious of these kinds of things.

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

RUBY1. I was really excited because I’ve never done recordings of that kind. I usually just do an audition recording. Your pianist is there and you do seven million take and stop and go back. And I went to the Mambo session thinking it was higher stakes. We had two chances and it was an opportunity to put everything into it. And I like the intensity of that kind of pressure. Even though it wasn’t really pressure, I made myself do the best I could every time.
And I wanted to put the pressure on myself. “This better be good… I want it to be good.” [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

RUBY1. I honestly expected more people to come in not knowing what was going on. It had been eight months. It’s been a while. But I was very happy everyone came in with the same fun attitudes. We were all saying, “Oh, these are the same problems we had eight months ago. Let’s figure it out now.” So my expectations started low and we surpassed them [laughing].

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel the music would come back easily?

RUBY1. With the chorus and with Sammi I was very comfortable. The first time I was kind of weary, but the second time through I had a lot more time with it and with my teacher. It felt a lot more comfortable.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved?

RUBY1. As silly as this sounds, I wish we could have all done it together and watched each other. I think that would have helped, even if we were giving each other feedback like we were doing in the performance process. We would often say, “maybe if you stand like this and try to act more fun about it,” or, “You’re a fun character but loosen up a little bit.” And even when you’re recording, people forget that we’re singers and whatever is incorporated in the character will be heard through the recording. So I think that maybe watching everyone over a two or three-day recording process, even if people come in and out, always being present there would have helped.

INTERVIEWER. Do you think recording to the animation would make that difference because you would see the silly characters?

RUBY1. Definitely. Especially with this, because there’s nothing else to reference. So you would see someone’s idea of Ruby and she’s cute and very timid. During dialogue, I could see, “Oh that’s what she looks like.” And when she’s speaking to Mambo she’s going to have more affection in her voice.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it and if so, can you describe how?

RUBY1. Definitely in a good way. We had done this so many times. I think when there’s time off and you look at the music again, it’s much more fun. You can get a little more animated. Especially in the group numbers where you’re depending on six or seven other people. In the solo part its just you, but that was kind of fun too.
INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording that were easier than performing?

RUBY1. As silly as it is, having the music in front of me is always nice. I know the Damn B is coming up, right? I can see it right in front of me. But I could prepare and I think that was definitely a little bit helpful.

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?

RUBY1. More challenging. I noticed with Ruby when I was singing with Mambo, that I fed off of his energy. Whereas, when I was singing by myself, there wasn’t really anyone to feed off of, so I thought, “OK, now you have to sing this high note and make sure you’re doing everything properly like support.” And also, when I was singing with Mambo, I was thinking, “Oh, OK! I really do feel his pain. I touched his hand and I know what this is supposed to feel like.”

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents during the recording that made you feel successful?

RUBY1. I think so. The group number, after doing it a few times it seemed like, “Oh we finally nailed it!” [laughs]. Definitely.

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe a difference in confidence for the rehearsals, performances, and the recording?

RUBY1. My confidence level definitely went up between the two periods. I mean even between day one when we got the music and the performance. My confidence level has definitely gone up.

INTERVIEWER. That is nice to hear.

RUBY1. It’s really difficult when you get something new and you think, “You have to make this. You have to come up with this.” Sammi, she’s sassy, and she has a lot of energy and she’s a dancer. OK, so what does that mean when it comes to singing? You have to take it from A to B. And the same with Ruby: OK, so she’s a really cute girl who likes Mambo and she sings a love song. OK, let’s take that from A to B. And then when you’re recording it, now let’s try to take the technique from A to C.

INTERVIEWER. Do you think you would like to do another original show?

RUBY1. Definitely. I think it’s really helpful and really important in the school setting. As a singer I want to try to see what everyone else’s ideas are. Especially since I’m from a classical setting. So I’m usually singing something that’s written hundreds of years ago. But something like this, you have all your friends around you that are also looking to try new things. And we see, “Oh that’s
a really cool idea. What made you come up with this?” Then you move to, “Can I take this and do this to it?” Especially when you don’t get a lot of singing opportunities. It’s really awesome to be able to say, “Hey I finally have an opportunity to perform in a show in which I have something to offer.” And I especially love children’s opera because you don’t need to have a big huge opera voice and you don’t need to have a huge musical theater voice. You can just have your own voice, and it’s accepted.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

RUBY1. I became more aware of my pronunciation of the dialogue and music. With children, I wanted to make sure that they clearly understood what each of my characters was saying. I really wanted to get laughs with Sammi.

RUBY1. Performance Practice: I absolutely love to perform and performing in a children’s opera was a completely new experience for me. I have performed in children’s theater in the past, but this was a different experience. I enjoyed getting to make my characters my own and take charge of each character. I would absolutely love to perform in another children’s opera in the future.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

RUBY1. I felt a little change for breath support with the addition of the costumes. Because the costumes were so flexible and yet stiff, they helped me make sure my posture stayed proper.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?

RUBY1. Yes, I was very conscious of my diction. Since it was a children’s opera, I wanted to make sure they could clearly understand what I was saying. I struggle still with making my diction (in any language) clear towards my break and above. I think I was very clear with my diction in all of my characters throughout my range for Mambo.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?
RUBY1. Ensemble work is sometimes frustrating for me because everyone learns their music at different paces and pronounces things differently. And everyone sings with different emotions. I believe the Mambo cast had a nice blending of everyone working together to achieve a common goal of unity. I always approach my ensemble music just like my solo music: first the rhythms, then the notes, and then the text. I would not make any changes to the process.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

RUBY1. It has informed me that it is okay to make mistakes. As a singer and performer, I am extremely hard on myself when I make a mistake. With the recording process, you get the luxury of getting a do-over if a note is out of tune or you miscount a rhythm. I thoroughly enjoyed the recording process and look forward to future experiences.

Bobbie2

Interview 1

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

BOBBIE2. I think that Professor Barrett announced to the class and you sent us an email. I was in a couple hours later.

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

BOBBIE2. I really think that – well last semester I was trying to prove myself to the department because I messed up in the fall a little because I didn’t know what I was doing. And it kind of put me in the right mindset – like “this is what I really love to do.” I mean you know normally how much drama we have but we didn’t have that in this crew. You saw that sense of family and it was a really great experience. You taught me a lot. I never really had where I get to practice over and over so I would get it. You taught me how to count and how to perform. It was really the kind of learning experience that I needed. Because on campus it’s kind of hard to get that because of all the courses we take. So it was really special to be able to participate in something like this. It was unique and different and was original.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals? How did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsal process.

BOBBIE2. Well, everyone I know that’s had you as a teacher says that like, we all think that you’re really positive to work with. Because you’re always, even if you have a bad day or something, you’re not like; you’re never in a bad
mood honestly, so we always get more energy off of you. So like I was just looking forward to working with you because a lot of my friends have had you as a voice teacher but I never really like... I would see you in the building and come into voice class and opera workshop and talk for a few minutes but I never got to work with you and I’d say, “Monica seems really cool but I don’t really know her. So I was excited that I was going to work with you and I was really glad that I had that opportunity.

INTERVIEWER. The rehearsal experience, was it comfortable for you?

BOBBIE2. Yes, you know, you were always there to help us. It wasn’t that we needed to be nervous to come to you with a question. You were pretty approachable.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances? How did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

BOBBIE2. At first I was like “Oh my God this is going to be so fun.” it was so cute and I was like what is this? But the leaves were cute though. And then after we all like, all the cast members we loved it. It was a fun experience and it was light. Something we felt like very anxious about. My mom came and my sister and my little sister loved it. She usually hates going to performances.

INTERVIEWER. Oh that’s great. I remember your sister.

BOBBIE2. We took her to see one and she hates it. She always falls asleep and she hates it. But this was like the right amount of time I think that it wasn’t pressing on the child attention span. So I think it was that, for your target market I think, good to know. So my sister liked it and she’s 13.

INTERVIEWER. Oh I see. That’s a tough age.

BOBBIE2. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Can you compare how you felt as a singer and performer in the first staging rehearsal to how you felt as a singer and performer in the final run-throughs?

BOBBIE2. I think in class if I don’t know what I’m doing or I have to have a certain expression and I’ll try to sing something but I won’t really know what I’m doing with it. So the first, like I didn’t really know what I was doing. After working with you I was able to understand the characters better and perform it to a better ability. Things like that.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process have been improved, and why? (And you won’t hurt my feelings.)
BOBBIE2. I think that it’s not you, I think it’s just like the students because we’re all so busy with our school work and a million other things; but I think on our part if we could have like learned our stuff a little better or were more prepared. I don’t really think it was you because you were pretty accessible. I think it was more on our part because we had to deal with like the opera and school and like choir, and like everything scheduled at the same time so we don’t know what we’re doing and then we’re in all different directions so it’s like, it wasn’t like something we could really improve. It was just like being overwhelmed on campus and because we like are music students we all want to be in as many things as possible. At least I know I do too much but, like this is like something that I really like, I needed last year, cause it really put me in the right mindset like I said earlier. There wasn’t much for you to change.

INTERVIEWER. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

BOBBIE2. Well actually this is actually because at this school we don’t have much funding for our productions, our stage productions in Whitman, this was like a vital thing we needed. Because we never experience quick change, we never experience knowing where to stand, how to do this because, even the grad students don’t get to experience having to deal with that back stage – what they’re going to have to do for their real lives. I think what you did was giving us that experience that we really needed because We will like for Fledermaus right now like, we didn’t have any props. Like you wouldn’t understand what the opera’s about cause of that. And like Mambo like, because we had, even if it was like a simple tree or whatever you still understood what was going on and where we were. When we did Traviata and Fledermaus you wouldn’t know where we are or what’s going on because we’re just sitting on stage in ball gowns. Even if it’s not – even when the chorus was needed. In Mambo we really practiced if it was like a real production as if like, you know we had the set we had the stage, we had lights, exactly, and we had lights even. So what you did was you gave us what we all craved and needed cause how are we supposed to jump from undergrad or grad school into a production that we maybe auditioned to get hired for if we don’t know how to quickly change into something before the next number. I think that was something that really, that was another reason I was really grateful because I don’t know, even in high school I didn’t have parts really, but I still will have to like experience props. I was always in the back right corner as a bumblebee or whatever. What I’m saying is this is really what we needed. I think everyone was grateful for that.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot.

BOBBIE2. Bobbie was funny because I had to try to show Mambo the more violent side of dealing with things. She admits, “Although I like your point of view,” I kind of just want to stick to what I want to do. But Bobbie also has to learn about different ways to cope and deal with strategies in situations. Magnolia
was this cute little leaf, and she didn’t really know (about the bullies). She was checking on him just to make sure he was OK. And she got his mom.

INTERVIEWER. She’s sweet.

BOBBIE2. Yes she was sweet. So like I’m very interested in finding how different people deal with different situations.

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you? Well yours was acting. It was all about rhythm. So how was that for you after the eight-month break?

BOBBIE2. I think it went OK I don’t know.

INTERVIEWER. For me, each time I do a role, even if it’s a different translation, each time it’s a little easier. That was the situation I was trying to create for the cast so you could revisit the characters in a new situation. What was that like for you? Did things change?

BOBBIE2. I think I wasn’t as intimidated by it. I was like what are we doing? Then I think because I’d learned it eight months prior I was able to have more fun with it. I was a little loosened up and it wasn’t such a scary experience. Also that just ties it down, the difference. So like you gave us the real experience of having to be on stage and learning a role then later doing it again and its like what you did is what we actually need at this school. So that was kind of important. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role or musical challenges in your particular role? Bobbie was actually musically tricky. That was my feeling about it anyway. So, if you felt there were tricky parts in either one of the roles, can you describe them? I didn’t find it tricky but I was jealous that the other performers got to sing like really pretty stuff and I was like Oh I have to do like a rap. Like the…and so I was like I wanted to sing something but I was like "You know what, this is a good experience because, hay its practice for counting and getting outside of my comfort zone." So I ended up really liking it.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel that you had enough opportunities to run it in rehearsals for the vocal/technical elements to improve?

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances? In which ways?

BOBBIE2. You mean like the support of all the students?

INTERVIEWER. Yes.

BOBBIE2. I think we all like, we all had a great time. We are all friends. We all take the same opera workshop, Paul Sperry’s class. You know we all joke. We all have group chats. So you know, it wasn’t like a weird experience to be together.
INTERVIEWER. Were you able to meet some new people? Were there any people in this that you hadn’t met?

BOBBIE2. Actually the other Bobbie I didn’t really know. I think she’s in chorus but I didn’t really get to speak to her. Oh, and the girl from…

INTERVIEWER. Reno?

BOBBIE2. That’s really cool. Like we got to meet someone who was hoping to go to music school. And I got to like be with her and tell her, “don’t do this, do that [laughs].” You know like make sure do this when you get there. So it was actually a cool experience to have so many diverse backgrounds in one production, which also is bound to happen in the real world. So it was really cool to happen.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

BOBBIE2. I don’t think there was anything awkward.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

BOBBIE2. I think it was just like we were all having fun. So it was self-validation that we were all smiling and all joking around and no one ever felt intimidated to ask for help. So it wasn’t a negative experience. It was pretty interesting.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

BOBBIE2. Succeeding as a performer?

INTERVIEWER. Yes, you were up there and felt, “OK, this is what I do.”

BOBBIE2. I think that, well what I said earlier was like how; sometimes to me music is really hard. And I have so many different interests on campus (lists). I mean like I really do love music, and sometimes I’m nervous like is this really going to be for me? Can I do this? I can’t even figure out this chord for harmonic analysis and I don’t know what I’m doing. And then when you’re on stage with everybody you just feel like you get a burst of energy. So there’s just something about that that like plays into it and having that right before like midterms kind of made me be more, it gave you like a little inspiration that you needed to keep going because it gets really stressful in music school [lowers voice]. I’m being honest.
INTERVIEWER. I’ve been there [laughs].

BOBBIE2. Yes, exactly! It’s like you know what I mean. So like, little things like that. You have the longest day and you can say like, “Oh I literally don’t feel like going to rehearsal and I’m going to die.” And then for some reason you get on stage and you look like you’re dying but you’re actually having a good time. So I think this also taught me I need to show a little more expression on my face because I know it looks like I’m dying but I don’t mean to look like I’m dying. My mom videoed the show and when we were watching it, she said, “why do you look depressed?” I said, “No I’m having a good time.” So it’s a really different experience to see how you appear to the audience. I had never had the chance to act. I was given that opportunity (in *Mambo*) and now I know I have a long way to go.

INTERVIEWER. That’s all right. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? If so, can you describe the difference?

BOBBIE2. I think that because this role force me to really say “you know what you’re going to act in front of the audience, you’re going to have to do this in the right beat” and after going there it kind of helped me in a) for juries because it got me out of the being so frantic like “oh I need to act this out a little” I think in the past year that I’ve been in school I tried to get stage time because I never really had it. We need to learn how to be on stage and be comfortable at some point, as soon as possible. But it takes a lot for me to be able to do that so I think that having this definitely because we did two shows helped.

INTERVIEWER. That’s great.

BOBBIE2. So it was good to be able to practice it in different ways and I was chorus for some of the shows and had role in the other shows. But telling me I had different characters and memorizing what I had to do so I really was grateful for that.

INTERVIEWER. To be clear, did you feel that it helped your confidence?

BOBBIE2. Oh confidence, yeah.
BOBBIE2. I was excited. I didn’t look at the music for a while so it was fun to do it again and work with you. It was just a bummer because I was sick.

INTERVIEWER. But you did a good job.

BOBBIE2. Thankfully, hopefully. I was just so out of it.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

BOBBIE2. I was expecting to do takes and do it. We had to just fix a few things. You have to be patient recording to get the right result.

INTERVIEWER. What were expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel music would come back easily?

BOBBIE2. With me, because I’m more of an ear person, so the minute I learn something I always have it. So it was good to have the experience to see how well I retained the music that I had.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved?

BOBBIE2. In recording, I was pretty comfortable. You did Mambo’s part with me, so it helped me know where I was.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it and how?

BOBBIE2. Yes, I think it definitely was. I wish I could add more acting to it but what was I going to do?

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it?

BOBBIE2. I guess it was the version was faster on the recording. So my counting was off a little. But besides that I don’t think so.

INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

BOBBIE2. Recording is a little less imitating with. Because you’re with the people that like “I’ve seen you work on it” so if you do something wrong, they’ll notice it but you can just go back and fix it. When it happens live you kind of just have to go OK it happened.

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?
BOBBIE2. In the recording you don’t have to act out as much. It was pretty equal I guess. What was the question?

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?

BOBBIE2. It was less challenging because I had worked on it with you and at practice. I think it got better.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel support of your peers or the people around you when you were recording?

BOBBIE2. Definitely. You were all laid back and understanding.

INTERVIEWER. Did you recall any awkward moments?

BOBBIE2. No but I’m just mad that I was sick.

INTERVIEWER. Were there incidents, remarks or responses that made you feel successful.

BOBBIE2. You were saying "That’s great, good job." You do a lot of positive reinforcement. And I think you were acting it out to give me more energy so that I would act it out.

INTERVIEWER. I think I was just having fun [laughs].

BOBBIE2. Yes, we were having fun. It could be that too.

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe the difference, if any, in confidence for rehearsals, performances, and the recording?

BOBBIE2. The regular performance was very different because we had to make sure we knew the costume we were going to wear and it was more not nerve-wracking but it was more of a hyped up thing. For the recording I could have been in pajamas and a toothbrush in your mouth. So it was very different presentation wise. There’s a visual element to the performance aspect. There’s another element to your preparedness whereas in recordings you have to just focus on knowing your stuff. In reality it’s audio, you only have to compensate for a mistake you might make that has to do with your ears. And when its just you alone, speaking or singing, during the recording its very different.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel like you gained confidence in yourself as a performer?

BOBBIE2. I think it definitely helped me grow. Because like I told you I didn’t know what counting was. I didn’t know and it kind of taught me some skills that we definitely needed. We needed to practice having to change
costumes. Having to be back stage and be quiet, because you’re not all on stage. It was really a good experience and it really helped my little confidence grow a little bit.

Hillary

Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

HILLARY. From you – in Opera Workshop I think. I have a horrible memory but I think so.

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe your feelings about participating?

HILLARY. Wait, what was the question. Well at first I was like, well it’s another thing to do. But then I was like, well it’s an opportunity to have a role and I haven’t really had one here. I felt like it was organized so I felt like time wasn’t really wasted. You said what you needed from us and it was clear and encouraging. I felt like, you know, it was a positive experience.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals? How did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsal process?

HILLARY. I think, based on other experiences, I had very low expectations. I hadn’t really experienced an organized director who knows what they want and would come in and do it. So I was surprised. It was nice.

INTERVIEWER. Compare how you felt as a singer and performer in the first staging rehearsal to how you felt as a singer and performer in the final run-throughs.

HILLARY. I guess it felt—because I didn’t know you and the music looked hard to me—more timid in the beginning. I felt more confident in the end.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances? How did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

HILLARY. I don’t know what expectations I had for the performance. Well actually, I felt like I exceeded what I expected from myself, which was nice. I feel like the whole ensemble also did with the exception of learning all the chorus parts perfectly. But aside from that I felt like the character was a little more animated than I expected.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why?
HILLARY1. How would it? I don’t know… [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. I’m just going to throw this out there and maybe this will help, but you don’t have to feel there could be an improvement. There are no expectations here. I actually designed the rehearsal flexibility into the study. Some people in these interviews have mentioned that it bothered them because they were more available than some of the others. Some people only did it because it was flexible.

HILLARY1. No, I think that is why I did it. Yes – I really can’t think of anything.

INTERVIEWER. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

HILLARY1. Well the costumes were kind of funny in and of themselves so that helped with the characters.

INTERVIEWER. You’ve done a lot of performing.

HILLARY1. Yes

INTERVIEWER. You’ve been through the process… this is such a fanciful kind of a show, so specifically walking around in that little leaf with the crazy stuff you had to do, how did that inform your experience.

HILLARY1. Putting on that costume, it does sort of transform you. You can’t really be serious wearing a giant sparkly costume. You can’t just stand there and sing. You have to do something. So everything expands from the costume.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your characters advanced the plot.

HILLARY1. I have to think. Well, I mean I think… Wait what was the first question?

INTERVIEWER. Well, did you feel the character’s personality or significance in the show had an affected your approach or performance?

HILLARY1. Hillary takes herself very seriously and she’s actually ridiculous when you look at it. Her ridiculousness helped Mambo come to the conclusion that he doesn’t want to be like that and that he’s actually not so bad off. Which is good.

INTERVIEWER. I have to tell you that I was so thrilled that you did that character. You were so hilarious [laughing]. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?
HILLARY1. I would say with the time and without being around the people, doing it again, I felt a little disconnected from it over time. I didn’t put the time into it this time, I just kind of came [laughing] – I guess the whole experience helps it. But it still brought back the memories.

INTERVIEWER. You said you didn’t put as much time into it?

HILLARY1. The second time.

INTERVIEWER. So did you feel it was just part of you?

HILLARY1. Yes, I didn’t have to work so hard at it again. So that’s amazing.

INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

HILLARY1. Well at first just being afraid of singing coloratura, which I know is crazy because I’m doing it, but it was scary. Especially when I hadn’t really done it until last year. Because I said I was a coloratura but I didn’t think I was going to get all that… like Oh no, can I do it? But then, you know, I surprised myself and could.

INTERVIEWER. What opportunities to practice one or more specific vocal technical elements during rehearsals did your roles present?

HILLARY1. Yes, yeah definitely.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you could actually improve during rehearsals – vocally?

HILLARY1. Yes!

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances? In which ways?

HILLARY1. Yes, I mean I didn’t really think about it. But actually everyone was very complimentary. So yeah!

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

HILLARY1. I don’t really – not that I can think of no.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?
HILLARY1. Yes, when my students came up to me and they were amazed. Also, when the performance happened and a kid yelled, “She’s behind you!” That was funny. They believed it. Because you know kids don’t lie.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

HILLARY1. When I started to ask questions, you were informative and open to ideas. It helped me feel more connected with the character and I wasn’t worried about the singing. And also, honestly the fact that you were very encouraging helped. Cause I was like, I don’t know does it sound OK? I don’t know. And you were like “No it’s great.” I don’t know if you would tell me if it wasn’t [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. Of course I would have. I would have made sure that the production values were met. Feelings aside, the audience comes first. But I wouldn’t have been mean about it.

HILLARY1. Yes. Well I guess connecting to the character and that getting the positive feedback, as I still was new in doing coloratura.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? If so, can you describe the difference?

HILLARY1. Yes, definitely. I mean like I said, when you haven’t done a role in a long time, or almost never in opera, to experience and feel as though you’ve done something well and to get positive reinforcement makes you feel accomplished and more confident.

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

HILLARY1. Fear! Well in recording I’m trying to be perfect. I’ve done recordings before and thought “Oh damn, the notes!” So that was my initial reaction. But then I did it and it was not really hard at all.

INTERVIEWER. Oh no, fear? My next question is about your expectations. Can you tell me how your expectations compared to the actual process?

HILLARY1. I sang it a couple times and thought, “Really that was good.” So it was much more pleasant than I had anticipated [laughs].
INTERVIEWER. What were expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel music would come back easily?

HILLARY1. Uh yeah? I kind of did actually. Like the music or…?

INTERVIEWER. Any of it, words, music, vocalism?

HILLARY1. Yes I did expect it to. It kind of did. I’m still a perfectionist. I’m never happy with anything. Everything that comes out so I’m like “well it could still have been better. But um, I’m losing my train of thought. Sorry.

INTERVIEWER. You’re totally fine. In which ways might the recording process be improved?

HILLARY1. It was pretty simple and it was not a problem at all. So I can’t really think of anything.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it and how?

HILLARY1. The second time it was easier because I could imagine what it was like when I was the character, without the running around.

INTERVIEWER. Was that part of your process? Imagining…

HILLARY1. Yes

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it?

HILLARY1. I guess when you’re performing it you can focus on the character. When you’re recording it you’re thinking, “well I have to sing it perfectly.” So that was the obstacle.

INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

HILLARY1. Well the fact that I’m not moving around. So I have nothing to distract from the voice so I could focus on that.

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?

HILLARY1. I don’t know. I mean. Well almost more so in the recording because I’m trying to be perfect about it. So it’s harder because nothing is ever perfect.

INTERVIEWER. That’s really informative. You mentioned it was easier at the end of rehearsals than the beginning. So did you find there was muscle memory when you came back to record?
HILLARY1. Yes there was, but I still don’t feel 100% confident in my coloratura. But you know I Yes I guess I just still don’t feel my coloratura is perfect. I don’t know really what I’m doing.

INTERVIEWER. When you recorded I believe it was just the recording crew there, right?

HILLARY1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel support?

HILLARY1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel awkward moments?

HILLARY1. I’m just like “Oh you want to do it again” I don’t know was the first time good? Maybe not.

INTERVIEWER. Did that make you feel put on the spot?

HILLARY1. No, it was just “was the first time good enough?” I don’t know.

INTERVIEWER. Typically when you’re recording, the engineer asks for two takes.

HILLARY1. Oh, OK.

INTERVIEWER. Even in the dialog recordings, if it was perfect, the engineer still asked for a second take. Otherwise, if something goes wrong with that perfect take, the engineer is left without anything to splice in. I probably should have said that up front.

HILLARY1. Yes – OK.

INTERVIEWER. Thank you for telling me that. Did anything happen that made you feel good?

HILLARY1. Yes, you were very positive so that made me feel good.

INTERVIEWER. Positive input.

HILLARY1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. What about the singing?

HILLARY1. Yes, I felt good about it. I’m still weird about my coloratura.
INTERVIEWER. Can you describe any difference in confidence for rehearsals, performances, and the recording?

HILLARY1. Yes, so I guess when I came into the rehearsal process I wasn’t so confident. In the performance I was more confident, and the recording the even more.

INTERVIEWER. Based on your answers I want to ask one more question. Do you feel that doing a project like this is a worthwhile project for someone about to go into the field professionally?

HILLARY1. Yes, I think any opportunity to do a role, especially vocally intimidating, helps us become more confident.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

HILLARY1. It was difficult for me to maintain breath support during the coloratura singing. The diction was also difficult during the coloratura diction and during the opening ensemble number with quick moving words. The coloratura starting out with difficulty, but became easier the more that I did it. The other elements of high notes, language, register shifts were easy for me. As a side note, I did encounter all of the elements with the exception of very high notes in my role.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

HILLARY1. I think because the costume was very large, I honestly felt that I had more room to breathe. Also, the costume helped me get into character, which helped me to sing the role as well.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?

HILLARY1. I had to focus on diction in the opening number because the words go by very quickly in that song. I would practice speaking the words in rhythm to get them into my brain, and then practice them on pitch.

INTERVIEWER. I'm not sure that this particular production informed my approach to learning ensemble material. I always to my best to make sure that I
know my part prior to rehearsal, so that didn't change anything that I can think of.

HILLARY1. This experience made me slightly less apprehensive when it comes to recording, but I still think I would prepare more in advance of the next recording, so that the melodies are readily in my brain.

Sammi1

Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

SAMMI1. You emailed me [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

SAMMI1. Well it was a lot of fun. I like it a lot actually. And I like the fact that it was an anti-bullying message for kids. That made it really nice.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals? How did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsal process?

SAMMI1. Umm, I didn’t have too many expectations because I knew there were a bunch of professionals working on it. So I knew it was going to be quick in and out with most of it and which my expectations were met with that.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances? How did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

SAMMI1. I thought that there would be more kids there actually. Which that was I was surprised. But I mean other than that, the only thing I was upset about was that I messed up. [laughs] Aaaargh.

INTERVIEWER. I know I remember seeing you,

SAMMI1. I was like “Oh”

INTERVIEWER. Even before you got off stage…

SAMMI1. Like “Oh” I couldn’t believe it! It was just one line and I was like “what the…” and then Mambo wasn’t speaking and I was like…

INTERVIEWER. But that’s just live performance.

SAMMI1. Oh yeah, no I’ve messed up before too. It was just like “It’s rhyming. The lines lead you to where you need to go” [laughs].
INTERVIEWER. That’s funny. I have certainly been there. Can you compare how you felt as a singer and performer in the first staging rehearsal to how you felt as a singer and performer in the final run-throughs?

SAMMI1. Not sure.

INTERVIEWER. Well, in the first rehearsal that you went to, did you feel differently about your singing compared to the final run through? Did you feel you had enough preparation? Did you feel like you were ready for the performance?

SAMMI1. Oh I totally felt prepared enough. I remember the first time I felt a little bit uncomfortable when I first sang through my songs because they were lower than I thought. So I was like going from head to mixed voice, which I’m not used to, but then by the performance I was fine. It just felt natural so it wasn’t a problem.

INTERVIEWER. Can you compare your expectations to the actual performances?

SAMMI1. I expected myself to get more into it and I didn’t, like in performance. I think I get in my head a lot, which you know [laughs]. Like I was into it, but I probably could have gone a lot further and I should have. Cause, I don’t know, I just kind of like shrink into a corner in my brain sometimes.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel like you got more into it in performance than in rehearsal?

SAMMI1. Yes, like 100%. I definitely got more into it when it was like costumes and…

INTERVIEWER. Right. So then, are you saying you left feeling like you could have done more?

SAMMI1. Yes, probably.

INTERVIEWER. Well I think you did a great job.

SAMMI1. Oh, well thanks.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why? And you won’t hurt my feelings [laughs].

SAMMI1. I don’t think it’s so much on your end. It’s probably on our end. Cause we were, a lot of people kept changing things. Like “Oh I can’t be there because…” I mean I’m guilty of it too because of life or whatever but maybe if people weren’t as indecisive. It’s hard.
INTERVIEWER. I intentionally scheduled around everybody. It was built into the study and part of the initial game plan. I was hoping it would create a more productive environment.

SAMMI1. I see that, I just feel like sometimes people were a little loosey goosey with it.

INTERVIEWER. Of course we’re dealing with students who have busy schedules, but other people have mentioned that it was problematic for them. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

SAMMI1. [laughs] It was funny back stage with the costumes watching them wiggle into them. Because they were made for more than one person. So like, I had a costume that was a little snug on me and fit the other one perfectly. And that was funny. I like the costumes. I liked the costumes for this show. It was a little bit low energy, and then everyone has the costumes on and it was, “Oh! It’s cartoon me [laughing]. We get to jump around now.”

INTERVIEWER. That’s true, that’s funny. Explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot. You can include Bobbie. I know you liked that character and you gave that up for the intern.

SAMMI1. The bully one I liked, Bossy Nova. I liked that one cause the kids had the natural reaction, “don’t do that, that’s not nice.” So I like that. Because that made the underlying plots a little bit more obvious. The boxer, the only thing I felt a little uncomfortable about And I know we talked about that, was the line where he says gun. And that’s like a touchy subject, and yet I feel like it has to be talked about now so I didn’t I think it was fine leaving it in there. And then Sammi was fun. It was a funny song and I got to dance. There’s nothing wrong with that.

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?

SAMMI1. It was so much easier. I came back and it was like “Oh, OK” that was easy. I thought we were going to have to do a bunch of takes. The Boxer came back like nothing, which was a surprised with cause I didn’t even get to perform that one. Yes it was like a lot easier.

INTERVIEWER. I’m glad. Every time I have redone a role it has been easier.

SAMMI1. Yes, that has happened to me with boxing. I had to take a month off because I broke my wrist, and I came back and it probably was the best lesson I ever had, the first one back. She said did you get stronger or something? You’re quicker and you’re stronger and you’re doing the combinations right. And I was like, I don’t know. Just need a break sometimes. It just works.
INTERVIEWER. I think that’s true for singing – sometimes you just need a break. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

SAMMI1. Sammi was probably the only one that I felt a little challenge just because it sat right in that like A to G range. And I thought, "I don’t have a voice there" [laughs]. And I was switching a lot.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel that you had enough opportunities to run it in rehearsals for the vocal/technical elements to improve?

SAMMI1. Oh yes. Because every time I ran it in the beginning I sang it all in head or all in mix and then I started messing around with it. And you told me that it doesn’t sound like there’s any change there. Cause in my head it sounded like that but once you said that, so I knew. There was enough time yeah.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances? In which ways?

SAMMI1. I wasn’t really close with anyone. Like not to their fault. I was just very in my own world. But no one made me feel like I wasn’t supported.

INTERVIEWER. Someone mentioned to me actually that she hadn’t had a chance to get to know you before, and that it was fun to get to know you.

SAMMI1. Yes it was a fun experience but I just wasn’t very close with anyone. But yeah, they were all awesome back stage.

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

SAMMI1. The only time there was like one awkward moment, and I don’t know if anyone else mentioned it, but like [quietly] Hillary1 – she’s a sweetheart—but on the chorus parts she was like “no this is it.” And then sang the wrong thing. I wanted to say, “You’re a soprano, stay on that side.” [Laughing] But it wasn’t horribly awkward just funny.

INTERVIEWER. That was probably a real-world experience.

SAMMI1. [Laughs] Yes – we all laughed about it afterwards, so it wasn’t even a big deal.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

SAMMI1. Oh yes, everyone back stage – they were awesome. It was like hands were up for high fives and were like good job, really great.
INTERVIEWER. Oh, I’m glad.

SAMMI1. Actually when I made the mistake, Sammi came up to me and said “It’s fine” like before I even said anything – the other one that played Sammi. She was like “nobody would even know - I only knew that because I know your lines.” And then Sassy1 was like “I didn’t even know cause I don’t know your lines and I’m in the play.” Yes everyone was really great about it.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

SAMMI1. Walking into the first performance, I was thinking, “Just sing! You got the part for a reason. Now just do it!”

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? If so, can you describe the difference?

SAMMI1. I always find that I’m more confident after the performances. I tell my dad this. I can perform well for people; I’m comfortable with it. It’s when I just have to stand there and sing that I get nervous. Give me something to do [laughs]. So I always feel more confident after a performance, like “Yes! I did that!”

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel that having the extra performance or opportunity added to your confidence in general?

SAMMI1. Yes definitely. I think any performance would help with my confidence. I wish this school would have more performance opportunities [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. That is good to know.

SAMMI1. [Laughing] I do!

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

SAMMI1. Excited, nervous, etc. I was so nervous.

INTERVIEWER. Really?
SAMMI1. Oh my gosh, I was like, pacing around, flipping through my music, like \[laughs\] I can’t sing this, I have to know it… I was so nervous. I don’t know why. It wasn’t \[laughs\] I don’t know what it was though.

INTERVIEWER. You answered the next question, what were your expectations regarding the recording process? Can you tell me how those expectations compared to the actual recording process?

SAMMI1. It was a lot easier like, just chill than I thought it was going to be. I don’t know what I was expecting. I don’t know if I thought you were going to bite my head off or something, I don’t know

INTERVIEWER. \[Laughs\] You know me.

SAMMI1. I know. I texted you like 6 times. I was like I don’t know… do we… I don’t know what was going on I really don’t, but it was like, really awesome. I had a lot of fun actually.

INTERVIEWER. Do you think that experience would make you feel more comfortable going into another recording?

SAMMI1. Yes – I actually want to do another recording.

INTERVIEWER. That’s wonderful.

SAMMI1. I love that. That was awesome

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding recollection? In other words, did you feel the music would come back to you quickly after an eight-month break or did you feel it would be like starting over?

SAMMI1. Yes, Listen at first when you said recording, for some reason I thought you meant video recording. I think that’s why I freaked out. I was like I haven’t looked at this for months. And then you said, “you can use music” so I kind of calmed down a little bit when you said that. But then I was like, I’m not sure if I know all the notes. But then it just came back to me when I sang it. But I really didn’t think I had it memorized at all. But I had more memorized than I thought.

INTERVIEWER. It comes back very quickly.

SAMMI1. Yes, it’s in your head.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved and why?

SAMMI1. I don’t know. I thought it was find \[laughs\].

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INTERVIEWER. Do you feel that recording your roles was affected by the fact you had previously performed the role? If so, in what ways? If not, can you explain why not?

SAMMI1. Yes. I think it helped, because it made me, even though I wasn’t performing it, I still put like different inflections on things and I was able to make it sound like “oh something would have happened there if we saw what was going on”

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording the roles that you did not encounter performing the role?

SAMMI1. It was easier. I mean I got really close to performing the boxer, because I had done all the rehearsals basically up until that last little part. So I guess that helped. But I mean that was fine.

INTERVIEWER. Was it easier because you could use your music or because you had done it before?

SAMMI1. I think it was a combination of I wasn’t moving, like during the performance, and then I had music; I think it was a combination of both.

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges in your particular role, did you find them to be as challenging, less challenging or more challenging than they were in the rehearsal and performance process?

SAMMI1. Less.

INTERVIEWER. Can you explain why?

SAMMI1. I don’t know… because when I performed it I was thinking I was consciously thinking “OK you’re, now you’re ahead, there are notes coming up…” that kind of thing. But in the recording I wasn’t thinking I was just singing.

INTERVIEWER. Oh great.

SAMMI1. And it just naturally happened [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during the recording process? It was just George, the recording engineer, and me, but did you feel you had support?

SAMMI1. I mean he raved about me afterwards

INTERVIEWER. Oh yes, he still talks about you. “She was great, I liked recording her.”

SAMMI1. That was a huge confidence builder. That was awesome.
INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during the recording process?

SAMMI1. No!

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses during the recording that made you feel successful?

SAMMI1. Yes, when we did the boxing one, at the end, you were like “We don’t need to do that again” and I was like “Yes!”

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe the difference, if any, in your confidence level for the rehearsals, performance, and recording sessions?

SAMMI1. I was more confident going into the performance, but I was more confident after the recording.

INTERVIEWER. I see.

SAMMI1. I was freaking out about the recording. But then coming out of the recording session I was more confident.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

SAMMI1. I had difficulties with breathing in the Bobby Boxer part since it a very fast paced rap, after enough practice it was not as bad though. For Sammi, I struggled with register shifts shifting from head voice to mixed without letting my voice drop to chest. I struggled a little bit with breath because I was too focused on dancing but the time the performance came around my breath was fine.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

SAMMI1. I didn't feel much difference in my breathing between staging and the performance with the costumes. The costumes gave enough room to be able to breath comfortably.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?
SAMMI1. I was most focused on diction in Bobby the Boxer rap but because I didn't perform it I hadn't come up with any ways to deal with it specifically. I did notice that when we recorded the diction problems had gone away, though. Sammi's part was basically straight forward with the wording and diction so there wasn't many problems with that, more so with phrasing and finding the correct places to breath without cutting words off, which you helped me to find the correct places to breath so that I didn't gargle any words.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?

SAMMI1. I would certainly like to be more prepared for rehearsals in the future. There were a couple rehearsals I had to sight read some of the chorus parts because I focused too much on my own songs. It's partly me needed to gain confidence in myself because I was so nervous about messing up my own parts that I gave the chorus parts the backseat certain times.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

SAMMI1. I would come into a recording more confident after the experience that I had. I would like to record much more in the future. It was a great experience. I would also make sure not to practice my songs too much because I found that having some of it come back from memory was actually helpful because when I tried to learn it over again I was using some of the habits I had from rehearsal out of nerves.

Mambo1

Interview 1

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

MAMBO1. I think I heard it from you during one of the master classes that we had. I think that was one of the first times that you... well that was the first time.

INTERVIEWER. I thought you may have heard about it from the composer, Jessica...

MAMBO1. Oh that’s right, maybe I heard it from her first.

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.
MAMBO1. Well it was such a – you mean the process of the time when we performed it or the rehearsals?

INTERVIEWER. You can address any of it: the process, when you heard about it, whatever you’d like.

MAMBO1. Well first of all, it was very flexible and there was a lot of flexibility with schedule. And also, when we got to rehearse the first time, there was a lot of time to look at things and a lot of patience and openness to change things.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals? How did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsal process?

MAMBO1. Well my expectations were to be able to transmit the idea the main topic of what the opera was about the play was about and I think that once we arrived the first time I think you were very clear of what was the purpose of this composition and how we should try our best to transmit it in the most didactic way, the most child oriented way. 3:00 minutes approximately.

INTERVIEWER. Can you compare how you felt as a singer and performer in the first staging rehearsal to how you felt as a singer and performer in the final run-throughs?

MAMBO1. In the very beginning it was very interesting to rehearse without the costumes because I felt like the costumes and staging was a big portion of the music, of how we want to depict the topic of bullying. But then, once we worked our music, our ideas, and how we want to do things, and we got to staging with costumes it was livelier. We got to experience the feelings and we internalized the music and the message.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances? How did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

MAMBO1. Well my expectations were to be able to give something valuable to the kids that they could take home and really think about the topic of bullying. I think that my expectations during the performance were fulfilled because we had an audience—that’s maybe the body of why we are doing this—and it was very clear I think that we were able to transmit the message to the kids. I’m really confident that they were able to go back home and not only remember the music but also think about why we are doing this. They could take home and really think about the topic of bullying.

INTERVIEWER. That’s great. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why?

MAMBO1. How could it be improved? I don’t remember there being any discomfort during the rehearsal process. I just thinking it was a little bit difficult
to adapt for the first time and this applies to anything else. In anything you do the first time that you are doing something, you’re not comfortable, you’re not used to it. It takes some time to adapt and rehearsing to the tracks was a different experience. But you were very open to change different things, so eventually things were changed on the track to help the singers.

INTERVIEWER. That’s true. In what ways did the costumes and set change the experience for you or add to it?

MAMBO1. I think that it had a visual effect, a visual cue that we could have as a reference of who we are, who we want to be when we perform.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the character you were performing and how. How did Mambo’s character relate to your vocal performance?

MAMBO1. Well, I think that emotions are very tied to our instrument. Therefore I think that it was very important for me to understand who my character was, where he was coming from and how he progressed throughout the whole story. It was important for me to see the progression and how I could depict it with my voice. The music was very changeable during the course of the story. There were so many kinds of motives, different kinds of phrasing and styles; and I think that is very important. It goes together with the personality of Mambo. There were lyric moments when he was sad and coloratura and high notes in the cabaletta. The coloratura and high notes were definitely connected to Mambo’s feelings. All of the music was. That also gave me the energy necessary to sing those parts. How he changes and eventually finds the key that is in his heart. I think that is the main… that’s where we want to reach.

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?

MAMBO1. Well it made me I would say more are we recording? Oh but we can edit this right?

INTERVIEWER. Yes of course. You have final say on what ends up in the final interviews. Your name won’t end up in it, but as soon as I transcribe them, you will have an opportunity to let me know if you are uncomfortable with anything.

MAMBO1. No, no… because I want to think of the right word because it’s a very important question.

INTERVIEWER. I’ll rephrase the question. Between the performance and the recording, did singing Mambo change for you, and if so, can you describe in which ways it changed?
MAMBO1. I have to say that it invokes in you all the memories that you had from the first time. I had such a wonderful experience learning who Mambo was and what was his message and his goal in the story and for the audience was. When I came back to the music, the first thing I had to do was to look at the music and remember key things. But I think that emotionally it’s very important that you had a good experience the first time, because it will come back to you very naturally and very positively and it will bring back good energies.

INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

MAMBO1. There were many vocal challenges in terms of style, in terms of range, and in terms of performing live with a recording, that was very challenging. Also breathing, counting, high notes, coloratura, and so on. There were many different challenges.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel that you had enough opportunities to practice those elements during rehearsals?

MAMBO1. Yes. Also, I prepared separately, I practiced; but during the rehearsal process we always had the time to go over things and you always pointed out the importance that we feel comfortable with performing. And if that would mean that we would have to re-do things, so then we would have the opportunity in the space and flexibility to work it until we feel more applicable to the music.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel that in the rehearsal process, these challenges that you had—the high notes or the low notes or coloratura, the phrasing—do you feel they got better by doing them in rehearsals.

MAMBO1. Eventually yes.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances?

MAMBO1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Oh, I’m glad.

MAMBO1. That’s why I said when you said how they feel to me after the eight-month break, and then it’s evoking all the good memories that I have during the rehearsal process and performance with peers and with you who directed. Everything always with great enthusiasm and a lot of great vision and always with a lot of positivism. Very positive energy so I think that’s the first thing that comes to you with your imagination and your feelings. Once you get that and the rest is just working musically. But that’s not every thing to it.
INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

MAMBO1. [Laughing] During the rehearsals I made a lot of mistakes – sometimes with the words I was changing some things.

INTERVIEWER. And that made you feel awkward?

MAMBO1. Oh no, no, no. No it was funny actually [laughs]. No awkward? I don’t remember feeling myself awkward. I think we have to define the word awkward in order to...

INTERVIEWER. Ah, awkward could mean something different to different people. One singer mentioned they felt awkward because the ensembles weren’t solid, so they felt awkward. Somebody else may have felt awkward that we rehearsed on the fourth floor one time. You may not ever have felt awkward.

MAMBO1. I don’t recall ever feeling awkward. And I have to say this because personally, when you are involved in a production you have to be ready for anything because in the real world you might rehearse here you might rehearse there. It’s historically proven many singers that the great singers they had to be in these productions where they... it’s never going to be ideal. It’s never going to be the way we want. We have to adapt and give the best from ourselves for the music, and for the message that we’re trying to depict. So those things don’t have to be considered. We don’t have to be very bothered, or awkward by it.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful? For instance, “I’m not a student I’m a singer and I’m doing a great job.”

MAMBO1. Well the fact that maybe the conditions sometimes we had one student couldn’t come and another student couldn’t come, the fact that it was very flexible but at the same time it allowed not the ability to have all the singers in one time. Then you really have to be very confident. You have to feel that you have to do things. You have to commit. You have to go and try it and do it. And that’s where the transition goes from the idea of the student and the idea of the performer. Because you have to really take the lead no matter which role. It could be me or any other role, but you have to take the lead. Every role functions in an individual way and also in a group way. But if you don’t do it then no one’s going to do it for you so that’s where the change happens.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel that?

MAMBO1. Yes of course.

INTERVIEWER. I’m so glad.
INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

MAMBO1. Can you ask me again?

INTERVIEWER. In the performance were there moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and as a performer, and if so can you describe them?

MAMBO1. Well the moments where my expectations as a singer and staging are everything coming together very well because there is a moment when you are performing and you can’t really stop to think. And there are moments where you are inevitably, you’re thinking about what you are doing and you’re living the moment and you’re saying “Oh I’m doing this.” And that’s where I felt I was succeeding as a singer and as a performer. When the kid yelled to me, “She’s behind you,” I tried to adapt to that. I did not want to see Hillary, but I stepped forward and looked for help from the audience. Then they all started to tell me where she was. That was a wonderful moment to connect with them as Mambo.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the performances?

MAMBO1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Yes? Can you describe the difference?

MAMBO1. I think vocally it was a confirmation that there were certain phrases that I hadn’t been ready to perform on stage but it was just a matter of, it was a psychological thing. It was something that I was holding myself I was hindering myself. And until I was granted the opportunity I wasn’t able to say to myself here I am and I can do this. I think that’s very important.

INTERVIEWER. So this gave that to you? That opportunity to address those phrases?

MAMBO1. Yes, that I thought that I probably wasn’t able to do or that I probably wasn’t ready to perform on stage given the circumstances.

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

MAMBO1. Very happy and very glad to come back.
INTERVIEWER. Oh good. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

MAMBO1. They were to be able to retain and to preserve the main idea of Mambo.

INTERVIEWER. And the process of recording, was that a comfortable process for you?

MAMBO1. It was very comfortable. And I think that the challenge now, besides the music, I think it was the time that we had. Given the circumstances it was a little more difficult to have everyone together so we had to give a little push and extra push for ourselves to really commit, we didn't have much time to rehearse things. But I think that the expectations were always there. Always remembered what we want to give.

INTERVIEWER. Did that seem more like a professional experience to you? One in which everyone comes in and they know their parts and you just do it?

MAMBO1. Yes, absolutely. I’ve never done it before where I would have to come back with the same people or even different people.

INTERVIEWER. I think you were performing with different people, right?

MAMBO1. Yes, that’s right. It was different. But at the same time we were able to feel that professional environment. Not only because of my peers, but given the time we have to do this we have this goal. The goal hasn’t changed. We still want to give this message and we have to do it.

INTERVIEWER. What were expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel music would come back easily?

MAMBO1. I think that it’s a very important factor like I said before was how much comfortable and how much fulfilled we felt after the first experience. And its through those memories, through those feelings that we had that we once experienced that when we came back to the music it was a little bit more internalized. So we were would have to just go back to that how do you say a coffin that you open back and you try to pick and grab as much as you can. It’s a tool to help you confront the new recording that you experience.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved?

MAMBO1. I don’t know that much about recordings so, to me I think that the crew was always very nice they were very helpful. It was a very nice it was a very comfortable environment. The way that the whole process was directed. The
fact that we were in the middle of school and everyone has their own schedule and jobs and what not we had to, given those circumstances, we had a lot of limitations. And there wasn’t ever a … going back to the recording experience, I think to me, the most radical thing is to have people that are kind that are generous that are flexible and I felt that from the people that were conducting the recording.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it and how?

MAMBO1. I don’t think it was affected I think it was influenced. Because the first time I performed it I felt that I gained so many valuable things that I could apply into my every day self as a performer. So I think that given what I gave there when I had to perform Mambo again, it was more natural for me. I think I was influenced, not that much affected.

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it? For instance, was dialog or acting harder because you weren’t walking around in costume, or was it easier because you could go back and do it over? How did you feel about that?

MAMBO1. You mean in the recording?

INTERVIEWER. Yes, in the recording.

MAMBO1. I think that standing while recording was a little bit more difficult than moving around and really living the character.

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?

MAMBO1. This would sound a little bit contradictory to the last question that I just answered, because living the character enables you to conduct your body in a gesture that would facilitate the way that you sing. But at the same time, it’s difficult to coordinate these things. So there are aspects of performing standing and recording that are probably easier for some phrases, some styles, and some parts.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel that vocally you sang the role more easily in the recording because you had done the performance?

MAMBO1. Yes. I was thinking about this while you were asking me the previous question. It’s more accessible – is that a word?

INTERVIEWER. Yes.

MAMBO1. Accessible, yes.
INTERVIEWER. Can you describe any difference in confidence for the rehearsals, performances, and recording sessions?

MAMBO1. In terms of how much I improved?

INTERVIEWER. In terms of anything you think of. For instance, were there times in the recording where you felt really successful? And if so, were any of those instances different than they were in the performance?

MAMBO1. Yes I think that although they were different circumstances, although they were different moments, the feeling you get from success is the consequence of what you do to achieve success. And I think that we, everybody who worked hard on Mambo felt very successful with the message that we carried and that we were able to deliver. And that we were delivering through the recording as well. I think that you were very clear with what the goal was at the very beginning so those instances of successfulness arrived. We might not have been aware of them but I think that sometimes we would see them through the response from the audience or in the recording through our collective response from everybody that was part of that recording process. The way that we felt about the material. That's the moment where we feel that we accomplish, that we are successful.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

MAMBO1. All of them.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

MAMBO1. The costumes weren’t tight on the abdominal area, so it wasn’t a problem. But due to moving on stage while singing, I had to learn to coordinate my movement, to feel more engagement from my entire body.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?

MAMBO1. Yes, I tried to be clearer on my diction during the dialogues. While singing I tried to focus on singing always on the vowels and delaying the consonant as much as possible, without distorting the sound of the word.
**INTERVIEWER.** How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?

**MAMBO1.** It has helped me to develop more awareness of everybody else's line of music and to think of the music more vertically sometimes in order to be in harmony with the ensemble.

**INTERVIEWER.** How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

**MAMBO1.** I learned about the feeling of coming back into a piece of music that I have previously worked. I also learned about the flexibility of the recording process and about some factors that are important to take into consideration while recording.

Mom2

**Interview I**

**INTERVIEWER.** Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

**MOM2.** Email to singers the class with announcement and Chief mentioned it before

**INTERVIEWER.** Describe your feelings about participating.

**MOM2.** Cool experience – first time I did new music never performed before and was still in process of being composed. Libretto and composition changing throughout process. It’s cool its never been performed or recorded so making it your own -

**INTERVIEWER.** What were your expectations regarding rehearsals? How did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsal process?

**MOM2.** I didn’t really know what to expect. I didn’t know how – I didn’t really have expectations but rehearsals ran so smoothly – very professionally and very on time. Everyone came on time and prepared and you and…Very productive we made the most of putting it together in the very little time we had. It was a really cool experience. It was a first time I had done that – a piece that had never been performed before. The piece had never been done before and was changing still – some of the notes and words in the libretti were being changed to make it better and easier to perform. And it was cool, since it had never been performed before. It had never been recorded. So it gave us the chance to really make it our own. I had never done that before.
INTERVIEWER. Really, there’s a lot of work out there for people who can do that.

MOM2. Yes, I know. Well, I didn’t really know what to expect. I didn’t know or really have any expectations. But rehearsals ran so smoothly. Everything was done very professionally and very on time. Everyone came very prepared as far as performers and you as stage director. I just felt everything – the rehearsals went very smoothly and that we did a really great job and came out with a really great product made the most of the very little time we had to put everything together. We did a really great job and came out with a really great product and great performance.

INTERVIEWER. As a singer with more experience, did you feel by the time you got to the final performances that you had the time you needed to feel comfortable?

MOM2. Like I said, I didn’t know what to expect, what sounds, what feeling what idea we had for the whole production, but I definitely felt comfortable throughout the rehearsal process and I definitely improved as a performer getting more acquainted with the music and also with the other characters and to interact with everyone else in the production. And I felt we all grew in the process. I know I did. I didn’t originally know what kind of feeling we were going to have for the whole performance. I definitely improved as a performer getting used to the character and having time to rehearse with everyone else in the production. I felt like everyone grew as well as myself.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances? How did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

MOM2. I didn’t have any expectations – I thought it was a nice opportunity to perform new music and to work with you and everyone else who was involved.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why?

MOM2. I feel like for the time that we had, and the venue we had to work with and the budget and everything I think – I don’t think there’s anything we could have done better. Everything went very smoothly and everyone was respected no time was wasted. Mine or anyone else’s… with circumstances. I know my time was really respected through the entire production.

INTERVIEWER. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

MOM2. I had never performed in a costume like that. I had to get used to it because I couldn’t move, walk, or have the same spatial relationship to other
people or sets. That took getting used to and took more planning, but it did not affect singing or anything like that. It took more planning and getting used to.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the character you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot.

MOM2. I think the mom really was that support figure that gave Mambo his comfort. She was very comforting and gave him confidence and positive reinforcement. Because she’s the mother, I think—also the way the music is written—it’s very lyrical and soothing, almost like a lullaby, and I approached it in a soothing and comforting way, with longer, softer lines.

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?

MOM2. I think it’s important with any role to learn it and perform it, and then to let it sit without thinking about it. Then when you revisit it, you see it in a new light. You already have the foundation and you can think of more nuances and new parts of the character that you want to bring out. Having the break was really nice and I think I definitely performed and sang it in a new light the second time.

INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

MOM2. No, not really. Very clear line. I felt like it was written very well for the voice and it was very natural and not awkward in any way. I didn’t feel I had trouble with anything.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances? In which ways?

MOM2. Yes definitely. Everybody I mean I already knew a lot of people in the cast and some were new people that I met and everyone was very nice and supported and positive and interested in making something great.

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

MOM2. No not really.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

MOM2. Yes, I mean just feedback from you from the audience from different cast members. I felt like it was received very well by the.
INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

MOM2. Yes I would say that maybe the duet that I sang with Mambo. At first the aria turning into the duet was a little awkward, but after the rehearsals it got better and more comfortable, and we could do it and it well and was very beautiful.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? If so, can you describe the difference?

MOM2. Yes, I did this because this was different than anything I had done before, as far as it was an opera written for children. I had done outreach things, but they weren’t operas written for children. That was very new. That makes me feel good.

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

MOM2. I think it went well, it was – you know everyone came very prepared and we took 1 or 2 takes of each piece so it went by very quickly and very well. All went very smoothly.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

MOM2. I thought it would take longer or maybe since we hadn’t sung the music together that maybe we’d have to do rehearsal, but everyone was really prepared and I had obviously revisited the music so we took off where we left off.

INTERVIEWER. What were expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel music would come back easily?

MOM2. Yes – I kind of expected it to come back to me easily. My part is fairly short and melodic and repetitive like a lullaby, so once you have the melody it doesn’t really leave you. It has a memorable tune. So I wasn’t worried about that. But I definitely looked at it before.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved?

MOM2. No I haven’t heard the recording so I don’t know.
Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it and how?

MOM2. Yes definitely – that always makes a huge difference when you’re singing anything and acted it out and performed the entire character. Of course you have a bigger understanding of your character and their role within the whole story the whole opera.

Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it?

MOM2. No, recording is always different than live performance just because it’s a limited time and its something that will stay forever and can be nerve racking at times in a different way than in a live performance. But I mean it went well.

Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

MOM2. Different.

If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?

MOM2. Yes definitely – everyone was very supportive.

Can you describe any differences in confidence that you experienced during the rehearsals, performances, and recording?

MOM2. Definitely the more that I (like with anything) the more experience you have the more performed the music, the role, with more experience.

Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

MOM2. HIGH NOTES, Breath support- long phrases, Diction - words are very important, Language- English diction, Shifts from head to chest and back to head - big range from high soprano register to low soprano register.
INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

MOM2. The costume did not affect my breath support, it was just matter of getting comfortable and used to the new way of movement in the costume in order for it not to effect the breath support. But it was no uncomfortable or restrictive in any way.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?

MOM2. I really feel that the words my character is conveying are very important and show her relationship to her son. I also feel that since it is a children’s opera it is particularly important to have good diction. As a performer we must make it as easy for the audience as possible to understand so as to not be lost or confused about the story.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?

MOM2. Ensemble music is just as important as solo material if not more important. If possible it is important to have even more time to rehearse ensemble pieces than solo pieces in rehearsal. Although in our particular rehearsal process we had enough time for these ensemble sections and they were well rehearsed. This makes the performers feel for comfortable and at ease when on stage with their colleagues.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

MOM2. When everyone has prepared his or her music so well individually there was not a lot of need for extra rehearsal time, which was nice. I liked the aspect of the recording being several months after the performance because this gave me time to let the music and character of Mom to marinate and develop more over this time period. Coming back to a piece of music after taking a several-month break is very enlightening and refreshing!
INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

ELMER. At Brooklyn College. I had a friend who was involved. And then eventually the glorious and wonderful Miss Monica Harte [laughing] asked me to be involved in this adorable production [Laughing].

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

ELMER. I loved participating in Mambo. I had done a lot of children’s theater, I have a lot of children’s theater experience and it’s really some of the most rewarding work we can do as performers. And specifically with this piece I felt that the concept was very clever and that the material was very honest and that there was a lot to take from the show as a child and even as an adult. I was like, "This is the main thing." I really enjoyed it. There should be more children’s operas. That would be an awesome thing and I think the leaves is an incredible idea and a wonderful way to convey these messages and morals to children.

INTERVIEWER. Wow, thank you. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals? How did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsals.

ELMER. I think I was at ‘A’ rehearsal [laughs]. But with any theatrical production, the rehearsal process is, it’s the nitty gritty of the show where we think things will happen and is that what really happens and we have to figure it out. And there are technical difficulties and also a bunch of adults that work together and then like playing these characters off one another. I worked my scene with two different Mambos, and they were two very different scenes—with all the same dialogue—but two very different scenes. There were different moments with Mambo1: and Mambo2. It’s always interesting to feed off another actor. It’s funny, that I played an elder character It’s not, we’re not in rehearsals - we hadn’t rehearsed for weeks so I’m not used to this pattern that we’ve created. So it was honestly like, it was a little bit like summer stock. It just kind of went up in like a rehearsal or two, and then we were in front of people, which was exciting and the adrenaline was going. I had a lot of fun.

INTERVIEWER. Your experience was a little bit different than the others because of your schedule. I actually based the flexibility on a convention model, which allowed the work to be scheduled around the individuals. That is why I went out of my way to schedule around everybody.

ELMER. Oh wow!

INTERVIEWER. The study I used as a model found that they’re more productive when they bring their life into their work. However, in Mambo different cast members had different feelings about that. How did you feel that scheduling method worked for you in Mambo?
ELMER. Personally, the flexible schedule worked incredibly well for me and it allowed me to participate. But with this, we really were allowed to tell you when we were available. And then you were able to create a schedule around that and it made my life, it made life less stressful. It also made me able to participate in this piece.

INTERVIEWER. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

ELMER. Truthfully, I lived for the costumes. They were perfect, very animated, the colors were great. The material was perfect with the lights. It made it for me. Truthfully, I was wondering, “who am I? What is this elder leaf?” It wasn’t until I was in the brown tights and leaf costume when I felt “Oh, oh I get it. I get it!” And I was able to breathe him a little bit. And understand his walk. I mean we found his mannerisms and what they read like but I was able to kind of manipulate my body and my voice to find his character. And I could tell from the audience that they liked, they liked the leaf. It like brought it all together.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the characters, including the puppet if you would like, and the ways in which they advanced the plot.

ELMER. It’s funny that I played an elder character. It was really nice to be one of the levelheaded characters in the show [laughs]. He wasn’t really stressed about anything that was going on. And really was able to hear Mambo out. He was able to give Mambo this life advice that mambo wasn’t really ready to accept yet. Which, I mean, often times this will happen when we get advice. We’re people and we hear things we’re supposed to hear, but maybe we’re not ready to accept them. And or use that advice. And I think it was nice for Mambo to hear those words even if they didn’t resonate until later in the show. And dealing with the puppet, I remember the song being about Mambo returning home or finding the key and it was kind of a turning point for mambo to have the confidence to return home. It just so happened that, because all the other characters were kind of bullies, so it was interesting that I got to play these two that were on Mambo’s side or taught something, or allowed Mambo to look at something differently during his journey.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel peer support during the rehearsals or during the performances?

ELMER. I definitely felt I was incredibly supported. Most of this I was watching for the first time, plugging scenes in to the arc so it was really wonderful to get to watch what everyone had been working on while I wasn’t there. Yes, definitely, I mean I think that once the costumes came on, people watched my scene and I became an old leaf and had the mannerisms and I think people began to feel more comfortable about falling into their characters. I feel like a lot of times, it has been my experience with singers, that sometimes we’re so concerned with how we sound that it is… what we look like or what we’re doing comes too
late in the game before we’re comfortable before curtain. But with this process, which was really nice, that the leaves, it comes back to the costumes, we were all like “oh, OK, I’m this character. I’m this silly leaf, or wide leaf or bully leaf.” And we were able to embody that with the costumes. So there was a lot of like – there was really great character work in this show specifically with Mambo.

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

ELMER. Awkward, no. I do specifically remember doing both shows and feeling different about both shows. More so with my character than with the puppet because the puppet was the same track. But with the elder character was just feeding off different actors, which was great because when I work on pieces I normally working with the same partner during the rehearsal process. I hadn’t done anything where I had different casts and I had been in both casts and I think it was a great thing for me to play and kind of see how things naturally change. It has to change because someone does a line differently and then I react to it differently. And the advice I was giving would naturally come out in this pattern that had been written in. Also that scene was just very well written so it kind of fell natural to say the things that needed to be said to Mambo. But never awkward, just like a different energy to feed off of.

INTERVIEWER. You’ve done a lot of acting and a lot of singing. And as you know, I mixed singers with different levels of vocal and performance skills. Do you feel in general that having an opportunity to get up and perform in a situation like that increases skills or confidence? Did you notice any kind of confidence building because of that?

ELMER. Interesting. Yes, definitely with the younger students who had just come into the voice program and had this wonderful opportunity. I definitely sensed a little, there was definitely some hesitancy when the company… when the company rehearsed, I could tell that there were some people who were actually nervous to even rehearse in front of the company. And that is an experience thing and the preparation thing. And I felt when they started to watch everyone else, sing their pieces and then be involved in the company numbers – especially the numbers when we all were praising Mambo, we were interacting. We were looking at each another like talk to one another. I saw people having to feed off of each other especially me, when I was surrounded by them. I was making sure I was looking in their faces and being proud of Mambo. I mean so people were, I hate to use the word forced, but like reacting and creating new spaces. And it was different every time we did it. And the big thing with me is I don’t enjoy doing a scene the same way every time.

INTERVIEWER. Right
ELMER. I want it to feel natural so it was a wonderful opportunity to experience that because I’m not sure they get that in opera workshop or have a stage class where that would happen.

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

ELMER. I was so excited. I loved working on the project and was like “absolutely.” And specifically my track, that little scene, I believe was so well written. The poem has a natural flow to it and it really… I mean what’s being said is gorgeous. So I was very excited participating in the recording.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

ELMER. You know with my recording and whatever I have experienced in recordings, they have been very long and having to do the same thing over and over again. So I was surprised that were, that we only had to do it two or three times. I’m used to singing the same four bars thirty-eight times before the producers are like, “Alright, that’s it.” It was great I only had to do it a few times to feel confident in what we had recorded.

INTERVIEWER. I heard that comment actually from other people.

ELMER. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel music would come back easily?

ELMER. There were one or two phrases that kind of stuck to me. But reading through the poem it was interesting how the first time reading it out loud, the pattern came back to me the way I said it, or I thought I said it. Or maybe it wasn’t exactly the way I said it but the flow of the scene came back to me and even Dan was – I said, “I’m not sure if that’s the rhythm – and he was like “No it was.” And it was amazing that I was able to look at it and it came back to me.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it even though it was a speaking part?

ELMER. Yes, I definitely do. I already felt connected. I knew exactly the tone of the scene. I understood the moment in the show before Mambo leaves and the words that he hears before he leaves Leafy Brown. Yes so the tone and that affected how many takes we had to do.
INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it?

ELMER. If we had done the recording right after we’d done the show, I think my vocal inflections might have been more on, because I had just embodied the character I had done the scene. I mean we did this; I don’t know how long ago it was. Feels like almost a year ago.

INTERVIEWER. It was eight months

ELMER. So I don’t know if my vocal inflections were in the same realm as when I did the scene. I mean I tried my best but I hadn’t done that character in a while and walked around with that cane and apparently done that weird thing with my arm that I was doing (I laugh – response to Richard’s comment to him after show). But my body and my voice I don’t know how connected they were during the recording if that makes sense. I don’t know if that makes sense.

INTERVIEWER. It totally does. I mean it was a different performance, which was my goal. I wanted to give people a chance to take a role they’ve done and do it again in a different situation. Hopefully it’s a different company at some stage. But I couldn’t do that. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

ELMER. At any time I could stop and ask a question. I also felt my pacing might even have been slower in the recording than it was in live theater. And I could breathe through those beats because there wasn’t the anticipation of the audience being there and what’s going to happen and do I move now… because there wasn’t blocking or anything to get in the way of what I was saying. So I definitely felt like it was slower in that regard.

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?

ELMER. The next question related to the vocalists who were singing together: Did you feel support of your peers, but you had. But you had Dan and Skip and me there. Did you feel support? Oh absolutely. You were all, welcoming, and had gorgeous energy. But also, we were able to talk and there were moments when I could say, “I’m not sure about this,” and you were able to answer me and I got to do it again. And I forget if it was you or Dan, but at one point when I said the line right, and you said “That’s it!” I think we all felt like that was it, or that was the best one yet. So I absolutely felt completely supported.

INTERVIEWER. You just answered my next question, which is: were there any incidents, remarks or responses that made you feel successful?

1 Dan Bøhler, Costume Designer, and George Brunner, Recording Engineer, Were Present at the Recording Sessions. Bøhler videoed the sessions for observational purposes.
ELMER. Absolutely. I can’t remember exactly but there was one point where I said am I saying it that way or do I say it this way? And I forget if it was you or Dan and at that point I said it right and it was like OK and we tried it again and you were “That’s it!” And so we were able to work together to find this natural pacing for this one line. I think it was 1 line that the rhythm was different and I wanted it to land and beat before I started the next line. And we kind of all came up with this collaborative decision, which was nice. It’s beautiful to have the writer in the room. And when the writer and the composer is in the room, the work is so much more, as a performer, its so much easier for me as a sponge to absorb the tone and color of the scene and piece.

INTERVIEWER. I know you have to go and this is my last question: How do you describe the difference, if any, in your confidence level for the rehearsals, performances, and recording sessions.

ELMER. I probably felt more confident walking onto the stage after our rehearsals than walking into the room for the recording. I was a little nervous just because I myself again hadn’t felt like Elmer Hawthorne in a long time. So I looked at the text and was like “Oh right, I’m saying these very important things to this impressionable leaf and this is a really important moment in the show. And to try to get to that center so I can be as honest and with only my voice. You know, my face and my eyes are the most expressive part of me. So to use just my instrument, my voice, didn’t feel that honest and affective. Especially when I’m not singing. There wasn’t a melody to do the work.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

ELMER. Diction and performance practice – children’s theater. I have a lot of experience with children's theater, but I normally perform young roles and this role was a slower paced elderly leaf. So it was interesting to find the tone, arch of phrasing and over all pacing of this role.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

ELMER. No, these costumes were incredibly loose and if anything the tights on underneath the leaf silhouette reminded me to involve my abdominal muscles in my breathing and support.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?
ELMER. This experience was unique, because normally a recording of a show occurs during the run of a theatrical piece so that all involved are familiar or shortly after the production has finished its run. This was recorded almost a year ago, so it was incredibly interesting to perform a "cold read" of this piece almost a full year afterwards.

Fandango

Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

FANDANGO. In my voice lesson by my voice teacher.

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

FANDANGO. I like collaborative efforts. This is stupid because every performance is collaborative. Can you repeat the question?

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

FANDANGO. Everyone that I worked with I knew personally and I enjoyed working with them and was fortunate to perform which we don’t get much of as voice majors. Instrument players happen to have more opportunities to perform in conservatory. So when we get opportunity its great to get up and perform and we train for it and rehearse with people so I was excited for that. I was happy to work with people I was happy to work additional times with my voice teacher. I happen to have a special case because the director happens to be my voice teacher. So basically those things.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals? How did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsals.

FANDANGO. Very organized, very much so. And my expectations were – again because it was my voice teacher, we did look at things in private but also during the rehearsal time that was assigned before the performance. It was fun and I learned from it but I learn from every experience. Is this about specific aspect of it?

INTERVIEWER. However you want to answer it is just fine.

FANDANGO. OK.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances? How did those expectations compare to the actual performances?
FANDANGO. My expectations… There were technical difficulties. Even though I felt that what I sang was the simplest thing for me in the whole work, I still had problems with it. One concern was that I wasn’t fast enough and I was really scared that I was not going to make it right. There were the fast patter sections, but also coloratura. I also felt like I was trying to be too clean. When I relaxed and would listen to my tape of myself, I noticed the notes were faster and cleaner, so I had to bring that into my staging. I learned a lot about the feeling and how it differs from other singing and also from the way it sounds. Thankfully the composer didn’t mind changing the tempo. I was going to fail at some point. Funny enough after the performance, recording it, it came back. During the performance somehow, usually my performances are better than my rehearsals and I’m happy about that [laughs]. It’s better than the other way around. So I was happy that the performance itself, I felt like it was a success at least. Not only for me, pretty much for everybody it was a success. But at least for me. So I felt like the performance itself was above my expectations in terms of doing the things you’re supposed to do on stage. I forgot saying one line which you, what’s the word?

INTERVIEWER. Prompted.

FANDANGO. Yes [laughs]. That was unexpected because I usually don’t forget my lines. So that happened, but in general it was as expected.

INTERVIEWER. I have a question based on your answer: Do you feel, because I do, that forgetting a line here and there is just part of live performance?

FANDANGO. It’s a part of performance and the fact that I managed to save it afterwards… it worked out. It wasn’t a big issue, but, yeah.

INTERVIEWER. Can you compare how you felt as a singer and performer in the first staging rehearsal to how you felt as a singer and performer in the final run-throughs?

FANDANGO. Sure, at the beginning quite honestly when we started rehearsal I didn’t know my part entirely well so, [laughs] the fact that I did learn my towards the end raised the quality of the later rehearsals for sure and that was the same for people I performed with because it usually takes a while for people to learn their parts and get into the character. So there was a big difference obviously. Once I observed the other people’s roles and the entire music, which also took a while because I didn’t go through the… since we did a lot of things I didn’t get the chance to look at the single arias of the rest that didn’t involve me singing, so witnessing their performances and getting involved in what this whole thing is about, definitely added to the experience. And towards the end it was – well you could see the whole thing and that adds to your performance and where you stand in the entire piece. So there’s that aspect. The other part of it is that I got to rehearse more. I got more into what I was doing, and learn more about my character, so that added to my performance.
INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why? And you won’t hurt my feelings, by the way.

FANDANGO. Having a real accompaniment would have been improved. Because it’s more – there’s more give and take than having the midi played. But then again, the midi was modified when it had to be modified so that really did help. So again, I think a real accompaniment makes a huge difference. That is one thing.

INTERVIEWER. By “real accompaniment” do you mean a pianist?

FANDANGO. Yes. A “real accompaniment” meaning a pianist playing a piano reduction for us to rehearse with; because the actual show would have to be with the midi, yes?

INTERVIEWER. Well that was the idea.

FANDANGO. I guess so. That’s what I was trying to say.

INTERVIEWER. I agree it would have been nice to rehearse the ensembles with a pianist.

FANDANGO. Obviously, you know it’s extra budget. There are all those concerns it all makes sense. But in a perfect world, sure. But also it would be great to do with a full orchestra [laughs].

INTERVIEWER. Yes, but it would take out the sound effects that were supposed to have been added. The composer was late, but there were supposed to have been wind and fancy sound effects. He used equipment that would have allowed for that.

FANDANGO. That’s true, I forgot about that.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot.

FANDANGO. Fandango was an unusual character. I don’t think there was another character in the whole work that was similar to mine: quite arrogant. There were bullies and bullies are obviously being arrogant, it’s a part of being a bully. But Fandango himself was not interested in being a bully. He was arrogant and it was a different shade of arrogance. And I kind of think it’s kind of great to show when we’re talking about bullies, and how arrogant it is to be a bully; we are showing another shape of being arrogant. So there’s a good comparison there. And it also, we have Mambo going around. In any children’s story, what I like about children’s stories is one way that it helps children get out of their own way and explore things and giving them different colors and personalities and letting them expand their horizons. Therefore I believe having different characters is very important. Regardless if that they are solely related to the subject. Like Sassy was
I imagined Fandango to be a gay man honestly [both laugh]. Maybe not, but maybe I was letting myself too much into it. But it just looked like it didn’t really belong to the rest of the story, but it somehow fit in there. Because as I said we can always adapt things. It doesn’t necessarily have to be in the core of the story. So I think that’s how I found that character added to the story. It’s good to – there’s always a storyline that goes to the target and it’s good to divert people’s attention throughout the story to be able to keep their attention.

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?

FANDANGO. Well I haven’t performed it again accept the recording.

INTERVIEWER. That’s what I mean.

FANDANGO. Mostly technically it felt pretty hard at the beginning. It was hard at the beginning and then we worked on it. So it was a good fit for my voice by then. When I went back to sing it again, I realized the technical difficulties came back. So I had to pay attention to them all over again. It took a couple of runs and then I was able to sing it. But I still felt like it wasn’t as good as the performance. Because the recording, I don’t know, we had to cut the recording in multiple pieces and then record it. Did we? Or not? I think we did 2 sections. OK so, whereas in the performance it’s only 1 as we know. But in the recording it was just fine and we didn’t make any mistakes in particular piece that we recorded. So I did feel that the performance, which happened right rehearsals was easier than the recording. Having it rehearsed towards the performance absolutely helped the case. Having not touched it, I mean I looked at it the day of the recording, which I thought would be just enough, which was apparently not the case. There were technical difficulties.

INTERVIEWER. Do you think that would inform your next professional engagement and then somebody says “Hey, we would like to hire you for that” do you think you’d put more time into it?

FANDANGO. I hope I would [we laugh].

INTERVIEWER. Let me put it like this: did you feel like it was a learning experience?

FANDANGO. Yes it really was. Because I don’t really remember any other experience of myself where I had to go and do something again after a while. Except yesterday we were in a voice lesson, no master class, and I was looking at a piece I hadn’t sung in a year and it was a piece I chose to sing and I looked at once at home for 5 minutes. And he didn’t pick me so I didn’t sing it. So I wonder what that would have been like. I usually perform things that I rehearse well.
INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

FANDANGO. It was written in consecutive passages without places you could really breathe. Which is something I’ve seen in other pieces before, a lot in Mozart. You just have to cut it short, I mean what I did was cut it short and trying to add that technical issue as a theatrical effect – so that was the first problem. Range wise I don’t think there was a problem accept for the high F he wrote, which is a note that I sing; so range-wise it wasn’t really a problem, but I had to practice it a lot because it was highlighted at the end of the aria. But I only had to stand there and sing it and it got better by the performance. It was only the speed, the tempo that really had me concerned.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel that you had enough opportunities to run it in rehearsals for the vocal technical elements to improve?

FANDANGO. Well as I said, thankfully the composer didn’t mind changing the tempo. I did think absolutely rehearsal did help. I don’t know what I would do without rehearsal in fact. I’m someone who’s not very self-disciplined. So if there are rehearsals to go and catch up, and if I have to prepare for rehearsals and I have do some work within rehearsals then I improve. If there’s a performance in 2 weeks and I have to get ready by myself with my voice teacher, I might not be as on. So it’s good that there’s an organized schedule of rehearsals and I know when they are. And not only rehearsals help me, but that organization. The existence of that organization itself helps me to prepare. So absolutely the rehearsals help me.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances? In which ways?

FANDANGO. Oh yeah, very much. Again, I worked with people I knew. I knew every single one of them and I worked with my voice teacher. That was very helpful. And there were also foreigners from out of town, which were very helpful. Yes it was a pleasure to work with people I knew.

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

FANDANGO. I’m not sure if I can call anything awkward. But trying the costumes was interesting. We didn’t know what to expect so that was a whole interesting experience. What did we wear under?

INTERVIEWER. Tights and shirts.

FANDANGO. Yes I think that was interesting. So there were wardrobe things. That were interesting; I wouldn’t call it awkward though. It was funny to watch each other try interesting costumes. I liked my costume actually.
INTERVIEWER. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

FANDANGO. Yes. Yes, absolutely any props that help the story better helps everyone’s case. And when you don’t have costumes you feel very naked on stage, and props. And it is very hard to describe a whole thing with the human body itself. It’s very hard work and its very professional work and doable but it requires paying attention to other things. So costumes are meant to help us and to amaze people. The costumes were very helpful. It’s a short amount of time we have to tell the story, so it’s easier for people to look and say “Oh, that’s a leaf.” I mean [laughing] everyone was a leaf at the end of the day. But certain colors indicated certain things and some of us had similar colors. There was the sassy girl who wore an entirely different color, red I think her color was, right? And it made sense.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

FANDANGO. Yes, my voice teacher is very supportive. The people I worked with were very supportive. There were pictures being taken and people looked like they were having fun. I don’t know how real it is when people compliment each other; it happens all the time. I do it all the time and it is absolutely motivating.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?

FANDANGO. In performance specifically. That’s why I usually do better in performances. Not be rude to anybody, but I feel like “oh no one can say anything right now. It’s my stage and I’m going to do what I’m going to do. So having that liberty of being free from everybody for that particular moment, which is something I feel in every performance. Especially in the opera. That liberty – that stage being yours at that moment, good or bad- its all you and you’re all by yourself. I think that sort of gives you the liberty to be yourself.

INTERVIEWER. Then the opportunity to perform is…

FANDANGO. Inherently what makes you feel like a singer? I think so.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel it is paramount to becoming a singer?

FANDANGO. There is no other place I feel like a singer. Not when I sing to myself, not when I sing to friends. Not in anywhere else that you can get direct feedback. I specifically love singing in Whitman and I look at the lights as much as I can so they bling me so I can’t see anyone in the audience. So I’m just looking far away and imagining things related to the storyline so that I can just be there be myself and tell a story.
INTERVIEWER. That said, was the children’s theater aspect of Mambo a challenge for you because it is presentational?

FANDANGO. There are different layers. I do prefer Whitman because it gives you more of that realm of… large venue, lighting, especially if there’s pit and a physical distance between us especially. All that adds up to it. There’s less of it there but it still on the other side of the line. Verses being in a master class or being in a voice lesson singing to your friends or in a venue like a cabaret atmosphere where people talk.

INTERVIEWER. Then there was another challenge for you in Mambo?

FANDANGO. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Being that close and that presentational style?

FANDANGO. Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER. You’re not the only person to have brought up the children’s theater presentation.

FANDANGO. Then again, what you get from the children is not really the sort of reaction that you get as a singer in training.

INTERVIEWER. Of course not, it’s a very honest audience reaction.

FANDANGO. Exactly, so it’s a little different than what really helps me be free on stage.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? If so, can you describe the difference?

FANDANGO. I think everything helps push you a little further. When I was first singing in front of people I would shake to hell, I would just physically shake. Some people I know don’t look like it and they sweat. Reactions are different for everybody. I brought it up to a friend of mine who is a psychology major and he said the approach that I go for is repetition. So just keep doing it until you don’t shake anymore. And then didn’t shake. Every bit of these performances, every time I’m on stage I’m like “oh my God, where am I 3 months ago and where am I now?” all these repetitive opportunities to sing help the case so much. And I’m sure Mambo did because there were multiple experiences. It was a whole weekend performing.
INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

FANDANGO. Intimidating because I always feel like, as I said, I’m more comfortable on stage verses singing to a machine. So a little intimidating. And also the fact that we are doing again that I hadn’t done for a little while.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

FANDANGO. I went into the studio thinking I’m fine. Meaning, I still felt the performance would be below the performance itself, but it’s going to be fine I’ve sung this before and it’s a piece of cake. And then once I went in there and I tried to sing, I was breathless and I couldn’t really for a couple of runs, sing it in time. And I was quite disappointed in the beginning. But the whole recording took less than? An hour and towards the end we managed to you know. You were helpful and not judgmental and you were problem solution oriented [laughs]. Thankfully that helps.

INTERVIEWER. What were expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel music would come back easily?

FANDANGO. Tell me what recollection is

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel that the music would come back after the eight-month break?

FANDANGO. I thought so and it didn’t. Well it did. At the beginning it didn’t but then it did. Which meant, if I spent another hour properly rehearsing for it, it would have been just fine. I don’t know what was I thinking when I walked in with no preparation.

INTERVIEWER. You hadn’t done it before, that’s all. In which ways might the recording process be improved?

FANDANGO. I was very comfortable with everything.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it and how?

FANDANGO. Absolutely, yes. You know I sang it on stage, I’ve done it; I’m not singing something that is foreign to me.

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it?
FANDANGO. I’m not sure if I’d ever done that.

INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

FANDANGO. You get to stop and go back for sure. You get to say I don’t like this part so in that, yes.

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?

FANDANGO. In the recording? Funny enough in first couple runs I found them to be more challenging than in the performances, not compared to the rehearsals.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel support of your peers?

FANDANGO. I was with Hillary2, who is a sweetheart. She also had, she was doing multiple things. A very hard job. And she was very supportive.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel awkward moments?

FANDANGO. No [laughs] sorry.

INTERVIEWER. Not at all, that’s quite all right.

INTERVIEWER. Were there incidents, remarks or responses that made you feel successful?

FANDANGO. Yes, I mean you were very supportive. You didn’t mind that I came unprepared, which I was like, “OK I’m glad she’s easy about that.” In my case, I happen to be someone who, that kind of actually works with me, as you know. It helped. It kept me willing and happy and thinking positively about myself and I quickly was back on track and managed to get through it.

INTERVIEWER. Only one person had experienced something like that before and he didn’t have a singing part. I didn’t expect anybody to have a particular approach. It was part of the study, so there was no “wrong.”

FANDANGO. Yes, good.

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe differences in confidence that you experienced during the rehearsals, performances, and recording sessions?

FANDANGO. I honestly went into rehearsals, I was exaggerating the amount of work, I don’t know why. I kept exaggerating “Oh, I’m given so much rep, not for Mambo but this and that and now there is Mambo and am I going to do this right?” I figured I was exaggerating so once I started learning my part that kind of eased out, eased up.
So for the performance I felt fine and ready and in the performance I was very confident. It’s just that – yeah I think I was very confident in the performance. So I’m giving my performance 4 out of 5 comfort level. It’s only because there are chorus parts I did not learn right and it I guess its part of being an irresponsible student. Like everything I do there is always something you leave out for whatever reason, which is so stupid. I must have told myself OK Fandango, go home and learn this by Friday. And it was towards the very end of rehearsals that I felt OK now I know everything. So by the performance, my performance was fine because I know my part.

INTERVIEWER. Do you think this entire project from beginning to end is a worthwhile project?

FANDANGO. Yes I mean as we’ve just been talking, I need the opportunity to sing. So if anything for people who are underperforming and there are a lot of us, the problem is we are all performing students but we don’t get to perform enough. So for one thing this creates an opportunity for us to perform. That’s a very essential reason we are in school. Performing aids that aspect of it.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?

FANDANGO. High notes and cover: I had to sing an F at the end, which is very common in baritone arias, but requires the same amount of work and attention each time. Some coloratura. Diction explained below. Register shifts. Performance practice – children’s theater - the children's theater happens to be more interactive, which wasn't necessarily the case for us but we could hear them react to the Performances. It was a different experience.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging in your costumes while singing?

FANDANGO. The costumes were fitted, but I managed that. I had a harder time singing while sitting on a cart that moved.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production.

FANDANGO. Whenever I open my mouth to sing, I feel the need to watch my diction, as so much of the technique I practice has to do with a certain shape of vowel production. So it wasn't any different here, but there also wasn't
anything new to develop any new, specific ways to deal with it. One of my characters was a prude who spoke with a New England accent, and that was new to me. We had to go over so many words with my voice teacher. But since English is a language I already speak, it wasn't too hard.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble and solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?

FANDANGO. Every time I perform, I get closer to being more prepared for my next work. It is crucial for every single one of the performers to be ready since all of our work is deeply intertwined. The first piece of the production was a choral part and so many of us took a long time to learn it right, and we had to go over it in rehearsals- I think I'm motivated to put more work towards my next learning process to prevent wasting precious rehearsal time.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experienced informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

FANDANGO. I never recorded in studio before, so this experience gave me a chance to observe. I can't really think of changes other than being better prepared in the future in terms of knowing my music. It's also a little challenging that there is no audience, I find it more comfortable to sing in front of an audience verses to my peers and professors.

Mom1

Interview I

INTERVIEWER. Where did you hear about the Mambo Production?

MOM1. From you [laughs] in class.

INTERVIEWER. Describe your feelings about participating.

MOM1. I wanted to do it. There aren’t many opportunities here. We get the scene program and one opera, but that is usually it. Even with all the other things going on, classes, exams, it is still an opportunity. Also, it gave me an opportunity to work with some people I didn’t know. People in the music department but not in opera. Still good singers, but not in opera. So it gave me a chance to meet them and make new connections.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding rehearsals? How did those expectations compare to the actual rehearsal process?
MOM1. Pretty much what happened. We all learned our music; I learned my music and came prepared. The rehearsals were really smooth actually.

INTERVIEWER. Compare how you felt as a singer and performer in the first staging rehearsal to how you felt as a singer and performer in the final run-throughs.

MOM1. I was a little nervous at the first rehearsal because I didn’t know what to expect. But then I got to stage and move around and it was fine. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the performances? How did those expectations compare to the actual performances?

MOM1. I expected something to go wrong. Usually something goes wrong. I was worried I would forget something, or there would be a technical problem with the computers and playback, but nothing happened. It was really smooth.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the rehearsal process be improved and why?

MOM1. Nothing really. Except, maybe, if we had had a rehearsal with everyone there at the beginning for the ensembles. I felt like the ensembles suffered because we didn’t do those at the beginning. Then maybe people would have learned them better.

INTERVIEWER. In what ways did the costumes and set inform the experience for you?

MOM1. It was nice, here, to have that. That is what I’m used to but we don’t usually get that here. And for this show, the costumes were really important. In fact, I don’t think it would have worked without the costumes. I mean, we’re leaves. How do you get that across to kids? Yes, and the fact that it’s a children’s opera. The costumes were necessary to tell the story to the kids. They wouldn’t have understood it otherwise.

INTERVIEWER. Explain your feelings about the characters you were performing and the ways in which your character advanced the plot.

MOM1. The mom is much more what I usually do. She’s sweet and the range is more like what I usually sing. And I thought of her like Pocahontas and the willow tree. And the willow is teaching and guiding Pocahontas. I mean, it was a leaf not Pocahontas, but I related it to that. Carol CrabbyApple was fun, even though she’s mean. The name really described her. She is a crabby little leaf. And the hardest character for me was Sassy because its for kids and she was a little, you know, it could have gone too far.
INTERVIEWER. When I wrote it I was using Bugs Bunny cartoons as my model… specifically when he dressed up as the Brunnhilde in What’s Opera Doc.

MOM1. Yes, and there are adult cartoons now.

INTERVIEWER. After the eight-month break, how did singing Mambo change for you?

MOM1. It was easier. Yes, a lot easier.

INTERVIEWER. Were there vocal challenges in your particular role? If so, describe them in as much detail as you can.

MOM1. Sassy was hardest because I hadn’t ever done anything like that. I was watching Sassy1 and she was taking liberties and I thought, “Oh, I guess I can do that.” Then it felt better because I added chest and mix, which I wouldn’t have done otherwise.

INTERVIEWER. What opportunities to practice one or more specific vocal technical elements during rehearsals did your roles present?

MOM1. In the Mom-Mambo duet, there was always a part I felt I couldn’t get right. I don’t know if it was the approach or the music, I just couldn’t get it. I would do it in every rehearsal and think, “Oh, I guess that was right.” But it never felt exactly right until the final rehearsals.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support during rehearsals and performances? In which ways?

MOM1. Definitely. Everyone was really nice and supportive.

INTERVIEWER. Do you recall any awkward moments during rehearsals or performances?

MOM1. No, not for me. The experience was really smooth.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any incidents, remarks or responses in rehearsals or performances that made you feel successful?

MOM1. Yes. Well, you are really supportive. Even if you’re correcting something you would say, “That was really beautiful. For future, the note you want to sing is this,” or something like that. So that support and positive approach made it really easy to take corrections.

INTERVIEWER. Were there any particular moments in which you felt you were succeeding as a singer and performer? If so, can you describe them in as much detail as possible?
MOM1. Yes, my friends came to see it. And she teaches math and he’s a drummer I went to Queens College with and he likes any music project. So he said “we want to come to the show” and I was like “Really? It’s for kids and it’s about bullying and we’re leaves. You guys are 25 and you don’t have kids.” I didn’t want to make them come all the way down to Brooklyn. But they really like it. They said it was a really good production and it would be a great thing to take to kids in schools. Because even though they’re leaves, the kids would leave with the message at the end.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in confidence as a singer or performer after the Mambo performances? If so, can you describe the difference?

MOM1. Definitely. For one, I have trouble memorizing music. I always have trouble in my lessons because of that. I just can’t remember. So the fact that I learned 3 roles in a short amount of time and did 3 roles in 2 shows gave me confidence that I can do that. And I didn’t forget anything. I expected to, but no, I didn’t.

INTERVIEWER. I would like to ask you if you think the approach we took for memorizing the music with the staging helped you?

MOM1. Yes, definitely. And [my teacher] is helping me that way too. Telling me to move during a phrase and I can attach the motion to the phrase to remember it.

Interview II

INTERVIEWER. Describe your initial feelings about participating in the recording of Mambo.

MOM1. I was happy to do it. I wanted to do it.

INTERVIEWER. What were your expectations regarding the recording process and how did that relate to actual process?

MOM1. I thought I’d have to do them like 4 or 5 times and I only had to do it like once or twice.

INTERVIEWER. Was that good?

MOM1. Yes, the fact that I was able to go back after the eight-month period only to record something twice was pretty good.

INTERVIEWER. What were expectations regarding recollection? Did you feel music would come back easily?
MOM1. I didn’t expect to [we laugh] just in general. But yeah, once I looked it over once or twice I remembered it all.

INTERVIEWER. In which ways might the recording process be improved and why? I know you recorded with the group there and some people came in individually? How did you feel the recording process could have been improved?

MOM1. It was fine for me. I mean I did my pieces, and then we did the groups. I know everybody’s schedule was crazy to like, to get everybody there to do the whole thing probably would not work especially this time of year. So it didn’t really need to be improved for me.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel you had peer support?

MOM1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. Do you feel recording your role was affected by the fact you had performed it and how?

MOM1. Yes.

INTERVIEWER. In a good way?

MOM1. In a good way. It was comfortable and I wasn’t worried. Like I knew it would all work out?

INTERVIEWER. Were there challenges to recording that you did not encounter performing it?

MOM1. No I don’t think so. The only – and I wouldn’t say it was even a challenge – was, when we did do the ensemble numbers. We didn’t have the harmonies. I guess because they weren’t so solid back then, to do them now eight months later it was really not going to happen.

INTERVIEWER. Were any aspects of recording easier than performing?

MOM1. Yes, it’s a lot easier to stand there with the music there in case you need it and sing into a microphone with people there who are doing the same thing as you. Not people who are staring expecting a performance. 

INTERVIEWER. If there were vocal challenges were they as challenging or less challenging or more for recording?

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel support of your peers?

MOM1. YES.

INTERVIEWER. Did you feel awkward moments?
MOM1. No.

INTERVIEWER. Were there incidents, remarks or responses that made you feel successful?

MOM1. In the recording, I think Sassy1 and I both sang our Sassy’s better. I looked at her and said, “That was really good,” and she looked at me and said, “That was really good too!” I think we both felt a difference on that one especially.

INTERVIEWER. Can you describe difference in confidence for rehearsals, performances, and recording?

MOM1. I guess I was more confident to do the recording because I knew I knew the music. The rehearsals, I guess the first one I was a little nervous because I didn’t know what to expect, and the rest of the rehearsals were fine. And then the performance I was probably a little worried about forgetting my music because, yeah. But the recording I wasn’t worried at all, I was pretty confident about it.

Interview III

INTERVIEWER. Which of the following vocal technical elements did you encounter in your role: High notes, Breath support, Diction, Language, Coloratura, Register shifts (chest to mix to head), Performance practice (children’s theater, musical styles, other)?


INTERVIEWER. Did you feel a difference in Breath support while negotiating staging and singing in your costumes?

MOM1. No, I felt no difference.

INTERVIEWER. At any time, did you focus on diction in your role and did you develop specific ways of dealing with certain words while singing during the production?

MOM1. I made sure to enunciate more than usual, especially consonants and even shadow vowels, because kids would be in attendance and I wanted to make sure the message would get across.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to learning ensemble material as opposed to solo material within a production, and what changes, if any, might you make in the future?
MOM1. I did not spend as much time on ensemble material as I did in solo material. In the future I think I need to spend more time on the ensemble material than I did.

INTERVIEWER. How has this experience informed your approach to preparing for a recording and what changes, if any, would you make in the future?

MOM1. I would not worry so much. It ended up being an easy and simple task. I will also organize my music better so I didn’t have to spend so much time finding the score!!
APPENDIX G

Musical Score with Dialogue
MAMBO

Music by John Cleary
Libretto by Monica Harte
Original Book by Jovanna Castagnola
Leafy Brown

John W. Cleary

Voice

Baritone

Piano

Here I am lov-in my town in the beau-ti-ful ci-ty of leaf-y brown. Here with my gal, just look-in a-round there's

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no bet-ter place than leaf-y brown.

Mr. & Mrs. Nova

Here I am lovin in my town, in the beau-ti-ful ci-ty of leaf-y brown. Here

with my guy just look-in a-round we are all ve-ry hap-py in leaf-y brown.
Leaf-y brown our quaint lit-tle town, Ev-ery
Chorus

Leaf-y brown our quaint lit-tle town, Ev-ery

bo - dy loves our leaf - y brown. Sway - ing to the left and look - ing at the ground, the

bo - dy loves our leaf - y brown. Sway - ing to the left and look - ing at the ground, the

leaves are hap-py in leaf - y brown.

leaves are hap-py in leaf - y brown.
Watch-ing my son swing-ing a-round, in the trees of the town of leaf-y brown. Makes

us ver-y hap-py deep down, In this won-der-ful place cal-led leaf-y brown.

The sun's al-ways up, the moon's al-ways down, here
in our city our leafy brown. And you'll never see anyone wearing a frown in this

And you'll never see anyone wearing a frown in this

wonderful place called leafy brown.

wonderful place called leafy brown.

Swayin' to the right, swayin' to the left, in the beautiful trees of leafy brown.

Swayin' to the right, swayin' to the left, in the beautiful trees of leafy brown.
Stay-in on the branch or jump-in' to the ground, we all love liv-in' in Leaf-y Brown!

Leaf-y Brown, oh Leaf-y Brown You'll
never see anyone wearing a frown. In Leaf-y brown, yeah Leaf-y Brown, cause we're

never see anyone wearing a frown. In Leaf-y brown, yeah Leaf-y Brown, cause we're

all very happy in Leaf-y Brown. Leaf-y Brown, Leaf-y Brown!

all very happy in Leaf-y Brown. Leaf-y Brown, Leaf-y Brown!
I'm Not As Happy As The Rest

John W. Cleary

I'm not as happy as the rest,
I'm awkward and silly at my best.

say the wrong thing, and the other kids are mean,
every day I become more...
pressed. All I really want is to fit in. Tolaugh and play and sway and spin. With the

other leaves around my trees in Leafy Brown. If they could

only see me from within.
DIALOGUE: (1:10)

MAMBO
Oh no! Oh no what’s happening? Wait... wait...
I think I’m going to...
(He falls)

MAGNOLIA DELIGHT (MAGGIE)
Mambo, Mambo are you all right?

MAMBO
What? Who is that?

MAGGIE
It is I, Magnolia Delight.

MAMBO
Magnolia, sweet Maggie, will you let my mom know
I have fallen from the tree and I don’t know where to go.
MAGGIE
Of course I will my friend! Stay right there and do not worry!
I will go right now and bring her back in a hurry!

MAMBO
Friend? She called me friend. I didn’t know she saw me that way.
Maybe it isn’t so bad here. Maybe it will all be OK.

(Enter: Gang of Bully Leaves)

BENNY BUR OAK
Hey, Carlos and Carol, Mambo is on the ground.
That big, ugly, leaf
Look what I just found!

CAROL CRABBYAPPLE
Mambo McFall?
That big, stupid leaf?

CARLOS CRABBYAPPLE
He’s clumsy and ridiculous
And dumb beyond belief!

BENNY BUR OAK
Hey Bossy Nova,
What shall we do?
Since you’re a Poplar,
You must have a clue!

BOSSY NOVA POPLAR
He’s so big and stupid
He should stay on the ground
The Bully Song
Carol CrabbyApple, Bossy Nova Poplar, Crunch the Bully Bur-Oak, Carlos CrabbyApple
John W. Cleary

Cue - Benny: And we'll throw things at him until he is found!

Mam-bo Mc-Fall fell, are you going to cry?

Where is your mom - my? She is not near - by. Mam-bo Mc - Fall fell,

Where is your mom - my? She is not near - by. Mam-bo is a Mam-bo rig,

Where is your mom - my? She is not near - by. Mam-bo Mc - Fall fell,
Mam-bo you are on the ground,

stupid and clumsy and way to big. Mam-bo is a Mam-bo rig.

are you going to cry? Where is your mom-my?

She is not near-by. Mam-bo Mc-Fall fell, will you cry? Mom-my is gone,

cry ba-by leaf, you'll never be found.

stupid and clumsy and way to big.

She is not near-by. Mam-bo Mc-Fall fell, will you cry? Mom-my is gone,
you'll stay and die! Mam-bo Mc-Fall fell, will you cry?

Mam-bo you are on the ground,

Mam-bo is a Mam-bo rig, stubby and clumsy and way to big.

you'll stay and die! Mam-bo Mc-Fall fell, will you cry?

Mom-my is gone, you'll stay and die!

cry baby, you'll never be found. Mam-bo you are on the ground,

Mam-bo is a Mam-bo rig, stubby and clumsy and way to big.

Mom-my is gone, you'll stay and die!
Mam - bo Mc - Fall fell, will you cry?

Mam - bo is a Mam - bo rig, stupid and clumsy and way too big.

Mam - bo Mc - Fall fell, will you cry?

Mom - my is gone, you'll stay and die!

Cry ba - by leaf, you'll never be found.

Mom - my is gone, you'll stay and die!
DIALOGUE:

MAPLE MCFALL

Stop! You mean leaves should be ashamed
Mambo here should not be blamed.
He’s a leaf and fall is here
Your time to drop is very near!

MAGGIE

They’re just bullies, Mrs. McFall.
They’re not nice, not nice at all!
They’re simply jealous since he’s already free
To go where we wants, just like me.

MAPLE

Maggie, you are right I know,
But words like theirs, hurt even so.
Thank you dear, I will talk to him
Soon he’ll be back on his limb.

(Maggie leaves)

MAPLE

She’s right my dear, you’ve grown up fast
And that is why you feel harassed.
Once we drop we’re free to run
Mambo… my wonderful son,
If you give up, then they have won!

MAMBO

I don’t care! I’m tired! I’m done!
All I want is to turn and run!
Mother dear, I love you so
But this deep pain, I’ll never outgrow.
I just want friends, you know!
MAGGIE

They're just bullies, Mrs. McFall.
They're not nice, not nice at all!
They're simply jealous since he’s already free
To go where we wants, just like me.

MAPLE

Maggie, you are right I know,
But words like theirs, hurt even so.
Thank you dear, I will talk to him
Soon he’ll be back on his limb.

(Maggie leaves)

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And that is why you feel harassed.
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Mambo... my wonderful son,
If you give up, then they have won!

MAMBO

I don’t care! I’m tired! I’m done!
All I want is to turn and run!
Mother dear, I love you so
But this deep pain, I’ll never outgrow.
I just want friends, you know!
Mambo, My Mambo
Maple McFall, Mambo McFall

John W. Cleary

Mambo, my Mambo

Mambo, let me hold you near. There's no body here but me.

Mambo, my Mambo

Mambo, my Mambo
Mambo, let me rock you now. Let me wipe the pain from your brow, oh Mambo.

Mambo, my Mambo, I love you so much. Let me
soothe your heart with my warm-ing touch.

Mam-bo, my Mam-bo, grow-ing up is hard to do. Re-mem-ber I am here for you, oh Mam bo_
Mambo, my Mambo,
I just want a leaf, a
let me hold you near.
There's nobody here, but
leaf I can befriend
and someone besides you I can de-

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Mam - bo, my Mam - bo, let me rock you

I can - not pre tend that I can com - pre -
now. Let me wipe the pain from your hand
the hurt that lives inside will

brow, oh Mam-bo_
ne-ver end.
I Will Go

Monica Harte

\[ \text{Is it really that bad to be different? Is it really so awful to be big? By falling I am free so} \]

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why are they so mean to me?

Why did I have to be the first to fall?

Why not

Crunch or Bos-sy Pop-lar be-fore me?

I wish they had gone first.

I
wish their ti-ny hearts would just burst. And yet, these feel-ings don’t feelright. It_

is - nt na - tu - ral for me to fight. I’d ra-ther walk a way. And
find a-no-ther place to stay. So I will go! I'll go a-way to-day! I'll start a

gain in a place near-by. The fa-mous ci-ty made of flow-ers it should
only take three hours for me to reach, once I say good bye!

So he will

go! He'll go away today! He'll start again in a place near-by. The famous
ci-ty made of flow-ers it should onl-ly take three hours, for him to reach, once he says good

bye! So he will go! He'll go a-way to-day! He'll start a-
called the town of flow-er-tags.  
They'll greet me with op-en arms, and I'll 
gain in a place near-by.  
The fa-mous ci-ty made of flow-ers it should

win them with my charms. I'll leave as soon as I pack my bags! So I will
only take three hours, for him to reach, once he says good bye!
go away! Go away today!
DIALOGUE:

ELMER HAWTHORN

Mambo, is it true?
Are you leaving our city of Leafy Brown?

MAMBO

Yes Elmer Hawthorn, I’m leaving you!
And moving to a new town!

ELMER

I understand you know.
My life was similar you see.
As a hybrid, I wanted to go.
The kids were also mean to me.

MAMBO

A hybrid? Can you please explain?

ELMER

I’m a mix. I’m not the same.
But now respect surrounds my name.
It took some time; I felt your shame,
But now I am engulfed in fame.

I’m Elm and Hawthorn together, you see
I come from a mix of 2 different trees
That makes me different, just like you
Mean bully leaves, bullied me too.

MAMBO

I would like to stay and talk
But I think I need to walk.
I have 3 hours to go until
I make it over Leafy Hill.

I really wish I understood
I know the things you say are good
But I can only feel my pain
And even though it seems insane
I am afraid I won’t refrain
In order to relieve my pain.
From hurting those who can’t restrain.

ELMER
Mambo, my son, I wish you the best.
For each of us, life is a test
And I believe that you are blessed
And will return much less depressed.

Growth is difficult and painful
Our paths cross with those disdainful
But you are strong and smart and kind
So best of luck and keep in mind
You will not always be maligned.

MAMBO
Thank you Elmer, and I will ponder
All you have said, while I wander
I hope you understand me clearly
I want to thank you most sincerely

Violence hasn’t been my goal
But I feel pain deep in my soul
So I will leave to circumvent
A tragic deed I may repent.

I hope it’s true, that I return
And find the strength that I should spurn
The bitter feelings and the thoughts
That tie my insides into knots.

ELMER
Goodbye young Mambo
Good luck to you!
You’ll find success
In all you pursue!

MAMBO
Goodbye Elmer Hawthorn!
And thank you, too!

FADE OUT:
Mambo heads to Flowertags when he's suddenly punched

**Boxing Rap**
Bobby Box Elder, Mambo
Bobbie

```
Bobbie
Bobby Box Elder

Mambo

Piano
```

```
A
Rap, with bounce. Swing

Oh gee, I'm sorry. I

A
Did

```

```
didn't mean that. It's a natural reaction, like tipping a hat. When a pretty little leaf, who you're

I punch you? It's a natural reaction. It's a thing I do. When any kinds' leaf comes

```

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lookin' at makes your heart go pit-ter, pat. So here, sock it to me... tit for tat!

(strollin' through) It's kinda' unfair since you had no clue so you can punch me, too!

(duck)
Rap, with bounce. Swing

No, that's all right, I don't want to fight. But punching me was not polite. Tell me,

(duck)
what did I do? Tell me out-right. What made you punch me at first sight?

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Why nothing leaf That's what I do! I'm Bobby Box Eder. Tell me, who are you?
I'm Mambo just a maple leaf. I'm big and clumsy and filled with grief. The
Mambo that's a terrible plight. Bullies in my town have won. So now, you see, I'm on the run.
I can teach you how to fight! You can box and knock them down and be the hero of your town!

I want to make them feel contrite and taste the wrath of Mam-bo's night! I'd love to crush them one by one! I even wanted to get a gun! I must admit that sounds delightful because I feel completely spiteful, but...
A man - bo, my boy, you're right of course! A

In my town, that's not the way so I de-cid-ed not to stay.

gun would on-ly cause re-morse. But a fist is an hon-est kind of force. So how a-bout it?

Bo-bby I think you're re-ally nice, but I'm say-ing 'no' to your ad - vice. Al-

a tempo
though I'd like the bullies to pay a price, I'd rather win by being nice!

Mambo my friend, good luck to you. I think I like your point of view. I wish I could be that strong too. But I love to box and that's...
what I do.

vamp to E.O.
I'm Sassy & I'm Fine

Sassy Brassy Sassafras, Mambo, Chorus

Have I been worthy all along?

But I left town, can he/she be wrong?

Mambo: Bobby/Bobbie told me I'm strong

Cue: Mambo-Bobby/Bobbie told me I'm strong, but I left town, can he/she be wrong?

You want to be a friend of mine! I see you're free, you're off the vine!

So stay with me, I'm just divine! I'm Sassy Brassy

Sassy-fras, I'm fine!

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I love a leaf that's really big
My last boyfriend a common fig.

but you're much more than that twig,
I'm Sassy Brass-a-fras, you dig? Yeah!

Yeah! Oh Yeah! Yeah! Oh Yeah!
I'm Sassy and I'm fine.

Ma-ple leaf come sing with us,
don't be a-fraid jump on this bus,
and sing your heart out
all day long, We're happy to include you in our song.

She's so sassy! yeah yeah yeah! Oh, so sassy!

Im sassy.

yeah yeah yeah!
and I'm fine!

and she's fine!
Cue: Mambo: There is something about her that I like. But she probably isn't my type.
Or perhaps I'm not hers. I'm sure she prefers... Oh, I have no idea what she prefers!

Fandango Fig & The Figlettes

Monica Harte

John W. Cleary

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got ten your way, you are show ing a slight ra tion from one who's pre pared!

7

Know ing your

9

plan from the start, that's the tick et, then you know when to turn left or turn right. Wan dring a
bout, like a lost little cricket, makes all of us think you are very bright!

We think you're not very bright, you have n't planned when to turn left or right. Some of

us think you may be very nice, but the rest of us think you not very bright!

Tell me
Leaf, do you re-mem-ber your name? Per-haps we can help if we know. I be-

If we know

lieve, there that is where-from you came, and, hence, that, is where you should go.

You should go. We

think, you dont know your name, there-for we cant help you.

Fan-
Fan go has pointed to where from you came and where from you should return to Fan-

See what I mean?

dang go who is Fan-dang go I ask? Sil-ly boy Yes we do!

You are fraught with confusion and clear dis-illusion, from this
I've arrived at my final conclusion, you don't seem quite right, and your slightly up tight, so I fault you for this rude intrusion!

We fault you, we do. And we see you're no clue, so we fault you for this rude intrusion!
Fan dang-go figs his game, ripe with a language so proper and pure. Albeit nevertheless for sure, Fan-dang fig is quite mature. It's all we can endure, ripe with a language so proper and pure. Albeit nevertheless for sure, Fan-dang-
I'm Fandango
fig with a Baroque couture. He's Fandango fig!

fig! Always correct and secure

He's Fandango fig! and often quite boring.

None-the-less in as much here to fore, not with
"You can choose pure with compound words fewer"
DIALOGUE

MAMBO
Pardon me miss but I notice your walk
And it seems to be slightly bazaar
You move very quickly, and so it’s a shock
You don’t seem to go very far.

SAMMI
You don’t understand the road that I take
But there is no need for concern
The distance I cover while I am awake
Is measured in things that I learn.

(MAMBO tries moving like SAMMI but on wrong beats)

MAMBO
The knowledge you gain is a journey, you say?
Can you explain in a simpler way?

SAMMI
I can, and I will if you want to stay.
But please stand still, and I’ll teach you today.

(SAMMI stops MAMBO after “still”)

MUSICAL 10: SAMMI’S SAMBA–MAMBO

Rhythm starts, then melody
Mambo tries to stand still in spite of rhythm

The Mambo is a walking dance. The Samba is more often steps in place. The rhythm is also different:
Samba: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7
Mambo: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8
Sammi's Samba-Mambo

John W. Cleary

Piano

Sammi

Mambo

\( \text{sam} \)

One two three

five six seven

Sammi: "We can call me sammi"

Sammi: "Knowledge makes life fearless"

\( \text{sam} \)

mp through out, emphasize hits based on groove

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I can teach you this. Your mind will grow at rapid speeds, and then your life is bliss. The
road you take is not the same as his or hers or mine, but knowledge travels far and wide and
that makes life divine! Rhythm is a special treat, it helps you learn so watch my feet! “Samba!”

Repeat for dance
My name is Mambo can you tell
  one two three
      five six seven

Sambo: "Sambo can't choose"
Icanbo: "Don't say name to heave it call"

Mambo: "The one name
      nice allowed"
six seven eight

Text

two three four

Sam-ba!

Mam-bo!

Text

two three four

six seven eight

Know-ledge is the key young man, to hap-pi-ness and peace. So
learn as much as you poss-bly can, and share your thoughts with fel-low man, Ex-

pand your mind and fol-low his plan. Knowledge and joy go hand in hand. Tra-

vel the world and tra-vel the land, don’t waste your time draw-ing lines in the sand. One two three

Silverbell
DIALOGUE:

MAMBO
Is she normal?
She seems odd to me.
Is that typical behavior...
For a Silverbell tree?

BUTTERNUT
Yes, I think it is.

MAMBO
(startled)
Oh, I didn't see you there.

BUTTERNUT
But is it normal for a maple leaf
To discuss things with the air?

MAMBO
I'm just a leaf alone.
At least, I thought I was
So I asked myself a question
As a lonely leaflet does.

BUTTERNUT
Why are you so lonely
My pointy little friend?
You seem young and strong
And able to defend.

MAMBO
It's true, it seems that way
But really, I am weak.
I do not want to fight
I turn the other cheek.
But You Are Strong

John W. Cleary

Allegretto

"Buffy"

But that is strong, dear boy!

Allegretto

Piano

That is your best defense. There is nothing to gain by being violent.

accel.

mf

Pno

be-cause the strong tra-vel the earth in si-

accel.

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sil-

Pno

ence.

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Thus say-eth Bruno But-ter-leaf.
DIALOGUE:

BUTTERNUT

So... any questions
Before you go?

MAMBO

Did you really say Si-o-rence, Bruno?

BUTTERNUT

(quietly and somewhat embarrassed)

It rhymes with violent, you know.
So...

Bruno leaves & Mambo shakes his head

MAMBO

I am having an unusual day
I guess it really started that way,
But when I make it to my new tree
I’ll send word back to my family
That I’m OK and no one bullies me.
RUBY
Bullies who? Bullies you?
How could anyone bully you too?
You’re big and strong and cute, for a leaf
(Mambo gets embarrassed)
I can’t imagine bullies giving you grief.

MAMBO
Thanks, that is nice, I’m Mambo, you see.

RUBY
I like your name, Mambo, I’m Ruby Rubbertree.

MAMBO
I like your name too. And how do you do?

RUBY
I’m not very well because I’m bullied too.
Would You Like to Join Me?

John W. Cleary

I'm sorry I'd help, but I am not able, I
But I fell off too, that's big, and I fell off my tree by breaking a twig.

What we leaves do. I think they're just mean, and jealous of you.

They laughed at my bouncy be bulies who bullied you do?
ha-vior and said, I look quite ri-di-cu-lous, They laughed at my boun-c ey be - ha-vior and said, They

laugh cause I'm boun-c ey and red.

I think you look love-ly, I'm red in the fall, but

I don't stay red long at all. And I think that you're love-ly boun-c ey and red, I don't
Would you like to join me and bounce a round like this?

I think you're ri-di-cu-lous at all.

I'm from a Rub-ber-tree, I'll show you what to do. and then you can bounce with me too!

Repeat for dance

Would you like to join me

I would love to join you and bounce a round like this!

Repeat for dance
like this! I would love to join you like this.

Would you like to stay? To

laugh and sing and play?

I'd love to but I have some-where to go. I'd
No, I think I'll stay. I'm nervous of a place that I don't like for you to join me.

Then I'll say good-bye, for now but not for ever.

I wish that you could stay. Good-bye good

I'll re-turn one day You will be o-kay. don't cry! good
DIALOGUE:

MAMBO

Hey, what was that?
I thought I felt a pat.
But nobody is near
I imagined it, I fear.

(Mambo turns & sees Hillary trying shadowing him)

MAMBO

Hey, who are you?

HILLARY

Who are you, too?

MAMBO

I asked you first.

HILLARY

And I reversed.

MAMBO

I need to go away.

HILLARY

I’ll tell you if you stay.

MAMBO

Well...

HILLARY

Please...

MAMBO

OK.
Tricky Hillary Hickory

Monica Harte

Allegretto

Hillary Hickory

(alternate notes G & B throughout)

Coloratura, Intentionally "square" throughout

Hill-a-ry Hick-o-ry, I am

Mambo

Allegretto

Piano

very stick-er-y, I love games, and tri-key I'm Hill-a-ry I'm Hick-o-ry.

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I'm terrible, unbearable, and leaves like me will stare

no one is comparable. This is my parable I'm scary and I'm terrible.

You should beware your behavior is rare, leaves like me will stare!
I'm not going to change, because you think I'm strange, but if you walk down my side of the street I promise you leaf you're in for a treat.

You'll
Hear my story, all scary and go-ry

(Makes scary face on beat)

All scary and go-ry

You don't scare me! You're

Neither friend nor foe. You want to be scary you want to be mean but I
think you're sil-ly from what I seen. So I'll say good-bye! and go__ go! Now

I'm say-ing good-bye! Now go__!
MAMBO

I must be getting close to my new town.
It's been a while since I left Leafy Brown.
I'm hungry and I'm tired
And I'm no longer inspired

The Chief appears
The Chief is a hand puppet
Singer is big baritone or bass voice

CHIEF LEAF
Are you done whining?

MAMBO
Who said that? Who are you?
The Key is In Your Heart
Mambo, The Chief

John W. Cleary

Mambo

\[ \frac{\text{Mambo}}{\text{The Chief (who?)}} \]

The Chief

\[ \frac{\text{I'm the chief}}{\text{The Chief (who are you?)}} \]

Piano

\[ \frac{\text{like bells}}{\text{}} \]

Mambo - Mambo McFall

But you're so small. How can you be a tiny leaf and

\[ \frac{\text{}}{\text{}} \]

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also be a great leader?

Mambo my friend, all my life as a leaf, there have been times there have been times of great grief! And although it caused me pain, I held my head up knowing it was not in vain. I began to learn, that the res-

rit. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . a tempo
pect for which I learned was locked inside of me. And all I need-ed was the key.

Mambo: "The key? Where is the key? Is finding the key an art?"

The key, my friend

Mambo. The key, my dear friend Mambo. The
The key, is in my key, is in your heart.

That is the place to start...

Strength is not an art it comes from love, It's in us all and you will find your strength. Mambo Mc-fall. You can
win the respect of your town, and you will shine, with delight and
joy, and all the villagers will come round, will ap-
plaud you Mambo my boy.
fight, the answer has been inside. I'm going

home! I'll be there tonight.

My heart will protect and guide me.

barely there repeat to F.O.
FADE IN:
On the road back to Leafy Brown

DIALOGUE:
Mambo runs back on stage & sees Ruby

MAMBO
Ruby, I’ve found the key.
Will you please come back with me?
We can be happy in my town
And we’ll have friends in Leafy Brown.

RUBY
Yes I’ll come with you.
I want to find the key too.
We’ll be happy in your town
And we’ll have friends in Leafy Brown.

They run off stage
The leaves of Leafy Brown gather around
Mambo and Ruby re-enter
Music to “I’ll go away” starts
I'm Back to Stay
Mambo, Maple Leaf, Chorus

Monica Harte

John W. Cleary

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back, I'm back to stay! I found the key in my heart to-day! and

to the bullies I will grin, and I will never give in. I know that love's the only
never give in! I know that love is the only way! I am
never give in! He knows that love is the only way!

here to stay! Here to stay to day!

here to stay! Here to stay to day!

here to stay! Here to stay to day!
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