

Exploring the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CL Isaacs



orcid.org 0000-0002-7975-6999

Dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree *Master of Music in Musicology* at the North-West
University

Supervisor: Prof CA Cupido

Graduation: April 2024



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

22 September 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I assisted **Collette Isaacs** (Coordinator: Directorate Music, University of South Africa) with the language editing of her Master of Music degree in Musicology at the School of Music, North-West University. The title of the thesis is **Exploring the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic**. Her supervisor was Prof. Conroy Cupido (North-West University).

I went through the thesis making corrections and suggestions with respect to language usage, and restricted my editing to addressing such issues. Given the nature of the process, it is not necessary for me to see the final version, but I always remained available for consultation as long as necessary.

I may be contacted at the number/address below for further information or confidential confirmation.

Dr Edwin Hees
(Associate Professor Emeritus)
University of Stellenbosch
Private Bag X1
Matieland 7602
Cell: 076 977 7742
eph@sun.ac.za

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give all thanks to God. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to further my studies and the strength to complete it.

To my supervisor, Professor Cupido - you have been instrumental in my achievement from the very beginning. I thank you for your patience and encouragement.

To my editor, Professor Edwin Hees – you have been extremely professional and efficient. Thank you.

To the MASARA staff at the NWU Faculty of Humanities and the NWU Postgraduate Bursary Department – I could not have completed this degree without your academic support and financial assistance. Thank you.

To my participants - thank you for your kindness and making the time to form part of my study.

To my intermediary, Madeleine Short, you were the perfect person for the job.

To Gerhard Geyser – thank you for being my sounding board and a motivating influence throughout this journey.

To Alet Venter – thank you for translating my abstract in such a professional and efficient manner.

To my mom and dad - I hope I have made you proud. I miss you, every day.

To the three most important people in my life - my very patient husband, Gavin, and two sons, Caleb and Joshua. Thank you for your endless love, tireless support and unwavering belief in me. I would not have been able to complete this without my cheering squad. I am truly blessed beyond measure.

“At the end of the day, we can endure much more than we think we can”. – Frida Kahlo

ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the assessment of classical music performances was conducted in a “live” setting where a practical music assessor is present in the same venue as the music performer. As of March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, social and physical distancing measures were put in place that influenced and transformed the assessment approaches and strategies of classical music performances. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional aims were to identify and understand the similarities and differences between in-person and online practical music assessment environments, to describe how the assessment approaches of classical music performances differed or had to be adapted within the in-person and online practical music assessment environment, and to assess the sustainability of online practical music assessments in South Africa.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, while the concepts, insights and detailed understanding were derived from common patterns or themes in the data, which were presented in a rich, descriptive analysis (Merriam, 2002:6). Six main themes emerged:

1. The practical music assessor’s influence on the music assessment process;
2. Attributes of online and in-person practical music performances;
3. Changes in the practical music assessor’s listening behaviour;
4. The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments;
5. Benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms;
6. Challenges of online practical music assessments and platforms.

The study’s findings revealed that the practical music assessor wields a significant influence on the assessment process and the effectiveness of that process. It was revealed that the online environment is not conducive to expressive music performances and that it influenced the practical music assessor’s listening behaviour and listening experience. A benefit of online practical music assessments was the expanded accessibility and convenience that it afforded students with limited access to in-person practical music assessments. Amongst the challenges of online practical music assessments, the importance of sound ranked as the most significant.

Keywords: Practical music assessor; classical music performances; COVID-19 pandemic; in-person practical music assessment; online practical music assessments; pre-recorded practical music assessments; music assessment criteria

OPSOMMING

Die assessering van klassieke musiekopvoerings is tradisioneel in 'n "lewendige" omgewing uitgevoer waar die praktiese musiekassessor in dieselfde lokaal as die voordraer teenwoordig is. Sedert Maart 2020 is sosiale en fisiese afstandmaatreëls ingestel weens die COVID-19 pandemie wat gelei het tot die verandering en transformasie van die beoordeling van klassieke musiekopvoerings. Die doelwit van hierdie basiese kwalitatiewe studie was om die ervarings van agt Suid-Afrikaanse praktiese musiekassessors gedurende die COVID-19 pandemie te ondersoek. Verdere doelwitte was om die ooreenkomste en verskille tussen die in-persoon en aanlyn praktiese musiekassesserings te identifiseer en te verstaan, om te verduidelik hoe die beoordelingstegnieke verskil het of aangepas moes word en laastens om die volhoubaarheid van aanlyn praktiese musiekassesserings in Suid-Afrika te ondersoek.

Inligting is versamel deur onderhoude en konsepte, waarnemings en gevolgtrekkings is afgelei uit gemeenskaplike patrone en temas in die data, wat in 'n ryk, verklarende analise (Merriam, 2002:6) aangebied is. Die volgende ses hooftemas het vorendag gekom:

1. Die praktiese musiekassessor se invloed op die assesseringsproses;
2. Eienskappe van aanlyn en in-persoon praktiese musiekopvoerings;
3. Veranderinge in die praktiese musiekassessor se luistergedrag;
4. Die belangrikheid van menslike interaksie tydens praktiese musiekassesserings;
5. Voordele van aanlyn praktiese musiekassesserings en aanlyn stelsels;
6. Uitdagings van aanlyn praktiese musiekassesserings en aanlyn stelsels.

Die studie het bevind dat die praktiese musiekassessor 'n beduidende invloed op die assesseringsproses en die sukses daarvan het. Voordrageienskappe soos tegniek is dieselfde ervaar in beide die beoordelingsomgewings, maar musiekuitdrukking was moeiliker om te hoor, sien en ervaar in die aanlyn omgewing. Hierdie studie het bevind dat die keuse van die assesseringsplatform, of dit 'n lewendige of opgeneemde vertoning is, en in die teenwoordigheid of afwesigheid van 'n praktiese musiekassessor is, 'n betekenisvolle rol speel in die praktiese musiekassessor se luisterervaring en luistergedrag. 'n Voordeel van die aanlyn praktiese musiekassesserings was dat dit leerders wat beperkte toegang tot persoonlike musiekassesserings gehad het, 'n geleentheid gegee het deurdat dit die toeganklikheid en gerief uitgebrei het. As deel van die uitdagings van aanlyn praktiese musiekassesserings het klankproduksie as die grootste uitdaging uitgestaan.

Kernwoorde: Praktiese musiekassessor; klassieke musiekopvoerings; COVID-19 pandemie, in-persoonpraktiese musiekassessering, aanlyn praktiese musiekassessering; vooraf-opgeneemde praktiese musiekassessering; musiek assesseringskriteria

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

- ***Practical music assessor:*** in the context of this study practical music assessors refers to musicians (in Western Art Music [WAM]) who assess practical music examinations, music eisteddfodau, music festivals or music competitions in their capacities as examiners and adjudicators.
- ***Assessed classical music performances:*** this refers to classical music performances that take place at schools, universities, eisteddfodau or competitions that are assessed according to specific criteria pertaining to the technical and musical features or requirements of the repertoire.
- ***Classically trained:*** this describes musicians who are formally trained and educated in Western Art music. They are equipped with the necessary skillset and experience to assess classical music performance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
ABSTRACT	III
OPSOMMING	IV
EXPLANATION OF TERMS	VI
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VII
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XII
LIST OF TABLES	XIII
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	14
1.1 Problem statement.....	17
1.2 Purpose of the study	17
1.3 Significance of the study	17
1.4 Delimitation	18
1.5 Research question	18
1.6 Methodology	18
1.6.1 Research design: Qualitative research.....	18
1.6.2 Research approach: Basic qualitative study	19
1.6.3 Positionality and role of the researcher	19
1.6.4 The participants	20

1.6.5	Data collection	20
1.6.6	Data analysis	21
1.6.7	Academic rigour	21
1.6.8	Ethics	21
1.7	Chapter division	22
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW		23
2.1	Assessed classical music performances	23
2.2	The purpose of practical music assessments	25
2.3	Practical music assessment tools	27
2.4	Practical music assessment methods	28
2.4.1	The criteria-specific approach	28
2.4.2	The holistic approach.....	30
2.5	Music assessment categories	32
2.5.1	Technical skills.....	32
2.5.2	Expressive skills	35
2.6	Assessment criteria.....	37
2.6.1	The link between technical and expressive criteria	39
2.7	Factors which influence a practical music performance assessment.....	40
2.7.1	The interaction of sound and sight in the music performance.....	40
2.7.2	Live versus recorded listening environment	44
2.7.3	The practical music assessor	46
2.8	Music teaching and practical music assessment during the COVID-19 Pandemic	49
2.9	Conclusion	51

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN	53
3.1 Research design: Qualitative research.....	53
3.1.1 Research paradigm or worldview	55
3.2 Research approach: A basic qualitative study	56
3.3 Role of the researcher.....	58
3.4 The participants	58
3.5 Recruitment and enrolment process.....	60
3.6 Data collection: Interviews	60
3.7 Data analysis	61
3.8 Academic rigour	63
3.9 Ethics	64
3.10 Conclusion	64
 CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	 66
4.1 Theme 1: The practical music assessor's influence on the music assessment process	67
4.1.1 The practical music assessor's anxiety	67
4.1.2 The practical music assessor's skills and experience	68
4.1.3 The practical music assessor's bias	69
4.1.4 Practical music assessor's flexibility	69
4.1.5 Practical music assessor's approach	70
4.2 Theme 2: The attributes of online and in-person practical music assessments	71
4.2.1 Sound Quality	72
4.2.2 Resources – instruments and recording devices	73
4.2.3 Physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor	73

4.2.4	Performance aspects – technique and music expression	74
4.3	Theme 3: Changes in the practical music assessor’s listening behaviour.....	75
4.3.1	Focus and energy levels of the practical music assessor	76
4.3.2	Physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor	76
4.3.3	Listening experience and listening behaviour of the practical music assessor	77
4.4.	Theme 4: The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments.....	78
4.4.1	Communication.....	78
4.4.2	Empathy.....	79
4.5	Theme 5: Benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms	80
4.5.1	Accessibility	80
4.5.2	Financial benefits	81
4.5.3	Adds value	81
4.6	Theme 6: Challenges of online practical music assessments and platforms	82
4.6.1	Disadvantages of online music practical assessments	82
4.6.2	The importance of sound	83
4.6.3	Not a live performance.....	83
5.	Conclusion	84
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....		85
5.1	Summary of findings	85
5.2	Theme 1: The practical music assessor’s influence on the assessment process.....	90
5.3	Theme 2: The attributes of online and in-person practical music assessments	92
5.4.	Theme 3: Changes in the practical music assessor’s listening behaviour.....	94
5.5	Theme 4: The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments.....	95

5.6	Theme 5: The benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms.....	96
5.7	Theme 6: The challenges of online practical music assessments and platforms	97
5.8	Integration of themes	100
5.9	Limitations of this study.....	101
5.10	Implications and future research	102
5.11	Answering the research question	103
5.11.1	Practical music assessment experiences.....	103
5.11.2	Similarities and differences between in-person and online practical music assessments	104
5.11.3	Sustainability of online practical music assessments.....	104
5.12	Recommended framework for online practical music assessment	105
5.13	Conclusion	108
BIBLIOGRAPHY		109
APPENDIX A: INTERMEDIARY SCRIPT		127
APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET		128
APPENDIX C: PROCESS TO GAIN INFORMED CONSENT		130
APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM.....		132
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS		140
APPENDIX F: NWU APPROVAL LETTER AND CONTINUATION LETTER		141

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Allen Henderson's framework for singing adjudication at the 54 th annual NATS conference, July 2016	49
Figure 2: Research process	53
Figure 3: Recruitment process.....	60
Figure 4: Data analysis process	62
Figure 5: Themes 1 – 6	66
Figure 6: The practical music assessor's influence on the music assessment process.....	67
Figure 7: Attributes of online and in-person practical music assessments	71
Figure 8: Changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour	75
Figure 9: The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments	78
Figure 10: Benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms.....	80
Figure 11: Challenges of online music practical assessments and platforms.....	82
Figure 12: High-level overview of online practical music assessments based on the findings of the current study	100
Figure 13: Integration of the six themes.....	100
Figure 14: Recommended framework for online practical music assessments	107

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: A summation of assessment criteria	38
Table 2: Themes, categories, and corresponding literature	86

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Classical music performances and practical music assessments have arguably been an integral part of many musicians' education and careers. In classical music, or Western Art Music (WAM)¹ as it is formally known, music auditions, music competitions, music recitals and music examinations are platforms where a musician's performance skills are often measured and evaluated. In my experience, the delight of a successful music performance can be quite rewarding, but in contrast it can also be devastating when the feedback received does not reflect one's hard work. As a child, I felt a great sense of achievement and pride when I read the practical music assessor's comments. Someone other than my music teacher had validated my musicality, and it was those comments that motivated me to continue and advance my music career.

Wesolowski (2012:36) defines assessment as "the collection, analysis, interpretation, and application of information about student performance or programme effectiveness in order to make educational decisions". The main purpose of assessment is to improve learning (Stanley *et al.*, 2002:46), which is achieved through assessment feedback. Assessment feedback is of such great instructional value that Asmus (1999:19) advocates for greater precision of assessment as it will provide more information to the student and teacher, which will increase student motivation, knowledge and skills.

In South Africa, students who learn WAM (or classical music) often enter practical music examinations, music eisteddfodau, music competitions and music festivals to measure the level of their performance against a set of pre-determined standards and criteria (Jacobs, 2010:215; van Dyk, 2016:1; de Villiers, 2021:384). Practical music assessors assess and provide feedback to the candidate based on performance criteria that include rhythmic accuracy and continuity, musical and stylistic interpretation, intonation and tone quality, choice of tempo and the appropriate use of articulation (Abeles, 1973:250; McPherson & Thompson, 1998:18; Thompson & Williamon, 2003:30; Juslin *et al.*, 2021:14). These performance criteria can be placed into two main categories: technique and musical expression (Salaman, 1994:211; Iusca, 2014:20).

Music examinations, music eisteddfodau, music competitions and music festivals which mainly took place in mostly face-to-face, live settings, were brought to an abrupt halt in March 2020 as the world was facing a health crisis of pandemic proportions. The first positive cases of the novel

¹ Western Art Music (WAM) is also referred to as "classical music – a term used to distinguish 'serious' music from pop music, rock music, jazz and folk music. It is generally used to refer to a tradition of writing music for the concert hall or church that originated in European music of the Middle Ages and passed through the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical and Romantic styles". (Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music)

SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus were recorded in Wuhan, China, on 31 December 2019. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared it a pandemic by 12 March 2020, which led to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) implementing school and university closures in South Africa (SABC News, 2020; Paterson *et al.*, 2021:6). According to a United Nations Report, the COVID-19-pandemic can be described as “the largest disruption to education, recently, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents” (United Nations, 2020).

In South Africa, a National State of Disaster, was declared and a national lockdown was implemented on 26 March 2020 (SA News, 2020). All schools and universities remained closed for three months. Because of the disparities in resources and infrastructure amongst schools and universities, some institutions could not implement online teaching immediately (Mathiba, 2020; Mkhize *et al.*, 2020:2). Learners were welcomed back to schools under strict COVID-19 safety measures on 6 July 2020, while most universities continued with online learning. This disruption impacted music education (Motala & Menon, 2020:82; Gravett & McGnaught, 2021:231; Daubney & Fautley, 2021:3-4). The pandemic consequently resulted in music teachers needing to find innovative ways to substitute in-person teaching for a novel online teaching approach using digital platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Skype. In some cases, educators and students also made use of video calls on WhatsApp, Hangout and Facebook Messenger (Paschal & Mkulu, 2020:3; Shenoy *et al.*, 2020:700). This sudden shift away from contact teaching and learning would affect the ways in which practical music students prepared for and delivered live classical music performances, and how practical music assessors and adjudicators conducted their music assessments.

The COVID-19 pandemic health crisis propelled music examination bodies and music institutions toward the implementation of online practical music assessments to ensure a continuation of music offerings. In South Africa, the graded music examinations of institutions such as the University of South Africa's (UNISA), the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), Trinity College London (TCL) – both British institutions – as well as competitions such as the Voices of South Africa National Opera Singing Competition, the UNISA South African Music Scholarship Competition, Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition and the Wes-Boland, Stellenbosch, Tygerberg and Bethlehem Eisteddfodau utilised digital methods of music assessment in their adjudication process (ABRSM, 2020; TCL, 2022; UNISA, 2020; Voices of South Africa National Opera Singing Competition, 2020; Stellenbosch Eisteddfod, 2021; Tygerberg International Eisteddfod, 2021; Maré, 2020).

From guidelines stipulating new rules and regulations on their respective websites, these entities describe two types of possible online practical music assessment strategies. The first can be

described as the assessment of a live classical music performance, where the practical music assessor examines or adjudicates performances via a digital online platform such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Skype (UNISA, 2020). The second type is the assessment of a pre-recorded performance when digital copies of performances are sent to the practical music assessors (ABRSM, 2020; TCL, 2022; Stellenbosch Eisteddfod, 2021; Western Cape Virtual Eisteddfod, 2022). In these instances, the performances were not always recorded in front of an audience.

For pre-recorded practical music assessments sent in to the ABRSM, additional criteria were added, prescribing that the recording had to be completed in one continuous take and the instrument and performer had to be clearly visible during the entire recording (ABRSM, 2020). The regulations imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic that restricted indoor gatherings necessitated changes to conventional ways of assessing practical music performances. Consequently, practical music assessors had to find alternative ways of adjudicating performance aspects of technique, musicianship and communication. The limited research related to this topic prompted me to further investigate and understand how practical music assessors would describe their experiences of assessing classical performances during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

For the purpose of this study, a practical music assessment refers to a classical music performance performed by a student/performer of any age, level (beginner, intermediate or advanced) or instrument within a competitive (music eisteddfodau and music competitions) or educational assessment-based context (music examinations at school or university and national/international examination music boards) assessed by an appropriate adjudicator, with or without an audience present. In the context of this study, the practical music assessor refers to a qualified musician with experience and training in practical music assessment. The practical music assessor also possesses the necessary skill set allowing them to adjudicate music performances within a competitive or educational assessment-based context whilst following the assessment criteria provided by the music examination boards, school or music body which they represent.

The three types of practical music assessments referred to in this study are:

- **In-person practical music assessment:** Assessments/performances are conducted in real-time (live); the practical music assessor and student/performer are physically together in the same room;
- **Online practical music assessment:** Assessments/performances are conducted in real-time (live) but on digital, online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or

Skype. The practical music assessor and the student/performer are not physically together in the same room;

- **Pre-recorded practical music assessments (video-submissions):** Assessments/performances are not conducted in real-time or with the practical music assessor physically present. Students/performers submit pre-recorded videos for practical music assessment. Music assessment bodies, music examination boards or music institutions may prescribe certain criteria or conditions in which these recordings are to be made.

1.1 Problem statement

Traditionally, the assessment of classical music performances has been conducted in a “live” setting where a practical music assessor is present in the same venue as the music performer. As of March 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, social and physical distancing measures were put in place that influenced and transformed the assessment approaches and strategies of classical music performances. Adjudicators of music examinations, music eisteddfodau and music competitions – referred to practical music assessments – had to find alternative, mostly digital, ways of assessment until they were able to conduct in-person practical music assessments once more. By exploring the practical music assessors’ experience, researchers, music teachers, music students and other stakeholders could gain more insight and a deeper understanding of how practical music assessors adjudicated and assessed classical music performances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional aims were to identify and understand the similarities and differences between the in-person and online practical WAM assessment environments, to describe how the assessment approaches of classical music performances differed or had to be adapted within the in-person and online practical music assessment environment, and to assess the sustainability of online practical music assessments in South Africa.

1.3 Significance of the study

Minimal research has been conducted on practical WAM performances that were assessed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent research focuses on WAM teaching practices in the

online environment and the influence that music teacher's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills had on online teaching, but there is not much research on the music assessment process from the perspective of the practical music assessor during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study therefore aims to contribute empirical knowledge adding to current discourse and contributing to the research of practical WAM assessments. By exploring the experiences of the eight classical practical music assessors in South Africa, valuable empirical data were collected that will benefit music examination bodies, music institutions, teachers and students. The findings of the study could be utilised to generally improve the existing in-person and online practical music assessments, implement new types of online music offerings and impart new knowledge from the perspective of the practical music assessor regarding the processes and expectations of practical music assessments.

1.4 Delimitation

For the purpose of this study, a practical music assessor is described as a classically trained and, qualified musician, educator or performer who, through their vast experience as a music practitioner, assesses classical music performances that include music examinations, music eisteddfodau, music festivals and music competitions. This study is limited to the assessment of WAM, as not all musics are assessed by the same criteria or even assessed at all. This study is also limited to traditional forms of WAM teaching and learning that take place at music schools and conservatories, schools that offer music as an extra-curricular activity.

1.5 Research question

How do eight South African practical music assessors describe their experiences of assessing classical music performances during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.6 Methodology

A brief overview of the research method will be provided in this chapter. A more comprehensive discussion of the research design and approach will be presented in Chapter Three.

1.6.1 Research design: Qualitative research

This study made use of a qualitative research design. Creswell (2018:41) defines qualitative research as “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social

or human problem". In qualitative research the emphasis is on understanding how people make sense of their lives and how they interpret what they experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:15).

The current study aimed to present a holistic description and understanding of the practical music assessments conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic by analysing and reporting detailed views of the participants by means of semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2018:257-258). By interviewing eight participants I gathered multiple perspectives that enabled me to identify and examine how elements of these perspectives interact with one another in different ways. By reporting on these multiple perspectives, a broad, complex and comprehensive picture of the practical music assessors' experiences was developed instead of following a narrow, limiting approach focusing only on specific aspects of the experience (Creswell 2018:257).

1.6.2 Research approach: Basic qualitative study

The research approach is the structural plan implemented to answer one's research question(s) in the most effective manner (Leavy, 2017:8) and for this study a basic qualitative study design was the most suitable.

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to understand how the participant makes meaning of a situation or phenomenon and this meaning is facilitated through the researcher's interpretation (Merriam, 2002:6). In this study, the phenomenon was the assessment experiences of eight practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy implemented was inductive and the outcome descriptive. An inductive approach does not test or examine existing theories or concepts, but instead aims to develop new theory from raw data obtained through the data-collection process that produces a comprehensive and descriptive account of the participants' experiences (Gibbs, 2007:5; Creswell, 2018:257). In the current study the data that were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations were carefully documented. Concepts, insights and understanding were derived from common patterns or themes in the data, which were presented in a rich, descriptive analysis (Merriam, 2002:6). This research approach proved to be the perfect vehicle to capture the practical music assessors' shared experiences and provided an in-depth, holistic account of themes as they emerged.

1.6.3 Positionality and role of the researcher

I was the researcher and primary data gatherer; therefore, it was my responsibility to safeguard the participants' information and protect the data in an ethical and professional manner. My previous occupation as a music educator and my current occupation as a Music Examinations Coordinator at the University of South Africa's (UNISA's) Directorate Music, played a significant

role in initiating my interest in this study. In my position as music educator, I have taught and entered many students and choirs for practical music assessments such as music examinations, music eisteddfodau and music competitions. In my position as a Music Examinations Coordinator, I am responsible for the organisation of the practical music examinations, nationally and internationally. I have regular contact with practical music examiners and my duties include, amongst others, scheduling of the music examinations and compiling the music examinations timetable, collating of examination reports and issuing of confidential examination material. My position as Music Examinations Coordinator is not managerial in nature and I do not have the authority to influence or affect decisions regarding the employment or financial impact of the practical music examiners. I perform administrative duties which have been identified by my direct line-managers and directors. My in-depth understanding of the music examination processes is a positive aspect of my position. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I played a significant role in conceptualising the development and implementation of the UNISA online practical music examinations.

1.6.4 The participants

Leedy and Ormrod (2015:280) define purposeful sampling as a method whereby you select “those individuals or objects that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation”. The participants were purposively selected based on their extensive experience and knowledge of assessing WAM, and so that they could successfully communicate their experiences in an articulate and reflective manner. In making a purposeful selection of participants, it is assumed that the participant has valuable input to contribute which will help sustain trust and comfort levels between the participant and researcher (Merriam & Tisdell (2016:128). No vulnerable population groups were involved in this study.

The study explored the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants of the study were professional music educators or music performers who are formally trained in WAM, with the necessary skillset and experience to assess classical music performances that included music examinations, music eisteddfodau and music competitions in in-person and online assessment environments.

1.6.5 Data collection

Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews to obtain a large, in-depth sample. My aim as researcher was to understand the practical music assessors’ perspectives on their experiences of assessing classical music performances during the COVID-19 pandemic, and so it made sense to make use of a conversational tool such as interviews.

1.6.6 Data analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2016:202) refer to data analysis as the “process of making sense out of the data and making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read - it is the process of making meaning”. I interpreted and made sense of the ways in which the eight participants described their experiences of practical music assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic and established how the data related to the literature.

1.6.7 Academic rigour

Overall, academic rigour is essential in qualitative studies to ensure that the findings are trustworthy, credible and valuable to the academic community. Member checking is a means of gaining academic rigour that involves sharing the preliminary findings with the participants and allowing for the participants to comment on the accuracy of the findings. In this study the participants were asked to confirm the accuracy of their transcribed interviews as well as comment on the findings that emerged after the in-depth analysis, to assess whether I have understood them correctly. The data and outcomes were shared with my supervisor and my work was critically evaluated throughout.

Thick, detailed descriptions were incorporated into the findings, creating results that were regarded as rich in value and realistic. For the sake of transparency and in line with my ethics declaration, I openly declared the biases I brought to study, since I am the sole researcher and primary data gatherer. I strove for reflexivity throughout the research process and, through constant self-reflection and self-awareness, I endeavoured to create an honest and open narrative (Creswell, 2018:274-275).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1986:77) lengthy and intensive time spent with your participants will enable the researcher to collect the richest data and ensure credibility. I asked follow-up questions and gently probed to gather more detail. To gain an in-depth, comprehensive understanding into the participants' situation and discover their meanings and understandings, quality time was spent with each of the participants but always remaining mindful of their time, not wasting time by being inefficient in data collection. In Chapter Three I will provide a more detailed account of how I ensured academic rigour.

1.6.8 Ethics

Ethical conduct in research involves the morality and integrity of the researcher as a person; the significance of this is magnified when the interviewer is the main instrument for obtaining

the information or research data (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008:37). Interviewing the participants was a human interaction that could give rise to ethical challenges, and therefore it was critical to be sensitive to and respectful of the needs of the participants and the research. The participants' dignity, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality were protected at all costs.

The data and related findings will be disseminated by means of publishing a dissertation on the North-West University repository. I also intend to publish an article in an accredited music journal and this was communicated to the participants. The dissertation and article will benefit music examination bodies, music institutions, teachers and students. Although my final findings will be openly shared, the original data collected from the participants will not be reused and shared with other researchers.

1.7 Chapter division

This chapter introduced the study and provided background information to this research. Chapter Two presents a literature review and Chapter Three describes the methods of research, data collecting and data analysis. In Chapter Four I present the data derived from the semi-structured interviews, and Chapter Five discusses the findings with reference to the literature.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I provide a brief introduction to the nature of practical music assessments and continue with discussions on concepts that are central to the research topic. These include the purpose of practical music assessments, practical music assessment methods, practical music assessment categories, factors which influence practical music assessments and music teaching as well as practical music assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1 Assessed classical music performances

The history of classical music performance has evolved over time with the development of various musical styles and genres, and throughout history WAM has played an important role in social and cultural life. WAM performances are used as a means of emotional and artistic expression, communication and entertainment; they are used during religious rituals and traditions, and promote the cultural continuity, stability and integration of a society (Schubert, 2009:64-75; MacDonald, 2021:5-17; Andriamasy, 2023:52-64). WAM can also be used as an educational tool to impart knowledge in schools and institutions, and plays a therapeutic role in the sphere of health and well-being. Today, WAM is often used for commercial purposes and incorporated into advertising, film music, product promotions and brand endorsements.

In some instances, individuals who perform WAM participate in competitive music making, for example, music and vocal competitions on a national or international level, music eisteddfodau, music festivals or music examinations. These individuals compete against others for various reasons including financial gain, motivation and recognition, completion of qualifications, professional development, promotion of music, or to gain feedback from knowledgeable others so that they can improve their craft (Jacobs, 2010:215; van Dyk, 2016:1; de Villiers, 2021:384).

A classical music performance (for the purposes of practical music assessment) can be described as the ability to publicly perform a musical work or group of works on a particular instrument that demonstrates the performers expressive skills and technical mastery. Classical music is often performed and formally assessed at events such as music concerts, instrumental and choir festivals, music eisteddfodau, music examinations and music competitions that can take place at schools, universities, and music institutions. These music performances may be assessed according to specific criteria pertaining to the technical and musical features or requirements of the repertoire. Three types of practical music performances can be identified: non-competitive, competitive and educational assessment-based music performances.

Non-competitive practical music performances such as music concerts or music festivals are not assessed by a practical music assessor or adjudicators. These performances can range from presentations in small, intimate settings to large-scale productions that feature a wide range of categories, age groups and instruments. The primary focus is to create performing opportunities to reveal musical talent and simultaneously provide entertainment and enjoyment to the public (Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival, 2022). Participating in non-competitive contexts provides opportunities to musicians to express themselves artistically without the pressure and stress of competition, as well as to collaborate with other performers and build a sense of community by sharing a musical experience. While performing in a non-competitive context has many advantages, there are potential pitfalls that could influence the development of a musician. In my opinion, the lack of competitiveness may influence levels of motivation and drive, and the limited recognition, exposure and feedback might influence the growth and improvement of the individual's music-making.

In South Africa competitive performances of WAM include music eisteddfodau and music competitions; they are assessed by a practical music assessor in performance conditions that can vary widely. For example, music eisteddfodau require the student to compete within a particular age group, music genre and instrument category. A symbol rating indicates how well the student has performed and feedback is provided by the practical music assessor at the end of each category. In South Africa category winners are identified and, in some instances, invited to perform at a gala evening concert or similar event (Pretoria Eisteddfod, 2023; Tygerberg International Eisteddfod, 2023). The structure and process of music competitions differ in music eisteddfodau in terms of the choice of repertoire, number of rounds and number of pieces (Victoria K Bennett Music Competition, 2022; Il Vento National Competition for Strings, Brass and Woodwinds, 2022; Atterbury Piano Competition, 2022; National SASMT Pretoria Ensemble Competition (NSPEC), 2023). The music competition may include an initial elimination round in the form of an audition which is conducted either in-person or by means of a pre-recorded video submission, audio only or audio-video as prescribed by the competition guidelines. Competitors are shortlisted by means of these auditions and further eliminated with a first, second and third round until a winner is determined (National Youth Music Competition, 2022; 7th UNISA National Piano Competition, 2023). Prize money or other rewards are usually attached to music competitions, whereas with music eisteddfodau, participants are all awarded with certificates and other acknowledgements.

Other classical music performances are linked to and form an integral part of educational learning outcomes, qualifications and certification. Individual practical music assessments may include the practical music assessor(s) and student present in an enclosed room where the practical music assessment takes place, for example, graded instrument-specific practical music

examinations, high school subject practical music examinations, or a university practical music performance recital as part of a formal qualification. The music repertoire performed is guided by the type of music assessment and the level of the music assessment. A graded practical music examination usually consists of three prescribed pieces, technical work, practical musicianship and sightreading. Prescribed requirements need to be met and by doing so, a level of competency is assigned to the student.

An assessed classical performance is not limited to advanced performers only, but may include any participants of any age, instrument or number of performers. These assessed music performances may include choirs as large as eighty members, string quartets featuring a violin, viola, violoncello and double bass, or two-piano works for eight hands. Any classical music performance which is prepared, practised and performed may be assessed and the type of assessment, whether non-competitive, competitive or educational assessment-based, is at the discretion of the student and music teacher.

The COVID-19 pandemic health crisis propelled music examination bodies toward the implementation of online practical music assessments to ensure a continuation of music assessment offerings. Two types of online music assessment strategies became prevalent during 2020 to 2021. The first type of practical music assessment can be described as a live assessed performance conducted via a digital platform such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) or Skype (Unisa, 2020). The second assessment strategy makes use of pre-recorded video submissions sent to practical music assessors for assessment (ABRSM, 2020).

2.2 The purpose of practical music assessments

The purpose of WAM practical music assessment is to measure musical achievement, to learn, improve and refine the areas of musical performance, and to enhance musical understanding. The outcome of a practical music assessment speaks to the level of performance quality and ability, which may affectively impact the student and their future learning experiences (Sadler, 2009:1).

The purpose of practical music assessment is not only to ensure that effective instruction and learning have taken place, but also to determine the efficacy of the educator and the instructional programme (Asmus, 1999:22). Thus, it is crucial that music assessment processes should be credible, valued by the music community and seen as a benchmark against which music standards can be measured. UNISA, ABRSM, TCL are music examination boards that offer practical music assessments that are viewed as credible (Van Dyk, 2016:2). The history of practical music assessment dates as far back as 1877 when Trinity College London (TCL)

offered their first external practical music examinations (Ross, 2009:474). In South Africa the first practical music examinations were conducted by the University of the Cape of Good Hope, in partnership with the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), on 16 August 1894. In 1918, the University of South Africa (UNISA), as successor to the University of the Cape of Good Hope, inherited the music examinations in South Africa. In 1933 the first South African practical music examiners began examinations throughout South Africa and in April 1945 UNISA took full control of the music examinations in South Africa (UNISA Website, 2023).

These music examinations are but one example of how cultural achievement in Western contexts can be fostered and promoted. Cultural achievement is accomplished by following a prescribed syllabus that indicates a particular standard against which the student's musicality and skill are measured, and the outcome of the music examination determines the level of achievement and competency (Southcott, 2017:53). Practical music assessments provide the student with an opportunity to compete against themselves and others, to set challenging goals, to learn new repertoire, and to showcase their music talent and gain recognition for it. Entering for a practical music examination or competing at a music eisteddfod or music competition may increase the student's level of accountability and responsibility, thus keeping the student driven and engaged in the learning process (Salaman, 1994:212). Practical music assessments often culminate in certification that affirms a certain level of proficiency, used to document the student's musical growth, and the feedback is used to refine aspects of the subsequent performances. A music audition is another form of practical music assessment often used to select musicians according to their musical skill and competency for example to place them in an orchestra or to gain entry to a university music school. It provides information about the student's level of progress, musical ability and performance level in comparison to other students.

The purpose of practical music assessments is varied and in South African schools in particular, students are encouraged to enter music examinations, music festivals, music competitions or music eisteddfodau, and the results of these external music activities are used to advance within the school's cultural spheres. These external practical music assessment activities, usually benchmarked against the standards of music examination bodies such as TCL, UNISA and the ABRSM, often form part of the schools' academic and cultural award policies, and are used as measuring tools of success and competency (South African College High School, 2023; University of Pretoria, School of the Arts: Music, 2023; Cornwall Hill College, 2023). Good practical music assessment results often indicate that effective instruction, in-depth preparation from a sound knowledge source in a supportive learning environment, have taken place. The participation in practical music assessments is not only beneficial for the student but for the music teacher as well. Anecdotal evidence suggest that parents choose music teachers based on their students' achievements (Salaman, 1994:212).

2.3 Practical music assessment tools

Rating the standard of a classical music performance can be challenging, because music is a complex and multifaceted art form that encompasses a wide range of skills and abilities. In South Africa, rating scales are used to measure the quality of the classical music performance.

The first performance rating scale was developed in the United States by J.G. Watkins in 1943 to evaluate solo cornet performances (Zdzinski, 1991:47). In 1954, Watkins and Farnum adapted the rating scale to include band instruments and later also stringed instruments (Zdzinski, 1991:47; Zdzinski & Barnes, 2002:246). The scale was originally developed for use in the United States but was widely used in music education and research by other countries, including Canada, Japan, Australia, China, Brazil, Germany, United Kingdom and South Korea. The object of the Watkins-Farnum Performance Scale (WFPS) was to measure music performance errors; however, the scale did not allow for the evaluation of important parameters such as intonation, musical interpretation and tone quality, which brought the validity of the WFPS into question (Zdzinski & Barnes, 2002:246).

Researchers Gutsch (1965, 1966), Kidd (1975), Abeles (1973), Mills (1987), Winter (1993) and Saunders and Holahan (1997) continued with research to refine practical music performance evaluation measures to produce the most valid and objective rating scales (Zdzinski, 1991:48-52; Saunders & Holahan, 1997:260; Zdzinski & Barnes, 2002: 246). The United States, Canada and United Kingdom moved on to scales that included specific assessment criteria to provide a more detailed level of diagnostic feedback (Saunders & Holahan, 1997:260). Saunders and Holahan (1997:261) describe the criteria-specific scale as a framework which includes “written descriptors of specific levels of practical music performance capability and the practical music assessors are asked to indicate which of several written criteria most closely describe the perceived level of performance ability”. The rubric, an example of a criteria-specific assessment tool, enables the practical music assessor to assess very specific levels of practical music performance aptitude accurately and reliably (Abeles, 1973:246; Wesolowski, 2012:37; Brophy, 2019:915).

Most musicians can recognise if a classical music performance is good or average, but struggle to describe clearly and objectively articulate which components are attributes of a good or average performance (Zhukov, 2015:57). The use of the rubric and rating scale created an increased level of objectivity and became a popular assessment tool (Stanley *et al.*, 2002:47). The descriptive criteria assist the practical music assessor to identify the specific errors and successes of the performance.

Wesolowski (2012:37) lists the following benefits of the rubric:

- “It indicates clear levels of accomplishment against defined measures of individual achievement”;
- “It provides clear indications of what the student needs to accomplish in the future to improve their individual performance”;
- “It promotes a versatility that can accommodate the syllabus or curriculum according to the student’s age, ability, style of music and type of performance”;
- “It provides a valid and reliable scoring system that implements learning outcomes and standards”.

2.4 Practical music assessment methods

The long history of practical music assessments in South Africa provides us with an opportunity to better understand the practical music assessment process and methods that have been implemented effectively. The literature shows that the practical assessment of WAM is comprised predominantly of two types of assessment methods: the criteria-specific approach and the holistic approach, both of which are traditionally applied in-person between the student and the practical music assessor (Winter,1993; Thompson & Williamon, 2003:25; Sadler, 2009:3; Sadler 2015:13-14; Zhukov, 2015:61-64).

2.4.1 The criteria-specific approach

Sadler (2009:2) referring to Sadler (1987) wherein the difference between a criterion and a standard is explained as follows: “a criterion refers to a property, quality, characteristic or attribute of a student’s response, while a standard refers to the level of degree or quality of the music performance”. Institutions such as the University of South Africa (UNISA), Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), Trinity College London (TCL) are long-standing, nationally and internationally recognised examination bodies that offer structured WAM examinations (Van Dyk, 2016:2). These examination bodies provide practical music assessors with descriptive marking criteria to guide their assessment of technical work, practical musicianship, sight-reading and repertoire. The set criteria, the expertise of the practical music assessor, the long-standing history of music examinations, as well as the oversight provided by the qualification frameworks ensure the reliability and validity of these music examinations (Southcott, 2017:53).

The evaluative standards in the criteria-specific scale guide the practical music assessor during the music examination, music adjudication or music assessment process. These standards are based on practical music performance characteristics such as interpretation, tone quality, intonation, tempo, articulation, rhythm and continuity (McPherson & Thompson, 1998:18; Barry, 2009:253; Iusca, 2014:120) and they describe the extent to which the music student has met these standards. The criteria-specific approach makes use of pre-set criteria determined by the music examining body, music school or institution to articulate the exact aspects which must be assessed during the performance to validate the outcome of the practical music assessment (Johnson, 1997:273). The rubric, an example of a criteria-specific performance scale, is an assessment tool which contains descriptive assessment criteria used by the practical music assessor or adjudicator to rate classical music performances.

Validity and reliability are important constructs in the implementation of the criteria-specific approach. Validity indicates “how accurately assessments measure the characteristics they purport to measure, while reliability refers to the consistency in the assessment process itself” (Stanley *et al.*, 2002:47; Thompson & Williamon, 2003:25-26; Barry, 2009:249; Brophy, 2019:912). Research showed that the practical music assessments that followed the criteria-specific approach were consistent and reliable (Saunders & Holahan, 1997:250-260; Ciorba & Smith, 2009:12-14). The criteria provided observable and measurable, specific aspects of the assessed music performances that reduced the subjective biases of the practical music assessor and enabled the practical music assessor to determine the specific area of performance level achieved or not achieved.

Practical music assessment processes are viewed as impartial, authoritative and a means to measure music “achievement”, which results in the awarding of an official certificate (ABRSM 2022; van Dyk, 2016:2). Similarly, adjudicators of music competitions and music eisteddfodau are guided by set criteria such as artistic ability, technical skill, musical interpretation and communication set by these bodies, which they use to assign a score (Forte International Music Competition and Festivals, 2022). Music competition criteria are often standardised, internationally recognised and accepted by many institutions as reliable assessment criteria. Organisations such as The World Federation of International Music Competitions (WFIMC), based in Geneva, Switzerland, founded in 1957, is a prime example of such an internationally recognised organisation which provides guidelines to ensure artistic excellence, authenticity, integrity and fairness, and that sets a globally recognised standard (World Federation of International Music Competitions, 2023). The specific marking criteria of music eisteddfodau, music examinations and music competitions are often not publicly available and in some instances the required standard is at the discretion of the practical music assessor (Tygerberg International Eisteddfod, 2022).

In my experience, in South Africa in some instances the music assessment criteria are not shared and become a point of contention for many music teachers and parents. This is because each music examination body or institution has its individual music assessment criteria to evaluate practical music performances. By keeping these criteria confidential, they are protecting the integrity of the music assessment process and so ensuring fairness, eliminating unfair advantages and unauthentic performances tailored only to meet the assessment criteria. However, the lack of transparency also raises questions about the efficacy, accuracy and reliability of the assessment process and, even more so, the practical music assessors' expertise as an assessor. In music examinations students are 'competing against themselves', while in competitions and eisteddfodau students are competing against each other (Salaman, 1994:212). In all practical music assessment environments there is value in making the criteria public to promote a clear understanding of how and against what standard the performance will be measured. This provides the student with the opportunity to become as good as what the explicit standard requires, thus making excellence attainable and enabling the student to manage their own learning (Shepard, 2000:11).

The practical assessment of WAM performances is a complex process affected by Western aesthetic value judgements that are subjective in nature and difficult to manage (Wesolowski, 2012:37). With the criteria-specific approach, the assessor's subjectivity and/or objectivity may also influence the validity of the assessment (Stanley *et al.*, 2002:47). Thus, set criteria provide clear and specific distinctions between levels of musical achievement and allow for greater objectivity, consistency and validity (Brophy, 2019:915).

The risk associated with using the criteria-specific approach is that practical music assessors can become overly critical and analytical in the light of the set parameters of the criteria (Newsome, 2015:153). Even when transparency is evident within the music assessment process, it is arguably difficult to assess any form of performance art accurately and objectively, since it is such an immersive, creative process. An already complex music assessment process was exacerbated by the COVID-19 health crisis, which enforced the adaptation of traditional assessment protocols and perhaps impacted on how successfully the criteria-specific approach effectively captured and explained assessment feedback.

2.4.2 The holistic approach

Mills (1991:173), Johnson (199:277-278) and Sadler (2009:19) offer an alternative music assessment strategy to the criteria-specific approach and advocate for a holistic assessment approach, also known as the global approach. In the holistic approach, the music performance

is assessed in its entirety, as a cohesive product of musicking (Small, 1999:13-14). The focus is placed on the quality of the entire music performance and not only on specific criteria (Sadler, 2015:14), which some assert makes this approach more realistic and musically more credible (Mills, 1991:179). These researchers argue that the use of listed criteria segments the performance assessment and limits the practical music assessor's focus to only those aspects of the performance. They assert that a music performance is much more than conformity to a predetermined set of criteria that can detect incorrect musical elements. Mills (1991:175) states "some performances have overwhelmed me, despite there being a handful of wrong notes. I remember others in which the notes have been accurate, and the interpretation has been legitimate, and yet the overall effect has been sterile". A music performance is about the overall experience of the performance.

To understand how musicians assess music performances, Stanley *et al.* (2002:46-56) conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis, interviewing fifteen experienced music educators at the Sydney Music Conservatorium. The purpose of the study was to determine the music assessor's perceptions of the effects of using criteria in music assessments at the Sydney Music Conservatorium. Through semi-structured interviews, the researchers focused on the following issues: the purpose of practical music assessment, music assessment procedures, the role of criteria and the current music assessment practices at the Conservatorium. The findings revealed that practical music assessors follow a three-step assessment process. First, a holistic approach was adopted which they call their "gut reaction" to arrive at a tentative grade. Practical music assessors rely on an emotional, instinctive response based solely on the enjoyment of the music performance. This enables them to determine an initial grade that places the performance in a particular percentage range. The second step involves justifying their initial holistic assessment by looking at performance characteristics to support their initial impression. During the third step, specific assessment criteria are used as a checklist to substantiate the final grade and to ensure that all aspects of the performance are assessed. The checklist consisted of two categories containing technical and musical sections for each instrument family under which several relevant criteria were listed.

The findings revealed that some practical music assessors reported that the assessment criteria assisted them to focus more intently, whilst others professed that it narrowed their view of the performance. Some practical music assessors stated that they went back and forth between the criteria-specific and holistic approaches throughout the music assessment. A few found that the use of criteria distracted them from listening to the performance and found that it was not suitable for assessing inconsistent performances that vary in standard throughout. Some of the practical music assessors stated that a music performance cannot be assessed by means of criteria, since music is a form of performance art and by making use of the criteria-specific approach,

you see only a small part of the big picture (Stanley *et al.*, 2002:53). The arguments presented by the practical music assessors in Stanley's (2002) study exemplifies a significant conundrum: assessed music performances involves the delivery of an artistic performance, and due to its artistic nature, it is challenging to assess. Therefore it is also challenging to articulate the elements that would constitute an excellent performance since the aesthetics or artistry that inform the way adjudicators assess can be subjective. The Sydney Conservatorium's assessment protocols were modified to include a set of shared assessment criteria for all instruments, hence featuring a holistic music assessment focus (Stanley *et al.*, 2002:53).

It is evident from the study by Stanley *et al.* (2002) that the overall assessment approach strongly shapes the specific music assessment process and may also influence the quality of the assessment feedback. The music assessment approach may influence the type of assessment criteria used to evaluate the music. For instance, a practical music assessment that focuses more on technical skill might prioritize assessment criteria such as accuracy, tone quality and intonation, while a practical music assessment that focuses on musical interpretation might prioritize assessment criteria such as phrasing, dynamics and expression. Each music institution employs internal music assessment policies and processes which the practical music assessor must apply. These assessment policies and processes are put in place to ensure fairness and consistency during the assessment process; however, every practical music assessor brings with them their own set of beliefs, musical understanding, musical preferences and performing standards based on their training, qualifications and experience. By making use of the holistic approach, practical music assessors might assign more value to certain musical aspects than others.

2.5 Music assessment categories

An assessed classical music performance will frequently have two major categories: a technical component and an expressive component. The technical component speaks to the mechanical production of sound on the chosen instrument and the expressive component relates to the intentional "performance parameters chosen by the performer, which will in turn influence the cognitive and aesthetic outcomes for the listener" (Sloboda, 2000:398). Technical and expressive skills are distinct entities, yet they interact and depend on each other.

2.5.1 Technical skills

Piano pedagogue Joan Last (1980:9) states that all performers need to understand the workings of their instrument if they are to fully understand the skill and sensitivity it will demand from their arms, hands and fingers. The arms, hands and fingers are not merely a mechanical means of

execution, but rather a support system that enables the performer to perform the music. The fingers can only function effortlessly and with musical meaning if the underpinning foundation of technique is sound; Arshinova (2022:83) stresses that if technique is taught incorrectly during the initial phase of learning, it is difficult to rectify later to produce expressive performance. A variety of technical skills are essential to control an instrument and to deliver a successful performance (Elliot, 1987:162; Goebel, 2017:3-5; Kim *et al.*, 2022:468; Huiqi & Jia, 2023:3385). Technical skill is important, but it is more than a controlled, physical process to ensure note speed and accuracy. A sound technique is the vehicle that is used to interpret the music and successfully express the emotion behind the music (Lehmann, 1997:164; Goebel, 2017:3-5; James, 2018:1-7; Alper, 2021:190-191).

The technical criteria that practical music assessors comment on include rhythmic accuracy and control, appropriate choice of tempo, sensitive and well-projected tonal qualities, accurate and secure pitch, and a display of stylistically appropriate articulation. These aspects will display the technical proficiency and physical dexterity of the performer. The level of technical skill demonstrated by the performer informs how a practical music assessor perceives the competency or mastery of skill of the performer and consequently influences the outcome of the assessment. Technique varies from instrument to instrument and, according to the syllabi of UNISA, ABRSM, and TCL, the most assessed instruments are piano, strings and woodwind instruments.

In the seminal work of piano pedagogues, Walter Gieseking and Karl Leimer (1938:12), they advocate that sound technique starts with good posture and sitting position; recent research by Kim *et al.* (2022:468), Arshinova (2022:82) and Gavel (2022:4-13) confirms these views more than eighty years later. An incorrect seated height as well as the distance away from the piano will restrict the free range of movement which will in turn hamper technique. Aspects such as the hand position, weight of the forearm and finger dexterity influence the overall quality of the performance (Goebel & Palmer, 2013:1-9; Goebel, 2017:3; James, 2018:2-3). The shape of the hands and fingers assists the performer to control the chosen tempo, rhythm, articulation, tone and sound production (James, 2018:3). Executing a good technique is reliant on relaxed muscles that will enable greater dexterity when required (James, 2018:3; Gavel, 2022:18). Gavel (2022:8) emphasises the importance of a “healthy” technique and describes it in terms of playing that does not cause pain or injury, and that feels effortless; to achieve this, the body should remain relaxed while playing. Relaxed muscles are equally important for playing stringed instruments, since it requires a high degree of precision and control in the movements of the fingers, hands and arms. When the muscles are relaxed, movements are more fluid and efficient, allowing for a performance with greater speed, accuracy and control.

In the doctoral dissertations by Nelson (1994:24-40) and Lee (2003:22-34) both researchers highlight the views of the violin pedagogues, Flesch (1939), Rolland (1979), Auer (1980) and Havas (1981), who asserted that technique is influenced by stance, posture and bow hold in string instruments. Achieving the proper stance, posture and bow hold will aid the student to reach the necessary technical and performance goals (Douglass, 2012:170-177; Ibrahimov & Bakri, 2020:422-435; Mustul & Aksoy, 2023:300). The practical music assessor will listen for level of technical competency throughout the music assessment and comment on areas in need of improvement, for example, “incorrect stance, inappropriate fingering and bow hold, as well as coordination skills related to tone production, string crossing, legato and staccato bowing, and finger dexterity” (Johansson, 2015:128). Characteristics which will be assessed include technical aspects such as accurate and fluid shifting from one position to another, controlled strength of the violinist’s wrist, arm and hand as well as the correct balance between bow speed and pressure, which all impact on intonation, dynamics and articulation (Lamb & Cook, 2002:55-78). The way the instrument responds is dependent on the actions of the performer and technique is at the core of these actions; this also applies to wind instruments. In fact, the technique developed by a performer on a wind instrument is critical in producing a clear and resonant sound.

Wind instruments rely on the player's breath to produce sound, and hence the technique used to control the use of air influences every aspect of the brass and woodwind performance; consequently, incorrect breathing techniques may impact negatively on the overall tone quality, sound production, vibrato, dynamic control and articulation of the performance (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009:23; Riman & Rauf, 2022:841). Breath control influences musical decisions such as phrasing, technical passages and a steady tone (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009:33). Breathing is a natural process that is very different during a musical performance as a result of nervousness and anxiety before or during the music assessment. Ely and Van Deuren (2009:33) state that a music performance requires that a large amount of air be taken in very quickly and let out over time in a controlled manner. Controlling the air stream affects the consistency of the tone production. Technical aspects such as weak embouchure control, poor lip flexibility and too much pressure on the mouthpiece can hamper technical proficiency. The more experienced wind player should be able to recognise the tonal inconsistencies and make the necessary adjustments during the performance. The proper position of the instrument and correct playing posture may also influence the flow of air, in this way influencing the technique (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009:137; Riman & Rauf, 2022:842).

Relaxation forms an integral part of a music performance since tension in the body can be heard in the delivery of the performance. In his pedagogical teachings Fink (1992) emphasises that tension is the enemy in piano playing that inhibits the freedom of playing. Fink (1992) refers to

piano playing in this instance, but this statement holds true for all instruments. I firmly believe that the expertise of a good performer and the success of a performance are reliant on a good technique that is perceived in a performer who is relaxed whilst maintaining full control of the instrument; having full technical control enables the performer to execute the written music as the composer intended. Some students perceive music assessments such as music examinations, music competitions or music eisteddfodau as stressful events that create heightened anxiety levels. The anticipation of such a music performance or the performance itself could have a significant bearing on the performer's technical abilities because performance is a physically, emotionally and mentally demanding activity.

A good technical foundation enables the performer to concentrate on the interpretation of the music and the execution of the performance itself; with experience, technique should become an internal habit-like feature of a performer that elevates the performance, and does not encumber the performer by exposing underdeveloped technical areas (Johansson, 2015:129). Technical decisions inform the stylistic choices and enable the performer to focus on communicating the expressive aspects of the music to the audience or practical music assessor (Johansson, 2015:134-135; Mustul & Aksoy, 2023:435). Often, practical music assessors must adjudicate several types of instruments and have a basic knowledge and understanding of the technical skill requirements of each instrument. Although several chapters could be written on nuanced and detailed accounts of technical proficiency, this short overview serves to convey some of the key technical attributes that practical music assessors listen to and evaluate.

2.5.2 Expressive skills

Communicating emotion, effective stylistic interpretation and musical expression form part of the expressive aspects which relate to the aesthetic part of a performance. Through communication and interpretation, the performer conveys their involvement with and connection to the music. The connectivity to the music promotes musical expression, which is the ability to create an atmosphere or mood that communicates the essence of the music to the listener (McPherson & Thompson, 1998:14; Swanwick, 1998:5; James, 2018:2).

Some of the expressive skills which the performer can apply to a music performance include incorporating a variety of dynamic levels, integrating different colours and textures as well as varying the timing for emotional effect. The practical music assessor can interpret music expression through visual cues that include gestures and body movements which the performer exhibits (Shoda & Adachi, 2012:925). The practical music assessor can also hear music expression through the sound that is produced. The interplay of auditory and visual aspects of musical expression during a music performance are reliant on the musicality of the performer.

Musicality can be described as a performer's musical abilities, musical talent or musical intelligence, which are based on acquired music knowledge and understanding of structure, style and genre. It is this foundation of musical understanding that allows for a convincing, expressive performance.

Extensive research has been done by Juslin (1997:383-414) on the link between emotion and music expression. Guitar players were instructed to play five melodies that communicated a range of emotional qualities, including no expression, anger, fear, happiness and sadness. Guitarists could apply different sound levels, articulation and tempos to illustrate the emotional intent. Findings showed that listeners can distinguish between the emotional quality of anger, fear, happiness, sadness and no expression quite successfully. A higher success rate was found amongst female subjects and it was found that the decoding of emotion is largely independent of musical training, expertise or background. The study demonstrated how the performer's expressive intent can affect the tempo, sound levels and articulation (Juslin, 1997:414). By manipulating how loudly, softly, slowly or quickly you play communicates emotion to the listener and can effectively demonstrate expression. Juslin (1997:383-414) likens this to speech; when you want to convey your anger, you will perhaps speak louder and faster, and when you are sad, you will speak softer and slower.

Music has the power to communicate without words (Salaman, 1994:212). Juslin (2003:274) asserts that the "quality of the music expression is what makes a music performance worthwhile", and it is expression that makes music-lovers go to extraordinary lengths to experience a live performance, and expression that sets one performer apart from another. Expression allows musicians to offer novel and innovative perspectives of old, well-known works (Juslin, 2003:274). By infusing their performances with personal interpretation and emotion, musicians can bring new life and meaning to familiar pieces and engage audiences in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Music transcends the traditional means of verbal communication and demonstrates the ability of the musical features to communicate meaning in vocal music that utilise words (Cupido, 2022:9). An example would be how audiences or practical music assessors make sense or ascribe meaning to songs or arias they hear in foreign languages that they do not understand. A classical music performance, whether performed in the context of an examination, competition or eisteddfod, tells a story; the postures, facial expressions, body movements of a performer contribute to the way in which the listener perceives and mentally participates in the performance (James, 2018:2). Besides the emotions that the music evokes, a practical music assessor also makes a cognitive appraisal of the performance as they evaluate the skill and competency of the performer.

The literature has shown that listening conditions, practices and mediums can affect music expression (Shoda & Adachi, 2012:928; Shoda *et al.*, 2016:1-11; Swarbrick *et al.*, 2019; Cupido, 2022:9). It is argued that recorded performances cannot fully capture the emotive and atmospheric quality of the musical performance and no matter how accurate the recording, it cannot convey the real-time interpretative actions of the performer and content of the music (Gracyk, 1997:143). Music-making is a human activity between a performer and listener, and in the context of a practical music assessment, the interaction takes place between the student and the practical music assessor. How successfully the student communicates the music could be influenced by their performance environment.

In South Africa, strict health and safety measures were implemented to prevent the transmission and spread of the COVID-19 virus. All social, religious and cultural gatherings in public places were restricted and physical distancing, sanitisation protocols and mask-wearing were mandatory. Consequently, in-person, venue-based practical music assessments and in-person music teaching were disrupted. Over time the more severe restrictions were lifted, but the basic health and safety measures continued and were reinforced to prevent a resurgence. Instrumentalists, for example, pianists, violinists and guitarists, were expected to wear a mask during practical music assessments in the presence of the practical music assessor, while woodwind and brass instrumentalists, who could obviously not perform while wearing a mask, completed their assessments behind protective screens to prevent further transmission of the virus. During the in-person practical music assessments, the practical music assessor was encouraged to wear a mask, practise social distancing and conduct the assessment from behind a protective screen. Alternative practical music assessment options, online and pre-recorded practical music assessments were introduced. The implementation of alternative practical music assessment options and adhering to the enforced safety requirements ensured the health and safety of the students and practical music assessors, but affected the assessment environment, which possibly impeded the practical music assessor's communicative listening experience.

2.6 Assessment criteria

Research has established that assessment provides a critical link between teaching and learning (Kinney, 2009:323; Sadler, 2009:810; Parkes, 2010:98; Waddell *et al.*, 2019:2:2). Technical and expressive skills within a classical music performance are key, but what are the specific assessment criteria that practical music assessors apply? Published criteria in Swanwick (1998:5-7), Stanley *et al.* (2002:50-54), Bergee (2003:22), Williamon (2004:3-4), Parkes (2010:103), Wesolowski (2012:38-39) and Newsome (2015:160-163) on music performance assessment are varied, but may be summarised as follows (Table 1).

Table 1: A summation of assessment criteria

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Tone Production	Intonation; breathing; sound projection; evenness of tone; quality of sound (warm/harsh); balance; range
Technique	Good posture; instrumental and physical control; consistency and clarity; coordination; relaxation
Accuracy	Consistent and correct tempo choice; rhythmic accuracy and control; fluid reading; pacing of the performance; assuredness and confidence; implementation of performance directions within the score
Articulation	Touch; stylistically correct; melodic contour
Dynamic Contrast	Dynamic range; shaping of music according to levels of louds and softs
Interpretation	Understanding the style/genre; musical coherence; phrasing; sense of movement; musicianship; musical creativity and understanding; appropriate use of tone, colour, light and dark
Expression	Grasping the emotional character and atmosphere of the work; understanding the musical form; emotional impact; sensitivity to the relationship between textural parts; convincing performance
Communication	Musicianship; conveying the mood; appropriate use of tone and colour; musical presentation; maintains a sense of direction and produces an atmosphere; commitment and conviction of performance; flair, individuality, and sensibility

The purpose of the practical music assessment will determine the choice of assessment criteria (McPherson & Thompson, 1998:12). Music examinations, music eisteddfodau and music competitions make use of different assessment criteria best suited for the type of assessment, e.g. music competitions often use a ranking system to determine a winner and eisteddfodau frequently assign symbols. Practical music assessments in a competitive context or an educational assessment-based context are not assessed in the same way, therefore the assessment criteria and framework will differ. The assessment criteria and assessment approach strongly shape and influence the assessment process and thus the assessment outcome (McPherson & Thompson, 1998:17).

During the COVID-19 pandemic the traditional forms of practical music assessment were amended to protect the practical music assessor and student. In my opinion, practical music assessors were perhaps more flexible and more lenient in their evaluations in response to the restrictions imposed that disrupted music teaching. The format of practical music assessments as well as the assessment criteria were amended to enable the continuation of music assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.6.1 The link between technical and expressive criteria

A classical musical performance or practical music assessment is a complex event where the performer relies on cognitive and motor, as well as on psychological and emotional processes (Williamon, 2004:1; Juslin, 1997:383-414). Cognitive aspects include the retrieval of stored information from memory, and implementing practised spatial, logistical and coordinative processes during the performance or assessment (Antonini Philippe *et al.*, 2022:1023-1024). Classical musical performances do not rely only on technical components but also on psychological aspects such as emotional intelligence, temperament, personality and resilience (Williamon, 2004:17-18).

Technical proficiency is a learnt activity that improves with experience, and involves many hours of repetitive practice and dedication. It is in this instance that skilled musicians exhibit resilience, exert more effort and rely on intrinsic motivating behaviour to achieve the desired result (Williamon, 2004:13-14). A good performance is dependent on factors such as the time and quality of the preparation (Antonini Philippe *et al.*, 2022:1028). A highly successful performer realises that extensive training and practice will enhance technical skills and, once a certain level has been achieved, expressivity can be conveyed with ease (Williamon, 2004:4-8). Nielson and Rosfeld (2010:23) state that in technical playing we are 'doing' something; in musical playing we are 'saying' something and what is 'said' starts by looking for the music behind the notes, because there is far more to the music than only the notes printed on a music score.

A musical performance cannot be wholly musical without good technique, but if you do make technique the sole priority, such performances will be turned into a technical exercise, an extension of playing scales (Johnson, 1997:279-280; Alper, 2022:190). Mechanical playing can be stiff and robotic, and will sound lifeless and rigid too (Nielson & Rosfeld, 2010:23).

In my opinion, a good performance will draw the listener into the performance in such a way that transcends technical and interpretative matters. It is a shared musical experience or event between the performer and the listener, and in the instance of a practical music assessment, it is a shared experience between the student or performer and the practical music assessor. The performer is required to understand that the technical and expressive elements need to be moulded into a coherent artistic form, and so too the practical music assessor is required not only to evaluate the technical and expressive elements cohesively, but also to produce a comprehensive judgement on the artistic nature of the performance (Winter, 1993:37). Each work should be evaluated technically and musically but, more importantly, cohesively and the assessment feedback should reflect this. Schumann's (1876:145-146) description of a Liszt performance encapsulates the concept of technical control and expressive artistry:

within a few seconds tenderness, boldness, exquisiteness, wildness succeed one another; the instrument glows and flashes under the master's hands He must be heard and seen; for if Liszt played behind a screen a great deal of poetry would be lost.

The level of technical control and expressive mastery will determine how well the performer communicates with the listener. Musicians who can find a genuine and personal means of expression receive the most attention and are the most appreciated by audiences (Gabrielsson, 1999:47). All musicians strive for an expressive music performance to communicate their emotional intent, but without technical skills the performer will not be as effective (Jarvin & Subotnik, 2010:81; Alper, 2022:190). Both components determine the standard and quality of the classical music performance.

2.7 Factors which influence a practical music performance assessment

Music teaching is a social interaction between the teacher and student or students where new knowledge and skills are exchanged and developed through a process of demonstration, listening and re-enactment (Joseph & Lennox, 2021:242). During the COVID-19 pandemic, music teaching was conducted via online platforms which resulted in positive and negative experiences for both the music teacher and student. The pandemic tested the resilience of music teachers and students alike. Practical music teachers shifted away from nonverbal teaching methods of demonstrating to verbal teaching methods. Difficult teaching concepts that were aurally demonstrated in the past now had to be explained in words via a digital platform. Describing technical, practical constructs in words was difficult to express and meaning often got lost in interpretation (Biasutti *et al.*, 2021:10).

The lack of proximity and physical connection between student and music teacher, and the inability to see and hear what the student was doing, negatively influenced the quality of preparation of music examinations, music eisteddfodau, and music competitions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, I would posit that the lack of physical proximity and physical connection between the practical music assessor and student could possibly have affected the practical music assessment process for both practical music assessor and student.

2.7.1 The interaction of sound and sight in the music performance

Assessing classical music performance through critical listening is explained as an auditory process. Sound is often considered to be the most important element of information for assessing a practical music performance (Chiba *et al.*, 2021:2). If sound is in fact the most important element, I suggest that one should consider the following questions:

- Does sound sound better in a live context?
- How does seeing a practical music performance in real-time influence the practical music assessor's listening experience?
- How does the quality of sound impact on the technical and expressive aspects of a practical music performance?
- How does the visual information (body movements and gestures) of the performer enhance the music performance?

Davies (1994:6) stated that “musical meaning begins to operate at the start of a pitched tone”, implying that the acoustic element, sound, is considered to be the most important aspect in a music performance. The criteria of assessed music performances tend heavily towards the critical appraisal of acoustic components. However, research indicates that music performances are inherently multisensory, and that sight and sound interact (Vines *et al.*, 2006:80; Vines *et al.*, 2010:157; Griffiths & Reay: 2018:364; Mehr *et al.*, 2018:1). We can therefore deduce that sight and sound interact during practical music assessments as well.

The performance of classical music is an expressive activity that evoke emotions (Juslin, 2003:275; Williamon, 2004:8-11; Juslin *et al.*, 2015: 282; Alper, 2022:199; Cupido, 2022:9). Music expressivity includes interpreting the composer's directions as captured on the music score as well as the performer's individual expressive interpretation and understanding of the music (Laukka, 2004:45). The performer plays a significant role in manipulating moments in the music by means of “articulation, dynamics, intonation, tempo, timbre and timing to influence the musical expression” (Laukka, 2004:45). Music interpretation differs from one musician to the next, and no two performances will sound the same and in these individual performances the unique artistry of the performer is evidenced. Consequently, when these music performances are adjudicated, the practical music assessor decides in each case if these moments are musically convincing and effective. Visual cues, for example, body movements, hand gestures and facial expressions, form part of the performance and could enhance the expressivity of the music performance and influence the emotional response of the listener. Singers especially use gestures, their bodies and facial expressions as tools to communicate emotion and subtext.

A study conducted by Vines *et al.* (2010:157) postulates that seeing a musician perform can enhance, complement and act with the sound to enhance the impact of the music experience. Zentner (2010:117-118) also affirmed that the physical appearance, mannerisms, gestures and non-verbal communication of the performer can also elicit emotional responses from the listener. By seeing the performer, the listener is exposed to the musician's facial expressions, hand gestures and body movements that may influence the listener's perception and experience of the performance. Davidson (1993:112) and Vines *et al.* (2010:159) conducted extensive

research on music expression. Both studies instructed three groups of participants to rate music performances that varied in levels of expressivity: restrained, standard and overly expressive. The first group of participants could only see the music performance; the second group only heard the music performances, and the last group could see and hear the music performances. Both studies showed that expressive playing does influence the listener's appreciation of the music performance and therefore influences the listeners' judgment as well (Davidson, 1993:112; Vines *et al.*, 2010:159). The studies found that we appreciate music performances based on the interaction of sound and sight. The performer's facial expressions, gestures and body movements are effective in communicating the expressive quality of the music, enhancing key moments in the performance and if perceived as convincing and authentic, the overall outcome of the performance will be memorable and well-received by the listener.

Shoda and Adachi (2012:925-929) conducted research to determine if visual information of the performer is more effective in a live or recorded context. Thirteen pianists who hold graduate or postgraduate music degrees were the performers. A total of 211 undergraduate and graduate music students participated as audience members and were randomly assigned to each of the thirteen performances. They all participated in the live as well as the recorded contexts; six compositions were selected and were played in the same order. The participants first listened to the live-context performances and ten weeks later they listened to the recorded-context performances. They had to rank each music performance according to expressiveness, artistry as well as the affective impressions conveyed by the performance.

The results indicated that the audience experienced expressivity and artistry more effectively in a live context. The pianist's affective interpretations were communicated more successfully in a live context too. The study evinced that visual information in a live performance can enhance the perception of expression and artistry. However, for three of the six pieces, the affective interpretations of the performer did not influence the affective impressions of the audience, indicating that sound alone sufficiently transmitted the performer's affective intentions. The study suggested that expressivity is linked to the tempo and musical style of the work performed and artistry is linked to the affective quality of the work and the internal aspects of the audience's experience (Shoda & Adachi, 2012:928).

It is not surprising that research shows that expressivity and artistry can be felt more effectively in a live context. A live music performance or a practical music assessment can be compared to a live concert experience. For the listener and performer, the shared physical space and shared musical experience produce a positive performing atmosphere and energy. One objective of the current study was to understand how the practical music assessors describe their experiences adjudicating WAM performances online and in-person, what those experiences entailed and how

they differed. I contend that in in-person practical music assessments, the sound quality and acoustic properties of the venue were often more conducive to an expressive performance which could influence the overall adjudication. If a practical music assessor were to adjudicate only a sound recording and not a video recording, they would not be exposed to the non-verbal communicative and visual expressive components of the music performance.

Exposure to non-verbal communicative and visual expressive components might significantly impact on the practical music assessor's or audience's perception and emotional response to the music. A study conducted by Tsay (2013:1480-1485) revealed that adjudicators tend to rely more on visual cues, such as facial expressions and body language of performers than on the auditory aspects of the performance when assessing its quality. Participants were tasked to choose either a sound recording, video recording or both sound and video recording to indicate the competition winners. Most participants selected the sound recording, which indicates that they valued sound as more important than sight. Surprisingly, not many participants successfully indicated the winner by making use of the sound-only recordings. Results showed that participants rated the performance higher when they were able to see the performers, irrespective of the quality of sound produced. This suggested that visual cues do sway the adjudicators away from recognising the best performance (Tsay, 2013:14583).

Seminal research by Goldin and Rouse (2000:715-741) supports my argument that visual information should not detract from the music itself, or become a distraction within the music performance. The research of Goldin and Rouse (2000:715-741) focused on blind auditions for orchestras where the gender of the performer was concealed from the adjudicators. This was to test whether gender played a role in the hiring process apart from the music performance criteria. During the blind auditions, a screen was used to hide the identity of the musician, each performer was assigned a number and adjudicators rated the performance against this number. Results revealed that the use of the screen increased the probability of women advancing from one round to the next by 50% and could also account for the increase of 25% of women who were hired in the orchestra between 1970 to 1996 (Goldin & Rouse, 2000:738).

The findings suggested that blind auditions prevent extraneous factors from influencing the selection process; such factors include gender, race or physical appearance, but at the same time also remove access to visual cues, such as body movements, facial expressions or gestures. Musicians are thus evaluated solely on their musical proficiency based on sound production. It is important to note that all the adjudicators were physically present when the auditions were conducted.

The evidence strongly indicates that audio (sound) and visual (sight) information are interrelated in the way it is perceived musically, “both by the performer in their artistic interpretation of the music and by the audience in their lived experience the performance” (Griffiths & Reay, 2013: 374). In South Africa the shift to online practical music assessments had a significant impact on how music was perceived and experienced, particularly with regard to the audio-visual link since digital mediums such as Microsoft Teams (MS Teams), Skype or Zoom were used (ABRSM, 2020; UNISA, 2020; TCL, 2022; Stellenbosch Eisteddfod, 2021; Western Cape Virtual Eisteddfod, 2022). Pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions) were captured with numerous devices varying in quality ranging from entry-level cell phones to professional video equipment. The pandemic highlighted the extent of the digital divide in South Africa. This digital divide can be explained as “the gap between people who have and do not have access to forms of information and communication technology such as computers, internet, cell phones and digital hardware and software “(Van Dijk, 2017 in Mojala & Mudau, 2022:276).

The digital divide impacted on practical music assessments, since students had limited access to laptops, cell phones and fast internet connectivity. Factors such as the student’s geographical location, the disruption of loadshedding², the student’s living conditions and their lack of digital skills played a significant role in the learning and assessment process (Güsewell & Terrien, 2021:8; Mojala & Mudau, 2022:276). These factors possibly influenced the audio and visual information of the online and pre-recorded practical music assessments. I contend that the student had to adapt aspects of their music performance such as music expression, dynamic contrasts and music interpretation, to compensate for limitations of the digital divide and digital distance.

2.7.2 Live versus recorded listening environment

Live music performances and music assessments are forms of communication and interaction between the performer and the audience, or the practical music assessor and the student (Shoda & Aldachi, 2016:11). A successful performance or practical music assessment relies on transmitting musical meaning through sound; how and under what listening conditions the musical meaning is transmitted will ultimately have an influence on the practical music assessment, practical music assessor, and student.

Performing music is a social phenomenon that is typically practiced in a live setting, but with the advent of recording technology there was a shift in the way in which all music was experienced

² Loadshedding is the planned interruption of the electricity supply in South Africa, affecting most households, schools and institutions in South Africa.

(Swarbrick *et al.*, 2019:1). Some theorists consider recordings to be simply a trace of a true, live performance and the process of playing back a music performance to a listener is not a performance and cannot be considered as performance art (Godlovitch, 1998; Rink, 2018:89-112). John Rink (2018:90) states “musical recordings can be likened to photographs as opposed to the events that give rise to them, the fixed image failing to capture one’s sense of the original experience, which naturally was shaped by a host of factors outside the frame”. Importance is placed on the *first time* the music is performed. The act of recording, and re-recording, until accurately captured removes the authenticity of the performance. Brophy (2019:925) stated that music activities should be as authentic as possible and match the performance context as closely as possible; students should perform, create, listen, respond and connect with the music in an authentic environment. Gracyk (1997:143) argued that recordings eliminate the listener’s experience of the performer’s interpretation in real-time.

Theorists such as Thom (1993) and Godlovitch (1998) advocate that a real-time audience is necessary for a music performance (Gracyk, 1997:139-150). The communication between the performer and listener enhances the quality of the music performance. Performers present their musical efforts in a shared auditory and physical space and, through sharing the same space, feelings of unity and connectivity are heightened. The performer and listener are engaging in an emotional exchange which is reciprocal in nature. The presence of the listener or audience is conducive to a heightened state of attention and the listener’s enjoyment in the form of exclamations and applause affects the musicians’ performance (Berleant, 1999:73). Each live music performance is unique and “unfolds organically and unpredictably, unlike when listening to a recording” (Swarbrick *et al.*, 2019:2). Other theorists disagree and state that despite the physical absence of the performer at the time of the listening, a sound recording constitutes a music performance and does not influence the performance for the performer and the listener (Auslander, 2004:5; Pitts, 2005:257; McCormick, 2006:126).

Are our senses more heightened when music is performed live and to what extent does the listening platform influence the listening experience and practical music assessment? Berleant (1999:77) explains that a live music performance, enhances the sensory awareness of the performer, heightening the perceptual experience of the listener, audience or practical music assessor. The performer’s hearing becomes more acute and the sense of touch more delicate and sensitive. He states that the listener becomes enveloped by the responsive space, while the attributes of the performing space ranging from the smells, tastes, instrument, acoustics, lightening and venue all fuse together and culminate in a successful performance. To this point, I contend that the absence of an audience, listener or practical music assessor will influence the way that the music is perceived and ultimately how it is performed.

Shoda and Adachi (2015:1-15) and Shoda *et al.* (2016:1-11) conducted extensive research on the effect of the presence and absence of an audience on a music performance. In the first study two types of recordings (audience-present and audience-absent) were evaluated by 153 pianists; the findings showed that the audience-present music performance was rated as better. Further research by Shoda *et al.* (2016:1-11) tested the audience's physiological response by monitoring their heart rates and nerve activities during both listening contexts: live (with the performer in the room) and recorded (through speakers and without the performer in the room). Findings showed that heart rates were higher for the faster-tempo pieces than the slower-tempo pieces, but only in the live context. By comparing the nerve activities of the participants in both listening contexts, it was established that live music performances tended to induce states of relaxation and reduced stress for the audience. Audiences were more attentive during the live music performances and heart rates might be influenced by the physical presence of the performer. This indicated that the sense of artistry, expressivity and affective nuances were felt more strongly in a live context than in the recorded context (Shoda *et al.*, 2016: 1-11).

In the context of this study, music assessments were evaluated in three ways during the COVID-19 pandemic: in-person, online and pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions). Listening is involved in a practical music assessment and therefore is focused mainly on sound. As previously discussed, the quality of the practical music assessment may be enhanced by physical expressivity and visual information; therefore, the auditory space in which the practical music assessment was conducted may have influenced the assessment and the outcome of the assessment, but it is in this instance that the practical music assessor's experience and knowledge played a vital role.

2.7.3 The practical music assessor

Many researchers assert that an effective practical assessment of WAM relies heavily on the practical music assessor's expertise as a musician (McPherson & Thompson, 1998:16; Thompson & Williamon, 2003:21-24; Wadell *et al.*, 2019:2-3). According to Juslin *et al.* (2021:4), an expert is "someone who by virtue of training, education, profession or experience has special skills or knowledge in a specific domain".

The practical music assessor evaluates the performance according to technical and expressive aspects and translates what he or she hears and sees into a form of feedback (Waddell *et al.*, 2019:2). This requires practical music assessors to be reliable, fair and consistent. These traits come with exposure to practical music assessments and experience. Non-experts are believed to make judgements on the basis of sensory and aesthetic criteria, whereas experts based their judgements on knowledge-informed criteria such as technique, musical style and interpretation

(Juslin *et al.*, 2021:4). The ability of an exceptional music performer does not automatically translate into the ability to be an effective practical music assessor (Wadell, *et al.*, 2019:1). However, research suggest that skilled, trained musicians are more likely to have reliable assessment skills (Abeles, 1973:246; Winter, 1993:34-39; Johnson,1996:84; McPherson *et al.*,1998:15-16; Kinney, 2007:33-34; Ciorba & Smith, 2009:12-14). Studies conducted by Johnson (1996:84) demonstrated that musicians and non-musicians do not assess performance from the same knowledge base. The scores allocated by musicians were aligned with and equal to those of experts, while the scores allocated by the non-musicians were haphazard (Johnson, 1996:84).

Besides experience and skill, the practical music assessor's personal preferences, music knowledge, biases and individual characteristics may also strongly influence the outcome of the assessment (Winter, 1993:22; McPherson *et al.*, 1998:15-16; Barry, 2009:249; Williamon, 2004:11-20). Music performances within highly competitive environments are synonymous with excellence, prestige and financial gain. In this environment, the skill of the performer is as important as the evaluative skill of the assessor. Consistency and fairness are critically important aspects of the assessment process which requires clear self-insight from the practical music assessor. Juslin *et al.* (2021:5) describe self-insight as the extent to which the practical music assessor understands their internal judgement policy and which criteria are weighted more than others when assessing. It could therefore be concluded that greater self-insight and understanding reduce music assessor bias (Juslin *et al.*, 2021:5).

Bias may be at the forefront if the practical music assessor is unfamiliar with the repertoire. In music competitions, competitors often perform prescribed music works that is repeated by other competitors throughout the course of the competition. Practical music assessors might be harsher in their assessment of unfamiliar works if they are played earlier in the concert programme, thereby advantaging performers who play later in the programme (Flôres & Ginsberg, 1996:1-17). By listening to an unfamiliar musical work numerous times throughout the course of the competition, the practical music assessor might develop a better understanding of and appreciation for the once unfamiliar work. Practical music assessors might also be more swayed by an aesthetically pleasing repertoire or technically more demanding works, which are viewed as more worthy or of a higher standard than others (McPherson & Thompson, 1998:16). They might also show a personal preference for certain instruments. Feelings of unease and inadequacy when assessing an unfamiliar instrument might lead to an unfair increase or lowering of assessment marks (Thompson *et al.*, 2003:34). Other influencing factors include the mood of the assessor, fatigue and the time of day, prior knowledge of and information about a performer, and personal distractions that may influence the practical music assessor's focus (McPherson & Thompson, 1998:16; Williamon, 2004:4-11).

The physical attractiveness of the performer could also be of significance. In studies conducted by Wapnick *et al.* (1997:477) groups were instructed to assess audio-only and audio-visual performances. In the audio-visual context, higher scores were given to the more attractive males and females. Stereotypical behaviour in terms of gender, age and race may also be an influencing factor in a performance assessment (Goldin & Rouse, 2000:716; Williamon, 2004:11-20). This may be an unconscious bias, but it may be present, nevertheless.

Performing from memory is seen as more impressive and rated higher than performance of pieces not memorized. The memorized music performance exemplifies authority, diligence and conviction (Siddell-Streibell, 2007:40). Playing from memory can improve the overall quality, musicality and technical proficiency of the music performance, which may enhance the level of communication with the listener (Williamon, 2004:). Memorisation can be viewed as a psychological advantage, since performers who memorise the music gain more respect from peers and practical music assessors (Williamon, 2004:11). It also enables the performer to concentrate fully on the delivery of the music performance, consequently attaining more freedom to express and communicate the music (McPherson *et al.*, 2003:27).

External environmental factors such as the audience's loud applause or cheering for their favourite performers could sway the practical music assessor (Nevil & Holder, 1999:228). In this regard, training will be required to minimize the unfair influence that these aspects may have (McPherson & Schubert, 2004:70). Music assessment strategies and training can be implemented to ensure reliable and consistent results. It is often assumed that computerised assessment programs might offer a more objective result, a theory tested by Shih (2018:113). He compared a computerized practical music assessment program, Smart Music, and a human practical music assessor. The results revealed that the Smart Music computer program was not as reliable as the human practical music assessor (Shih, 2018:113). Human traits such as tolerance, forgiveness, affective listening and the practical music assessor's ability to interpret expressivity, are what make a practical music assessor more reliable and effective, yet at the same time it is these human characteristics that may negatively influence practical music assessments.

Dr Allen Henderson, the Executive Director of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), a professional organisation for singing teachers, shared a framework for singing adjudication at the 54th annual NATS conference which was held in July 2016; this framework explains important aspects of adjudication and is applicable not only to singers but to all instrumental players as well (Figure 1).

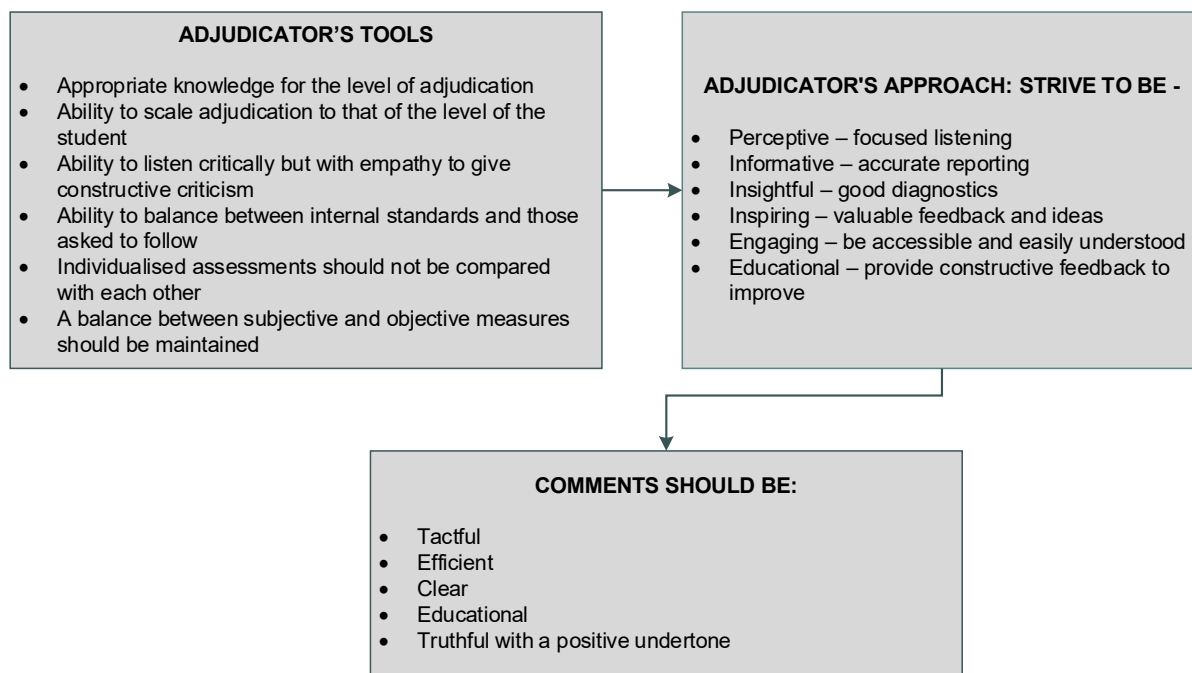


Figure 1: Allen Henderson's framework for singing adjudication at the 54th annual NATS conference, July 2016

2.8 Music teaching and practical music assessment during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic South African institutions went to extraordinary lengths to assure that teaching and learning continued by means of remote teaching (Motala & Menon, 2020:82). Alternative means of assessment were designed and implemented (Majola & Mudau, 2022:275). But there has been limited research on practical music assessments conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

The overarching problem of music teaching is ascertaining the exact nature of the subject. It is practical, interactive and relies on the connection between student and music teacher. In music education, students are taught the skill of performing and these skills are assessed as they develop in music institutions such as music academies, music studios, preparatory schools, high schools or tertiary institutions (Ritchie & Sharpe, 2021:1). The acquisition and display of these skills, which had been taught and assessed in-person pre-COVID-19, now shifted to an online environment. Music teachers and students experienced this as a stressful time and were compelled to embrace technology and navigate the digital space, but not without difficulty (Kennedy & Lautenbach, 2021:222; Joseph & Lennox, 2021:251).

Research showed that music teachers experienced technological frustrations such as poor sound quality and syncing issues that caused time delays (Biasutti *et al.*, 2022:5; Güsewell &

Terrien, 2021:4; Joseph & Lennox, 2021; Biasutti *et.al.*, 2023:257). To explain and demonstrate music concepts such as music communication and interpretation were challenging, and music teachers feared that teaching music on an online platform would impact on their students' development and expressiveness. Music teachers also felt the burden of managing and maintaining motivation levels amongst the music students to ensure progress and success in the online environment (Joseph & Lennox, 2021:251). Teaching music online was time-consuming in terms of preparation and affected the rate at which the students progressed, since most of the teacher's time was spent on assisting students with technical difficulties, providing emotional support and adapting lessons because of the lack of students' resources. Another concern was that music teachers found it difficult to read the student's body language in the online environment and were not sure whether students understood the music concepts, dilemmas that were further exacerbated by the loss of internet connectivity at times (Joseph & Lennox, 2021:250).

Another issue creating difficulties was the visual component of teaching an instrument. Correcting posture, finger or seating positions was difficult and even more so in the case of specific instruments, for example, bow movement for stringed instruments and embouchure for wind instruments (Biasutti *et al.*, 2022:10-11). Providing accompaniment for solo instruments was a concern and instruments such as the organ, percussion, drums or harpsichord could not be taught online, because they were not available in the student's home. Ensemble work, such as string quartets or choirs, was challenging since important performance elements such as dynamics, expressivity and performing together as a cohesive and coordinated unit could not be realised (Biasutti *et al.*, 2022:11). Despite such setbacks, music teaching provided a 'connectedness' in a time of physical separation, which in turn fostered a sense of well-being for students and music educators alike (Joseph & Lennox, 2021:242-244).

A study by Yadigaroglu (2021:427) highlighted the opinions of music teacher candidates who were assessed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some advantages of the online platform included the continuation of education, the ability to access the course anywhere, and it enabled quiet students to feel more comfortable about asking questions freely and engage more actively. Disadvantages included the inequality of educational opportunities and resources, the technical problems experienced, and assessment and evaluation processes were unreliable. The findings showed that distance education cannot replace face-to-face education, especially in the applied field of classical music (Yadigaroglu, 2021:429).

A more recent study by de Bruin and Merrick (2023:149) explored how instrumental music students at the University of Melbourne experienced their learning via the online platforms. Findings showed that the online environment was challenging because they were not able to

make music 'on stage' and felt that this influenced their ability to fully engage in the musicmaking process, as many of the students depended and thrived on the musical interaction (de Bruin & Merrick, 2023:153). Another study by Váradi *et al.* (2023:7) investigated music teachers' technical computer skills and potential offerings of online music education during the COVID-pandemic. This study revealed that 40% of the music teachers created new digital learning material that included "videos to assist the learning of certain pieces, tutorial videos on YouTube (e.g. for learning chord progressions) and piano accompaniment for wind instrument players" (Varadi et al, 2023:7). The findings of Váradi *et al.* (2023:7) aligns with the study of Joseph and Lennox, (2021:251) which highlighted that online music teaching was time-consuming. The study by Váradi *et al.* (2023:7) also found that individual instrumental music teaching is most effective when delivered in person.

It was evident that during the COVID-19 pandemic creative teaching and amended assessment strategies were implemented by education institutions. In Europe and America online practical music assessments were conducted if the student had access to their instrument and fast internet access to avoid technical delays and connectivity issues. Video-recorded submissions were another option with immediate practical music assessor feedback once the recording was received (Biasutti *et al.*, 2022:13; de Bruin & Merrick, 2023:150). Another option was the creation of a sound and video studio at the institution where students would go perform live while the practical music assessors assessed students remotely (Biasutti *et al.*, 2022:13).

In South Africa issues of internet access, poor living conditions, loadshedding (interruption of the electricity supply) and environments that were not ideal for learning and assessment became evident (Motala & Menan, 2020:89). Because of their vast resources, some universities had the requisite infrastructure to teach and assess online, whereas many of their students, especially those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, did not have the means to acquire or access the necessary digital resources to participate in online classes. Heidon and Arnold (2021) stated that online assessment accelerated the expansion and implementation of alternative assessment techniques. COVID-19 did indeed accelerate alternative assessment techniques and platforms to incorporate more flexible and accessible music assessment strategies that enabled the continuation of practical music assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I reviewed the literature that pertains to practical music assessments, practical music assessment methods, practical music assessment categories, factors which influence practical music assessments and music teaching and practical music assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. The literature indicated that the purpose of music assessments is to

measure musical achievement and progress in competitive or non-competitive environments in the form of concerts, festivals, competitions, eisteddfodau, and examinations. Practical music assessors follow the criteria-specific approach or the holistic approach to guide them through the music assessment process. Practical music performances are assessed based on technical and expressive criteria that are interlinked; however, the literature suggests that both audio (sound) as well as visual (sight) information influence how music is perceived and experienced. Findings also suggest that the sense of artistry and music expressivity can be felt more effectively in a live context compared to a recorded context. Research suggests that the practical music assessor's experience, personal preferences, music knowledge, biases and individual characteristics may also strongly influence the outcome of the practical music assessment. The shift to online music teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic had advantages such as the continuation of education; however, challenges were identified, including inequality of education opportunities, technical difficulties, and unreliable assessment and evaluation processes. Findings indicate that while online education can provide certain benefits, it cannot fully replace face-to-face practical music instruction, particularly in the applied field of music. The research method adopted for this study is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter discusses the research design and the research approach of the study as illustrated in Figure 2. The role of the researcher, the participants and how they were recruited, data collection, data analysis, academic rigour and ethics of the study receive attention in this chapter.

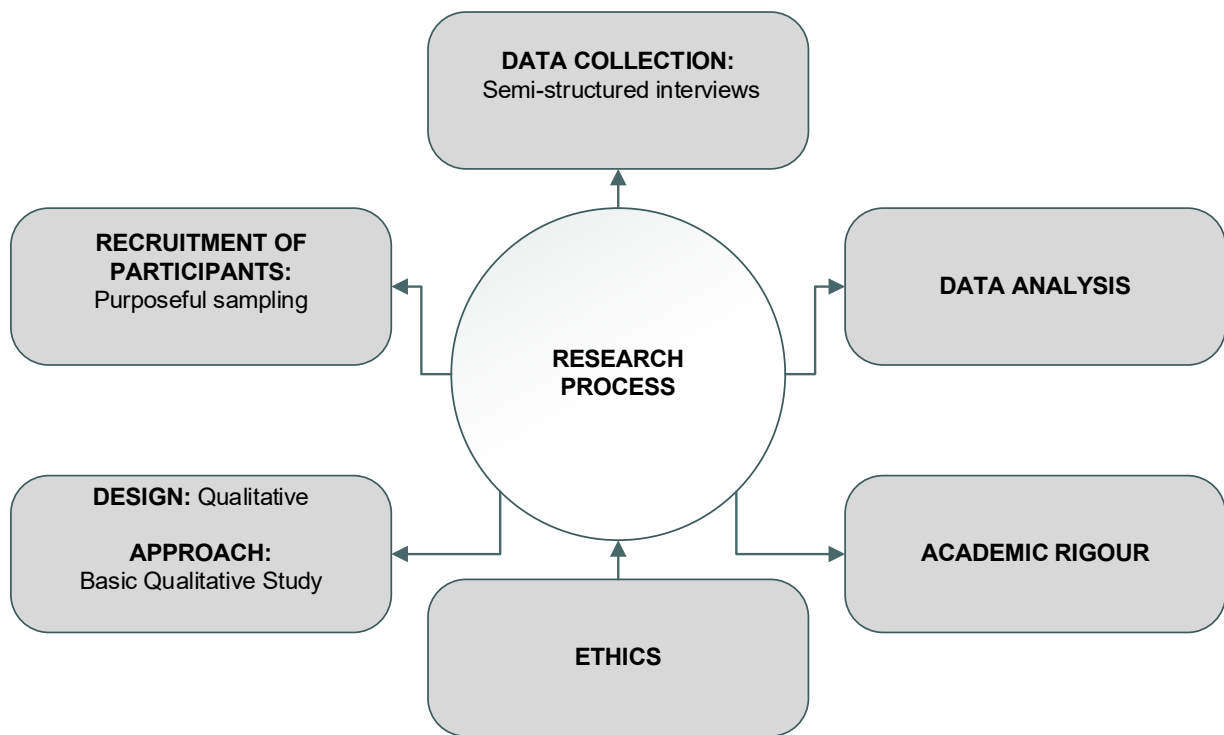


Figure 2: Research process

3.1 Research design: Qualitative research

Merriam (2002:3) states that “the world or reality as not fixed, constant, agreed upon or a measurable phenomenon”. Meaning is constructed by individuals based on their interactions with the world as they experience it; multiple constructions and interpretations may occur at the same time and may change over time (Merriam, 2002:3). Qualitative research entails “understanding what those constructions and interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context” (Miriam, 2002:3)

A qualitative research design was used since it best suited the focus of my study. The aim was to explore, understand and interpret the experiences of eight practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic and the meaning they ascribed to these music assessments during that time (Creswell, 2018:41).

The study manifests the following key characteristics of qualitative research as stated by Merriam (2002:5-6), Gibbs (2007:3-5), Creswell (2009:175-176) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016:18-19):

1. The study takes place in a natural setting;
2. The researcher is the primary instrument;
3. An inductive process is followed;
4. Understanding the meaning that participants ascribe to their experience from their perspective;
5. Use of rich descriptions.

Firstly, the qualitative research was conducted in a natural setting. The study was not intended to test a theory, but to ascertain and explore meaning from the practical music assessors' individual perspectives of the music assessment experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information was gathered in a relaxed, natural context by communicating and interacting with the practical music assessors in an online, face-to face setting.

Secondly, in qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument. Qualitative researchers gather and analyse the data themselves by observing behaviour, analysing documents or conducting interviews. During this study, I was the primary instrument and gathered the information directly from the practical music assessors. As a human instrument collecting and interpreting the data, I was cognisant of my personal biases, assumptions, values and beliefs which might influence and shape the outcome of the study. Instead of ignoring these, I adopted a reflexive approach and acknowledged my biases, declared them openly and monitored them carefully. In qualitative research, "the researcher does not control or manipulate what is being studied" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:7). Therefore, I undertook regular self-reflective and self-awareness check, ensuring that my personal experiences, thoughts, assumptions and beliefs were minimised to address potential biases that might occur.

Thirdly, this study followed an inductive process. Inductive reasoning is applied when data are used to build patterns, categories, themes and concepts from the bottom up, without having an agenda or preconceived notions as to what the categories or themes will be (Creswell, 2009:175). A theory is developed based on observations and intuitive understandings (Merriam, 2002:5). In this study, the emphasis was on generating and developing descriptions and explanations instead of testing pre-defined hypotheses (Hammersley, 2013:12).

The fourth characteristic of qualitative research is an understanding of meaning that participants ascribed to their experience from their perspective, not the researcher's perspective or that of writers who have produced literature on the topic. This study aimed to build a holistic picture of

practical music assessments conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic by analysing and reporting detailed views of the participants (Creswell, 2018:257-258).

Lastly, qualitative research is a product of rich descriptions in the form of words or pictures instead of numbers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:17-18). In this study open-ended questions were posed during the interview process; that enabled me to capture thick, descriptive details so that a comprehensive view of the practical music assessors' perspective of music assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic could be presented.

Yin (2016:83) explains that the design which the researcher selects can be viewed as the logical blueprint that links the research question(s), the data collected and the strategies adopted to analyse the collected data, so that the findings of the study address the research question(s) in a focused way. Qualitative designs are held together by a general framework that guides the research process and through which knowledge and nuanced insight is gathered and interpreted.

3.1.1 Research paradigm or worldview

All qualitative research is underpinned by a belief system, also known as a world view or a paradigm, which guides the researcher during the research process. The paradigm defines “the nature of the world, the individual’s place in it and possible relationships to that world and its parts”, to the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:107). It is a way to explore the research phenomenon, to investigate the problem and to pursue the knowledge (Cohen *et al.*, 2018:8).

The interpretive paradigm is integral to this study. The sole focus was on the individual and to gain a rich understanding of their music assessment experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interpretivism, also known as social constructivism, can be described as knowledge that is constructed and reproduced through exchanging information, interactive communication, and practice (Leavy, 2017:129; Creswell, 2018:46; Tracy, 2020:51). This paradigm “assumes that social reality is complex and subjective, and that individuals construct their own meanings and interpretations of the world around them” (Cohen *et al.*, 2018:20). The interpretative framework allowed me to focus on the music assessor’s assessment experience during the COVID-19 pandemic in its entirety and allowed for a more in-depth understanding and exploration of individual experiences and unique perspectives through informal discussions and interviews (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:41-43).

All knowledge is grounded in the processes of experience and instead of taking such knowledge for granted, it should be interpreted, explored and understood (Hammersley, 2013:28). Through

the lens of interpretivism, I was able to describe and analyse the music assessor's individual experiences and perspectives, which culminated in the formulation of a theory to account for these experiences (Hammersley, 2013:29).

3.2 Research approach: A basic qualitative study

As researcher, I had to choose the most appropriate qualitative approach to unpack the meaning that the participants assign to their experience of practical music assessments to gain an intensive understanding of how music assessments were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Leavy, 2017:159). For this study, a basic qualitative study, also known as the generic, common, or interpretive qualitative study, was followed.

Merriam (2002:6) noted that all qualitative research is intent on understanding how meaning is constructed, and how people make sense of their lived experiences. The main objective of a basic qualitative study is to reveal and interpret these meanings, which makes this approach appropriate for this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:24) explain that the researcher who conducts a basic qualitative study is interested in:

1. The exploration of participants' lived experiences;
2. Examining how the participants shape and perceive their worlds: and
3. Understanding the meaning they assign to their experiences.

Callei *et al.* (2003:4) assert that a basic qualitative study is "not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophical assumptions as other qualitative research methodologies". The term "basic, common, generic, fundamental" are applicable to this qualitative study, but they may imply that it is simple, superficial or preliminary, yet this is by no means the case (Sandelowski, 2000:335). Sandelowski (2000:335) emphasises that no one research approach is easier, weaker, stronger or of less value than another; instead the focus is on how well it suits the purpose of the study. I selected the basic qualitative study because it was best suited to allow me to capture the practical music assessors' perceptions of their assessment experience; the result was rich, descriptive data that enabled a comprehensive understanding. It provided me with the freedom to gather as much as data as I required, and to obtain accurate descriptions verified by the participants through remaining immersed in the words and the meanings behind the words used by the participants. It was the best approach that would obtain the best results.

Basic qualitative studies are prevalent across all disciplines and in applied fields of practice (Merriam, 2002:24). They are commonly found in qualitative research in education, such as the basic qualitative study conducted by Dunn and Moore (2020:72). Their research explored the

influence of peer mentoring on first-year university students. By means of a basic qualitative study, a deeper understanding, and insight into the effect of peer tutoring was achieved by means of semi-structured interviews. Their study revealed that the mentoring experience enabled significant learning for both the student and mentor. Through this approach, Dunn and Moore (2020:72) answered their research question and successfully captured other valuable data that identified how the mentor's own learning was negatively affected due to the mentoring experience.

Basic qualitative studies can offer valuable insight into aspects of WAM as well. Krause and Davidson (2021:9) made use of a basic qualitative study to explore the music-listening experiences of older adults in their daily lives while living in an aged-care facility and how listening to music might promote their well-being. The approach was successful in proving the benefits of listening to music for the well-being of older adults and was used to educate the staff of the aged-care facility as well as family members.

Similarly, by making use of a basic qualitative study Fulford *et al.* (2011:461) explored the lived experiences of 12 hearing-impaired musicians to establish the extent that hearing impairment can influence the process of music making. The study highlighted that their impairment impacted the way in which they expressed their musicality: in their choice of instrument, hearing aids and ultimately their career (Fulford *et al.*, 2011:462). It also showed the strategies employed to overcome hearing challenges and indicated that these strategies are heavily reliant on visual and physical cues. A similar study was conducted by Vaisberg *et al.* (2019:868) on hearing-impaired musicians, which confirmed the findings of Fulborg *et al.* (2011:462; both of these studies utilised the basic qualitative study as an approach.

Jaap and Patrick (2015:274) made use of a basic qualitative study to test how music teachers' beliefs about music talent impact on their teaching practices and the opportunities they provide for their music students on the basis of their perceived level of music talent. Jaap and Patrick found that music educators should be cognisant of their own beliefs about music talent and ability, since this may significantly influence the advancement of their student's musical skills (Jaap & Patrick, 2015:274).

Callei *et al.* (2003:19) described basic qualitative study as "not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophical assumptions as other qualitative research methodologies". But after intense investigation they established that there is a place for the basic qualitative study especially in applied fields.

3.3 Role of the researcher

The role of the qualitative researcher is to gain access to the thoughts, feelings and understandings of the participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015: 226) and the researcher thereby becomes the primary instrument for the collection and analysis of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:16).

Holmes (2020:3) explains that “positionality implies that the social-historical-political location of a researcher influences their orientations, i.e. that they are not separate from the social processes they study”. As such, researchers are shaped by their background, education, experiences and employment history and cannot completely detach themselves from each other. My background as a music educator and my experience as a Music Examinations Coordinator at the University of South Africa’s (UNISA’s) Directorate Music, placed me in the best possible and most fortunate position to conduct this research.

My experience with music assessments and practical music assessors meant that I could connect and develop a rapport with the participants, allowing me to gain insight into their words and meanings, while keeping professional boundaries in place. There was a level of trust between me as the researcher and the participants that allowed for meaningful and insightful questions to be asked, contributing to data which was truthful, rich and thick (Holmes, 2020:6).

By adopting a reflexive approach, I remained open and honest throughout the research process. By means of constant critical reflection, I evaluated my position as researcher and my position as music examinations coordinator, and I remained cognisant of the researcher-participant dynamic and how it may influence knowledge production.

3.4 The participants

The quality of the research is fundamentally impacted by the selection process and selection of the sample. (Morse, 1991:127). For this study, I made use of purposeful sampling. Maxwell (2013:99) asserts that purposeful sampling is an appropriate strategy when “particular persons or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can’t be gotten as well, from other choices”. This study was aimed at generating insights into the experiences of Western Art practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore participants were selected on the basis of the criteria listed below:

- Be a professional musician or music educator;

- Should hold at least a Bachelor of Music (BMus) degree;
- should have experience in the assessment of classical music performances (at either music eisteddfodau, graded music examinations at primary, secondary, or tertiary institutions, or local/international music competitions) that include in in-person and online practical music assessment environments.

I identified eight practical music assessors as potential participants of this study. In my position as music examinations coordinator, I have access to the UNISA database of trained practical music assessors, and I identified the participants by making use of this database. I also searched music websites such as the South African Society for Music Teachers (SASMT), Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition Facebook page and eisteddfod websites to source adjudicators who were used as practical music assessors before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am fortunate that my extensive network of music teachers and music examiners which I amassed through years of music teaching and music examinations placed me in the best possible position to identify the eight participants. Rather than treating my positionality as a limitation, it became an advantage.

All the participants identified met the selection criterion of having a BMus degree. Seven of the eight participants obtained their first degree in South Africa, while one participant completed their BMus Honours and Master of Music Performance in the United Kingdom. Among the participants, three hold doctorates in Music, three possess a Master of Music degree, one has a BMus Honours degree, and the remaining participant holds a BMus degree along with a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

Currently, all participants are engaged in teaching roles within the field of classical music. They are either lecturing at tertiary institutions, teaching in high school music departments, or providing private music lessons at their residences. Their collective experience as practical music assessors is extensive and includes adjudicating various music competitions such as the Hubert van der Spuy Music Competition, UNISA Strings Competitions, UNISA Music Scholarship Competitions, and the National Youth Music Competition. They have also served as adjudicators for both in-person and online music eisteddfodau, including the Pretoria, Tygerberg, Stellenbosch, Robertson, Swellendam, Riversdale, Garden Route, Bloemfontein and Bethlehem music eisteddfodau. Furthermore, they have assessed Grade 12 subject Music final examinations, both in-person and online, as well as internal and external university practical music examinations and national-level Unisa practical music examinations. In addition to their roles as practical music assessors and music educators, the participants continue to actively engage in musical performance as soloists, members of ensembles and accompanists for performing artists and choirs.

3.5 Recruitment and enrolment process

Once the eight prospective participants were identified by the researcher based on their qualifications and WAM assessment experience during COVID-19, an intermediary was appointed to facilitate the initial communication. An intermediary refers to an objective individual who facilitates the initial research process by connecting the prospective participant and researcher. The intermediary's role was to interact with the participants without interference from the researcher, explaining the purpose of the study and what their participation would entail.

The researcher provided the intermediary with guidelines to ensure that no form of coercion or manipulation occurred. The intermediary was issued with a script (see Appendix A) which was read at the time of the initial contact. A step-by-step process outlining how consent was obtained can be viewed in Appendix C. The recruitment process is outlined in Figure 3 below.

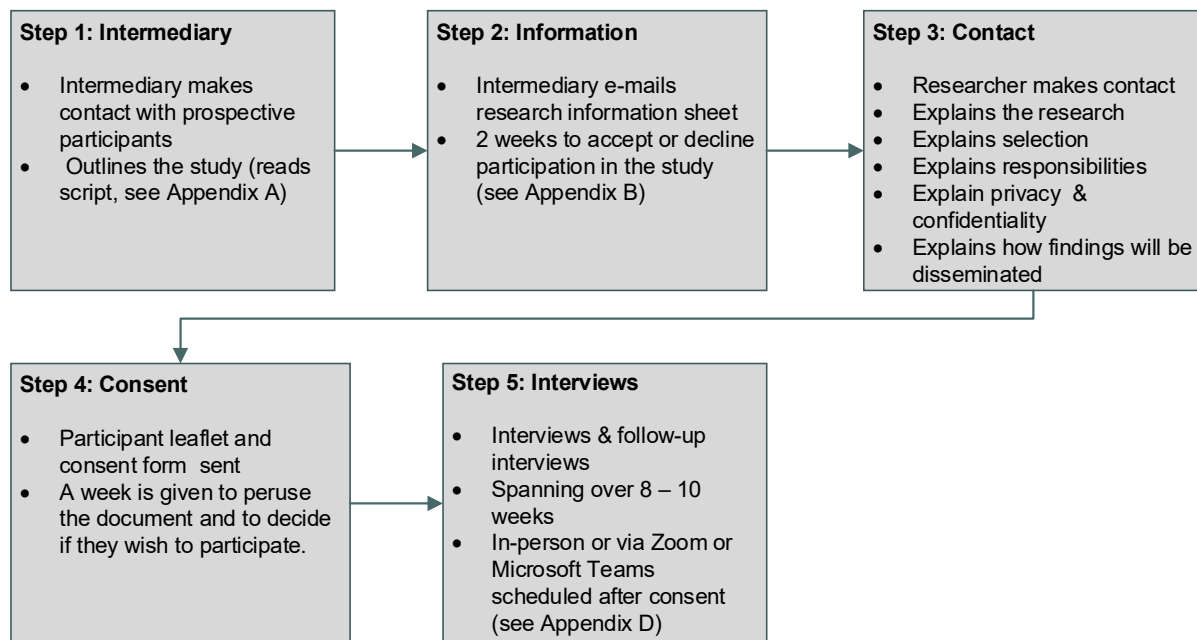


Figure 3: Recruitment process

3.6 Data collection: Interviews

Brinkman (2013:3) notes that “conversations are a rich and indispensable source of knowledge about personal and social aspects of our lives”. Interviews are simply conversations structured to varying degrees and participants are accustomed to participating in conversations. Tracy (2020:185) states that a good interview is much more than asking questions; it requires strategic thinking and planning so that the data gathered are useful, rich and detailed.

This study used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (see Appendix E). Open-ended questions encouraged the participants to use their own words and to engage in open discussions, which precluded the possibility of one-word answers (Brink, 2013:21; Yin, 2016:143). My aim was to gather as much information as possible and open-ended questions provided me with the opportunity to do so.

Online interviews were conducted with the eight participants via Microsoft Teams as this was most convenient for the participants. Loadshedding had to be taken into account and so to mitigate the risk of loadshedding at the time of the online interviews, loadshedding schedules were consulted in advance and taken into consideration when interviews were scheduled. The interviews were scheduled for an hour, but interviews varied in time ranging from 30 minutes to one hour.

Eleven questions were constructed in consultation with my supervisor and were not shared with the participants beforehand. Questions were asked twice, slowly and clearly, to ensure that participants understood them. Answers to the interview questions were spontaneous, not pre-determined and follow-up or probing questions were asked to obtain more information. Throughout the interview process, I listened to and engaged actively, and did not interrupt participants, while observing silences and non-verbal cues during the interview process. As researcher, I was non-directive in my interview approach and allowed the participants to express their meanings, according to their perceptions and sequencing of events. I set boundaries but allowed the participants to be flexible and move outside the set boundaries when necessary (Yin, 2016:144).

3.7 Data analysis

Creswell (2009:183) states that “data analysis is the process of making sense out of text and image”. It is an analytical process that involves the examination and interpretation of the accumulated data. It involves a systematic process of organizing, categorizing and interpreting to draw conclusions and develop new insights. Figure 4 below depicts the process of data analysis.

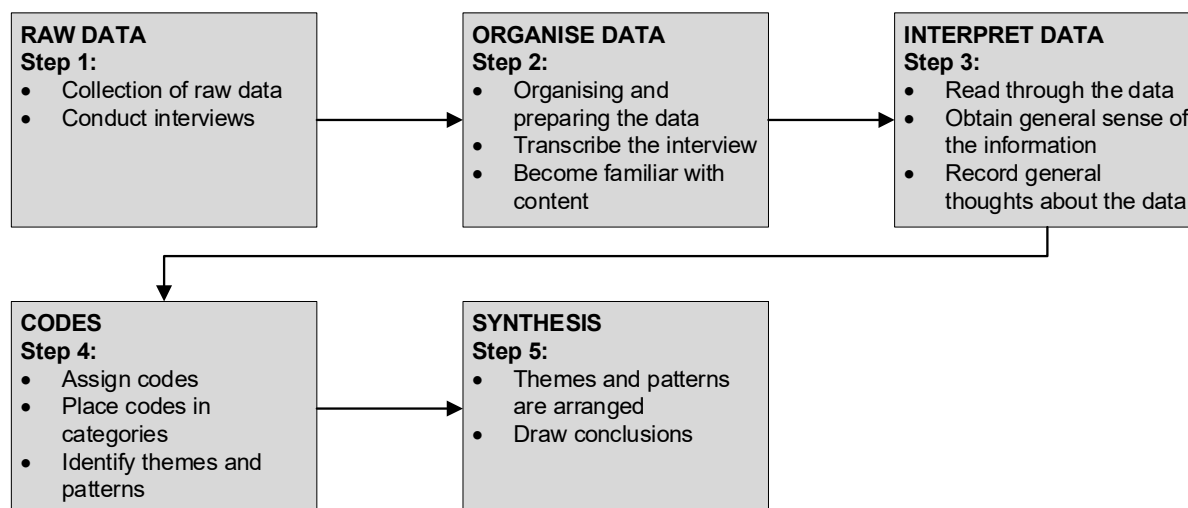


Figure 4: Data analysis process

The process of meaning-making starts with the collection of raw data during the interview process. The interviews were audio and video recorded on MS Teams as well as on a recording device. Upon completion of the interview, I transcribed it into text from the voice recording. This process was very useful and provided me with an opportunity to further familiarise myself with the content. During this process, the information was organised and “winnowed” (Creswell, 2018:268). “Winnowing” is the process of sorting through the dense and rich data to determine what is relevant and what is not (Creswell, 2018:268). The data gathered were read through thoroughly. Creswell (2009:185) recommends that the researcher should be guided by the following questions:

- What is the general idea of what the participant is saying?
- What is the tone of the idea?
- What is the overall depth, reliability and use of the information?

After the transcription process, the interviews were loaded into ATLAS. ti 22 and codes and categories were assigned, which forms part of the coding process. According to Gibbs (2007:38), coding refers to how the data are defined and analysed; it involves “identifying and recording one or more passages of text that, in some sense, exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea”. This was an immersive and detailed process which involved continuous reading and re-reading of the transcriptions, going back and forth between codes, to ensure that the coding was meaningful. All the similar codes were grouped into categories and labelled with a description.

By using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006:79), I identified, analysed and reported themes within the data that were interrelated and connected with the categories (Saldaña, 2016:15). The final step of the data analysis was to interpret the overall findings and

compare them with findings in the literature (Creswell, 2018:273). By following the five steps, I was able to analyse data from the eight practical music assessors on how they described their experiences of assessing classical music performances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.8 Academic rigour

Academic rigour is concerned with how credible and authentic the findings of a study are. Credibility of the data is directly tied to those who collect and analyse the data (Patton, 2015:759; Cohen *et al.*, 2018:139). Maintaining rigour is a commitment to excellence in research that includes thoroughness, precision, attention to detail and a high degree of intellectual honesty. I applied a number of features to ensure the rigour and credibility of the study.

Member checking: This involved sharing the findings with the participants and seeking their feedback to ensure that the findings accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives.

Reflexivity: Patton (2015:67) asserts that the academic rigour depends to large extent on the research instrument; in this instance it was the researcher. To gain the perspectives of others and create new knowledge, the data collected will be filtered through the researchers' own perceptions, beliefs and views. The knowledge produced reflects the results of a transaction between two perspectives rather than a simple presentation of the viewpoints and experiences of others (Hammersley, 2012:55). Since inductive reasoning were applied throughout the analysis process, I remained open, intuitive and honest by engaging in self-reflection throughout the research process. As a researcher who was also the research instrument, I was fully aware that my positionality and subjectivity could influence the outcome of the findings. Therefore, I employed an introspective approach throughout and examined my own assumptions and biases. By openly acknowledging my biases and assumptions, I understood how they might influence the interpretation of data and findings. This ensured that the research remained as objective, transparent and trustworthy as possible.

Making use of thick descriptions to convey findings also ensures rigour (Creswell, 2018:274-275). All the information was seen as important and truthfully captured, which aided in providing comprehensive and detailed data.

Transparency: By being transparent about the research methodology, design, data and findings, I provided a clear and complete account of the research process.

3.9 Ethics

Leavy (2017:25) explains that “the word ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means character; ethical behaviour entails morality, integrity, fairness and truthfulness. Morality is about knowing what is right and wrong, and integrity is about acting in the light of that knowledge”.

Ethics forms a central part of research. As human beings we constantly engage in understanding other human beings, and therefore in research we must uphold high ethical standards to protect the welfare and rights of the participants and maintain the integrity of the research (Leavy, 2017:25). The participants should not experience any disadvantages, harm or risk from participating in the study (Flick, 2007:73).

Before the participants were contacted, the research proposal for this study was approved by the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC), North- West University (NWU) in South Africa with the ethics number NWU-00990-22-S7. I also completed the Training and Resources in Research Ethics Evaluation (TREEE) Ethics online training course as required by NWU’s BaSSREC. TREEE provides researchers with the necessary training to ensure the protection of the interests and well-being of the participants who participate in research as well as the promotion of the highest ethical standards (TREEE, 2023).

The eight participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study by means of verbal and written confirmation. Consent forms were signed and returned to the researcher before the interviews commenced. All participants were given pseudonyms (numbers) to protect their identities before and during the study. Research information was protected and kept safe from misuse. Participants were treated with respect and dignity, recognising their autonomy and individuality. They were fully informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. There was no coercion, dishonesty, deception or exploitation before, during or after the study.

As stated by Cohen *et al.* (2018:144), the researcher has an ethical duty to ensure that the findings reported are fair and accurate without misrepresentation, simultaneously protecting the participants’ safety, well-being, reputation and confidentiality. In terms of this study, with the guidance of the NWU BaSSREC committee, I successfully complied with all the ethical considerations and guidelines.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter provided an in-depth discussion on the chosen research design and the research approach of the study. The role of the researcher, the participants, recruitment and enrolment

process, data-collection strategies, data analysis, the academic rigour of the study and ethics were addressed. The findings of the data will follow in the Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the data analysis. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and were loaded into ATLAS. ti 22. The coding process commenced by identifying and recording multiple passages of text that, in some sense, represent the same descriptive idea. All similar codes were grouped into categories and six main themes emerged that provided the framework to understand the meaning that the eight practical music assessors ascribed to their music assessments conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

The six main themes as illustrated in Figure 5 are:

1. The practical music assessor's influence on the music assessment process
2. Attributes of online and in-person practical music performances
3. Changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour
4. The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments
5. Benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms
6. Challenges of online practical music assessments and platforms

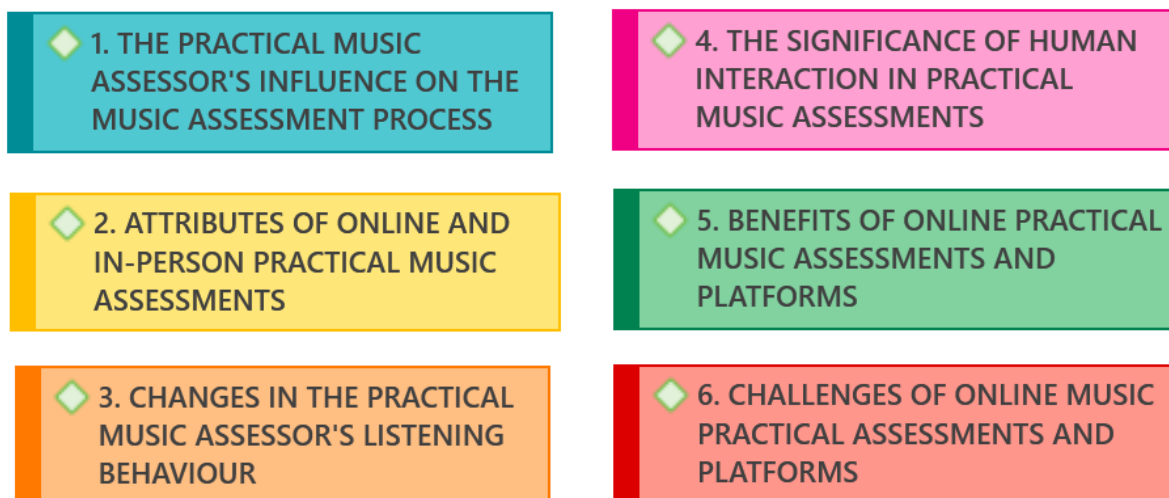


Figure 5: Themes 1 – 6

4.1 Theme 1: The practical music assessor's influence on the music assessment process

"You should assess yourself first" – Practical music assessor 1

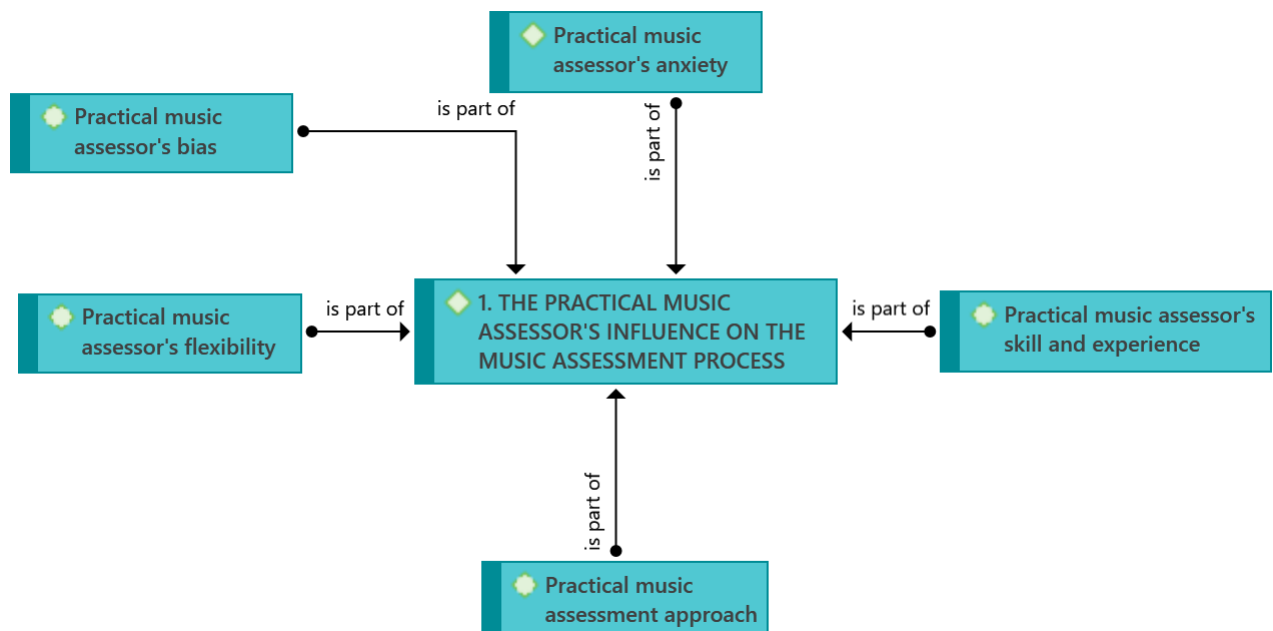


Figure 6: The practical music assessor's influence on the music assessment process

The findings derived from the data analysis highlighted the pivotal role played by the practical music assessor in the music assessment process and subsequent outcome. It became evident that the practical music assessor's skill and experience, flexibility, biases, approach and anxieties are the elements that significantly influenced every aspect of the practical music assessment (Figure 6). These aspects of the practical music assessor's profile are critical factors in shaping the music assessment process, contributing to its integrity and fairness; it is the relationship between the practical music assessor and the music assessment process that contributed to a meaningful practical music assessment during the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.1.1 The practical music assessor's anxiety

According to the participants' accounts during the interviews, the practical music assessor's anxiety levels rose noticeably when confronted with instances of connectivity issues or technical problems. Practical music assessor 2 stated that "with online assessment, it is out of your hands, and you don't have that control because technical issues affect the assessment". Practical music assessors 2 and 3 stated that with in-person assessments they felt more in control of the

assessment room: "sometimes online exams or online eisteddfods can be frustrating because you can't see the piano clearly or you can't see the pedal work. You don't have control over the room". Environmental disturbances and connectivity issues were listed as frustrations that contribute to negative experiences, as stated by practical music assessor 3: "there might be environmental interferences like car noises or other people in the room. Technical problems like poor Wi-Fi connection or the music teacher's computer battery becoming flat and then you lose the connection. These frustrations can have a negative influence on you as assessor. I try that these frustrations do not influence me, but I am only human".

4.1.2 The practical music assessor's skills and experience

In my discussions with the participants it became apparent that the eight practical music assessors possessed an extensive and comprehensive range of experiences, skills and knowledge specifically tailored to the domain of WAM assessment. Practical music assessors 4 and 7 stated: "you know when a candidate is a 60, a 70 or 80 and I think it comes with experience. In my head, I go through the criteria because I know what a 60, 70 or 80 sounds like". Practical music assessors 4 and 7 conveyed that through the process of internalisation, the assessment criteria became ingrained within their perceptual framework which allowed them to "get their mark very quickly in the performance".

The interviews revealed that music practical music assessors possess a distinct skill set that extends beyond their extensive experience and incorporates characteristics and personal attributes that make them good assessors. Characteristics and personal attributes include the ability to engage and communicate with students of all ages in a friendly yet professional manner, maintain calm and adapt when challenging situations arise, provide objective, honest feedback in a positive, constructive way that motivates the student to continue with their music studies. Practical music assessors represent the music institutions or music examination bodies and must therefore be efficient, tactful, perceptive, reliable, not easily swayed or influenced, committed, punctual and organised (TCL, 2020).

Practical music assessor 2 stated: "You must remain absolutely focused on your purpose. As practical music assessor, you cannot be influenced by people that think that they can influence you". He stated that he is not influenced by audience members or family members. Discussions revealed the importance of fostering a comfortable assessment environment as this "allows for a pleasant experience for the examiner and student ... if the circumstances are good, the mindset of the student will be good, therefore the entire experience will be positive", practical music assessor 3 stated. The need to make the student feel at ease was reiterated by practical music assessor 4, who explained: "If it's online, you can't look into their eyes and say enjoy it!"

and similarly, practical music assessor 8 stated: “the fact that I could not to say to the student, ‘let’s do that again’ but had to work with what I was given on the recording, was difficult”.

4.1.3 The practical music assessor’s bias

During my discussions with the participants, they recognised and acknowledged their bias with a notable degree of transparency and candour. Practical music assessor 1 shared his views: “You must understand that listening is subjective. It’s dependent on so many variables like how you’re feeling that day, your own biasness to the instrument, its sound quality, repertoire choice and so forth. So, with all of that, you should almost assess yourself first, to establish if you are not being wholly unfair to the candidate; then with that, take the guidelines and listen objectively”.

Practical music assessors acknowledged that their emotional state and overall wellbeing during the music assessment process may exert an influence on the assessment outcome. Similarly, the demeanour of the student, if characterised by unfriendliness or excessive nervousness, may elicit biased responses from the practical music assessors, thereby affecting their judgement.

4.1.4 Practical music assessor’s flexibility

"There's always a bit of give and take with an assessment", says practical music assessor 8 referring to the practical music assessor’s adaptability during the COVID-19 pandemic. Practical music assessor 3 mentioned that she would "differentiate between how you would listen to a live student and ones that were playing on online" and added "I think I was more lenient with online assessment because of the distortion of sound and colour". Practical music assessor 5 remarked, "If assessments were in-person, I did not really adapt it, no. In terms of assessments that were pre-recorded, I took into consideration the place and the instrument; if it's not the student's own instrument, especially with piano for instance, and the room where it was recorded".

Practical music assessor 7 acknowledged: "I had to make some provision for the medium, the platform of the assessment, and sometimes the sound was not that good. As assessor, I reminded myself that this is a recording and perhaps not the best video recorder was used, so I just made provision for that, and I gave the candidate the benefit of the doubt”.

Practical music assessor 6 remarked: “what they presented in the exam was about 20% less of what they were capable of, if they had the in-person contact" and "If you had to compare it to previous year, before Covid and after Covid, the improvement was drastic because of the in-

person teaching. It was vastly different. I felt quite bad, as a teacher, that they had to be assessed during the 2020 pandemic".

This study's findings showed that practical music assessors adopted a more flexible, lenient approach during the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially influenced by subjective factors such as empathy, sympathy or a desire to compensate for any perceived challenges or disadvantages faced by the students.

4.1.5 Practical music assessor's approach

With reference to the participants' accounts, there was evidence of the practical music assessors' capacity to adapt their assessment approach in response to the unique challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, but they insisted that they did not compromise on the standard of the assessment process in terms of criteria, approach, consistency and fairness.

Practical music assessor 3 stated that "my assessment criteria and assessment approach remained the same whether it was live or online". Six of the eight practical music assessors followed the criteria-specific approach. Practical music assessor 2 strongly felt that "you cannot just take something out of the air and examine it, put a stamp on it and say this is good and this is not good. Making use of assessment criteria is a necessity". The remaining two practical music assessors (practical music assessors 4 and 7) followed a holistic approach. Practical music assessor 4 explained: "I prefer to give a mark as a whole and then provide remarks on what had influenced my decision to assign that specific mark. I have found that when I have to give specific marks for specific criteria, I would have to move the marks up or down, indiscriminately, to get to the mark that I feel that candidate deserves and that I think is not correct".

This study's findings showed that most of the practical music assessors adhere to assessment criteria and believe that they enable objectivity and hold them accountable. The two holistic practical music assessors based their first reaction on their gut response and said, "when you have to explain it to others, for example, if you are on an adjudication panel, and you have to discuss what you've just heard, then the assessment criteria vocabulary comes to the fore". She does recognise that the criteria keep her objective and focused "in case my gut feeling is maybe a little bit worn off towards the end of the day".

Practical music assessor 3 is of the opinion that "your gut feeling is your criteria because that is how you listen. I can't see how you can separate your gut instinct from the criteria". Practical music assessor 6 stated: "the gut feeling became way more prevalent with the online assessment than the in-person assessment". All the practical music assessors agreed that they listen differently in terms of different levels of performance and types of music assessments, but

strove to maintain consistency and fairness throughout. The question of fairness between the pre-recorded and in-person practical music assessment also emerged, as practical music assessor 4 stated, "the in-person candidate might be unfairly disadvantaged because adjudicators might be more lenient towards the online candidate".

Maintaining the same standards regardless of the type of music assessment was discussed with specific reference to being "emotionally present" in all types of assessments. Video submissions was challenging, as practical music assessor 5 explained: "If it's just you with your computer in your office facing a student that sent in the submission, you must consciously decide to stay present and give that person your full attention". Practical music assessors agreed that if they are physically present at the assessment, there is an external control measure in place that forces them to be emotionally present and focused during the assessment.

4.2 Theme 2: The attributes of online and in-person practical music assessments

"If you are unmusical, you'll be unmusical online or in person." – Practical music assessor 1

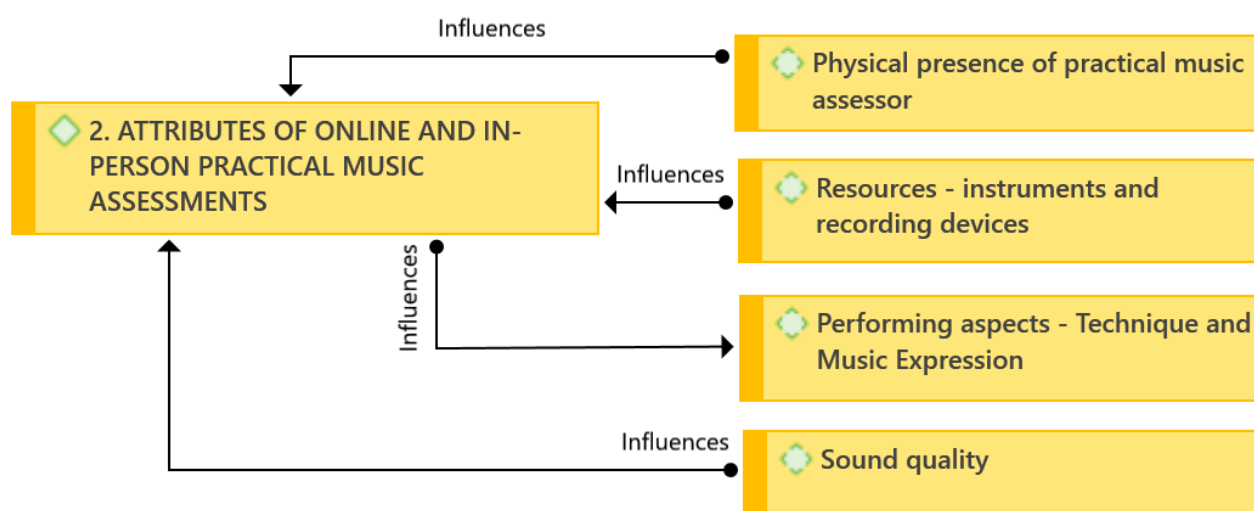


Figure 7: Attributes of online and in-person practical music assessments

Figure 7 illustrates another prominent theme that emerged from the data analysis highlighting the distinctive attributes of online and in-person practical music assessments, with a focus on the influence of sound quality, resources, the physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor in the assessment room, and performance aspects such as technique and musical expression.

4.2.1 Sound Quality

The data analysis brought to light that practical music assessors assess sound first, therefore the sound quality of online music assessments or pre-recorded video submissions significantly influenced the assessor's ability to effectively appraise the performance. Practical music assessor 1 stated: "there are serious variables there that impact not only the quality of the sound but also the quality of the performance". Because distorted videos influenced the sound output, practical music assessor 8 noted that "sometimes, what you see and what you hear is not necessarily synced", potentially due to unstable internet connection or poor reception during the recording process. Positioning of the instrument during online music assessments resulted in practical music assessors relying on visual information to confirm technical details such as pedalling and legato playing. Practical music assessor 4 said, "I would actually look at the performer and see whether the foot was moving to establish if they were actually using pedal because you can't always hear it" and "I would check the fingers to see whether the keys are down to check if the candidate played legato or not". In a similar vein practical assessor 8 said, "For strings, I looked at the bow movement. If I could see the bow, then I know that there must be sound. I would only rely on this for online and not in-person assessment".

The type of instrument used for online assessment also affected the sound, since "many candidates often played on electronic keyboards or on digital pianos, and the sound just doesn't carry", said practical music assessor 4. Conversely, practical music assessors pointed out that string instruments produced a more resonant, projected sound that was more audible on the online platform. Practical music assessor 4 stated that "with string instruments in terms of intonation, you can hear if it's correct or incorrect in online assessments".

Discussions revealed insights indicating that the online practical music assessments presented a different sound experience and assessment experience in comparison to in-person assessments. Practical music assessor stated 4: "You can't really gauge tone colour and dynamic spectrum". It was evident that both online, live and pre-recorded practical music assessments presented their own distinct challenges and limitations with respect to sound and sound quality. Practical music assessor 2 concisely encapsulated the situation and stated: "You must ask yourself, if the candidate played on a Steinway piano would the outcome be the same, or if the connection or sound quality was better will the outcome be the same?"

4.2.2 Resources – instruments and recording devices

The resources (instruments and recording devices) associated with online practical music assessment emerged as a notable category that directly impacted sound quality and output. Practical music assessor 8 noted that "with online, you have different acoustics, different instrument quality, different environmental situations, and different video qualities".

The disparity in equipment available to students during the submission of their recordings resulted in "an imbalance between the students' assessments where the one has an unfair advantage because of the equipment available to them", practical music assessor 5 reported. Practical music assessor 6 and 8 stated that certain students had an unfair advantage as a result of their access to professional-grade video recording equipment, while others were limited to utilising cellular phones for their submissions. This affected the quality of sound and overall performance. Practical music assessor 6 noted that "You would sometimes find the left hand sounding too loud, but it's because there are more notes, so the mic picks it up and amplifies it whereas during in-person assessment there won't be such a great imbalance between hands".

The music instrument used for online music practical assessments played a significant role in the assessment process. In in-person practical music assessments, it is the norm for students to be assessed on standardized or institution-provided instruments, ensuring consistency and a level playing field. However, the transition to online practical music assessments required students to perform on their own music instruments, which introduced potential discrepancies as practical music assessor 5 stated, "A very simple example, a piano that's extremely out of tune which is not necessarily the mistake of the student. You would also find that one would play on a very good instrument and the other would play on a very bad instrument". Moreover, practical music assessors 2, 6 and 8 mentioned that the acoustics and lighting of the performance venue, physical surroundings, background and environmental noise and room size may affect the recorded sound quality.

4.2.3 Physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor

According to the participants' accounts during the interviews, the implications of the practical music assessor's physical presence or absence in the assessment room were notable, as practical music assessor 1 stated: "I think that we have to always be conscious of the fact that being in the assessment room with a student and watching them on screen are not quite the same thing". He asked an important question: "If you are in the same room with the performer, how would that have impacted the way that they perform and you assess?"

All the practical music assessors agreed that the physical distance between the practical music assessor and the student during an online music assessment, contributed to the practical music assessor experiencing the assessment as “cold and clinical”. Practical music assessor 3 stated: “In terms of eisteddfods, you see the competitor walking onto the stage and the audience is present. With video submissions, no one is there”. But practical music assessor 7 viewed this physical distance as an advantage: “since it is so impersonal, you will rely more on the content of the video, and you will focus on that. I feel that you should just judge the music”. In a similar vein, practical music assessor 5 said, “When you are physically present in the same room as the student, you are faced with everything that the students bring to the performance”.

Discussions centred on the importance of successfully communicating the music to the practical music assessor, irrespective of the platform. The study’s findings speak to some students “feeding off” the practical music assessor’s presence and performing better under pressure “whilst people are watching, or when an examiner is in the room”, and others finding the absence of the music assessor beneficial. All the practical music assessors agreed that being physically present in the same room as the student, to hear the true sound, “to see the candidate, how they react and how they respond” is the better option.

4.2.4 Performance aspects – technique and music expression

This study’s data analysis revealed that performance aspects are experienced differently on different platforms. Practical music assessor 2 stated that “with in-person, live assessments, you hear and see exactly what is being played”; however, with pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions) it can be recorded multiple times, as noted by practical music assessor 4: “If you have a bad day, you have a bad day, but when you have a bad day with the recording, you can go back and you can record it again”.

The platform does not influence technical aspects, as posited by practical music assessor 3: “if they can’t play E major scale in-person, they won’t be able to play E major scale online”. There was consensus that if technical skills are underdeveloped, this will reflect across all assessment platforms. Practical music assessor 4 noted that technical problems will “influence tempo choice, rhythm, articulation, dynamic spectrum and sound colour. If you’re stiff or rigid, referring to the piano or even in a string instrument, if you have a rigid bow arm, you can’t produce a warm colour”. Practical music assessors 1, 2 and 4 repeatedly emphasised that technique is a “conduit for what you feel”, enabling the performer to convey the musical content successfully.

The study’s findings consistently indicated that music expression is “much tougher online” and “gets lost on the online platform.” Practical music assessors attached great importance and

expectations to being emotionally moved and engaged by the performances, seeking to establish a profound connection between the music, the performer and themselves.

Upon asking questions about body movement, visual cues and gestures, practical music assessors unanimously agreed that they don't enjoy a lot of body movement in a practical music assessment and practical music assessor 5 said, "it puts me off" or "I don't enjoy the spectacle". Practical music assessors found it "distracting, disturbing, overwhelming" and practical music assessor 2 noted that some performers "try to compensate for something that is missing in their performance". They indicated that too much movement could influence rhythm, dynamic levels and therefore affect the overall performance. Practical music assessors acknowledged the presence of the "visual side to music performance", but strongly emphasised that "what should always come first is the sound that is produced, and the physical side can either add to it or distract from it."

4.3 Theme 3: Changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour

"Wearing a suit, sitting at a desk with your spearmints, changes your demeanour." –

Practical music assessor 1

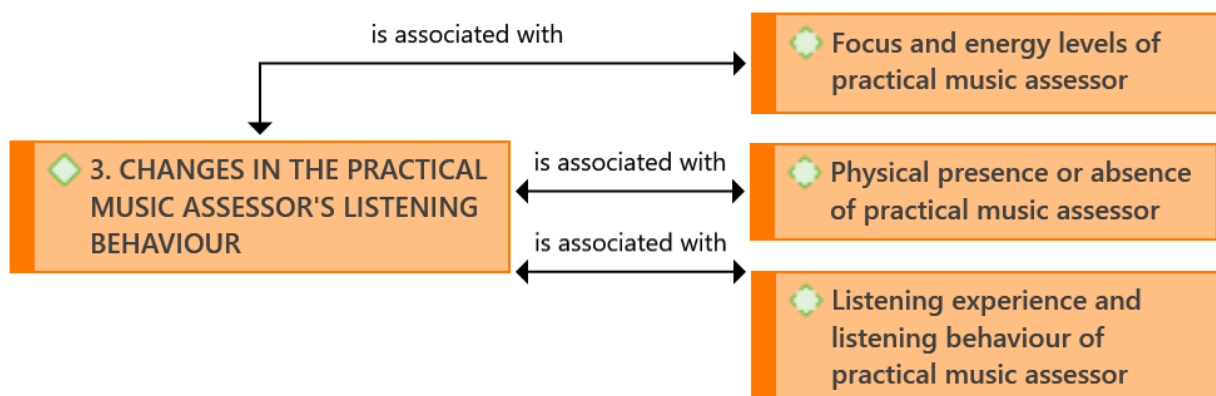


Figure 8: Changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour

A distinct theme that emerged was changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour, giving rise to the associated categories featuring focus and energy, physical presence or absence of the assessor, and listening behaviour and experience. As indicated by the participants during the interviews, there was a significant shift away from the traditional way practical music assessors listened to practical music assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional music assessment practices typically involve the practical music assessor and student physically present in the same assessment room enabling the assessor to observe

and evaluate the music performance through critical and focused listening in real-time. Theme 3 is depicted in Figure 8.

4.3.1 Focus and energy levels of the practical music assessor

Maintaining energy and sustained attention proved challenging for the practical music assessors with regard to watching pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions). Practical music assessor 8 admitted: "if you receive 200 pre-recorded videos and you need to watch every single one of them, it's rather daunting". Initially, this assessor attempted to rewatch the videos multiple times, but soon recognised the impracticality of this approach and instead viewed it as "a live performance instead. Watch it once and that's it. Erase the idea that you have an opportunity to watch it again because it is a recording".

Practical music assessors acknowledged instances when their focus faded, leading them to take frequent breaks or constantly ensuring that they have a pen in hand, which helped them recover their attention and give their undivided focus to the pre-recorded video-submissions. Practical music assessor 5 explained that he was more engaged in in-person assessments: "as assessor you face the students ready to completely pay attention and you are conscious of looking relaxed yet attentive in front of the students".

4.3.2 Physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor

As previously discussed under theme two, practical music assessors indicated that being physically present or absent from the assessment room played a significant role in shaping their listening behaviour. Practical music assessor 1 said, "I think being in the room makes a difference for the actual candidate. I think with that, you as assessor behave differently". Findings of this study showed that practical music assessors listened with more empathy when they were physically present in the assessment room, as practical music assessor 6 clarified: "perhaps I'm more sympathetic when I'm in the room; for example, if they make a mistake and you can ask them to start again".

They explained that they were able to hear the anxiety conveyed by students through the medium of videos. Practical music assessor 8 suggested that "perhaps the lack of someone being present in the room and having to cope with that affected some students more than others and therefore affected their performance and in turn their assessment". Practical music assessors were acutely aware that students played to a cell phone or a tablet and practical music assessor 8 stated, "Perhaps some candidates found that more intimidating." Notably, practical music assessor 8 made a positive observation regarding the assessment of pre-recorded video-submissions, particularly in the case of beginners. She appreciated having the ability to replay

the short pieces multiple times, facilitating a more thorough evaluation process, since the beginner pieces were rather short.

4.3.3 Listening experience and listening behaviour of the practical music assessor

This study's data analysis provided valuable insights into the transformation of the listening experience and listening behaviour experienced by practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes prompted them to adapt and modify their listening behaviour, consequently influencing the overall listening experience.

The practical music assessors acknowledged that the most prominent distinction between in-person and online listening behaviour was the opportunity to listen to recordings more than once. They explained that the repeated listening was implemented to overcome technical issues, such as poor sound quality, unclear visual information, or other technical aspects that had an effect on accurate assessment of the performances. Practical music assessor 4 emphasised that recordings of performances were recorded multiple times, but "when you assess an [in-person] exam, what you get the first time, is what you get".

There was a consensus that when assessing pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions) the listening experience felt less authentic than the in-person practical music assessment. They highlighted that "assessing in the moment" was not possible with pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions) and they were acutely aware that what they were assessing "could have been the tenth recording or the first recording" and did not accurately represent the true potential of the student.

Practical music assessor 4 shared the view: "I often accompany music students for exams or competitions. Boys would want to play it only once and use that recording, but girls would want to record it three or four times because they made a mistake. I would have to tell them to select one of the recordings. Usually, the first recording is the best one, anyway".

Changes in listening behaviour were evident as practical music assessor 1 acknowledged that it was "very difficult to listen intently to a screen and sometimes you find that perhaps you listen to it more critically simply because you can". Practical music assessors concurred that they restricted themselves to watching it once and view pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions) as live performances. Practical music assessor 7 disclosed that she experienced the video submissions as "a little bit easier when you're on your own in front of a computer" and explained that it alleviated certain pressures experienced during live performances, particularly concerning the time constraints for providing assessment comments.

4.4. Theme 4: The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments

"The human connection is vitally important; it has an impact on both the assessed and their assessor." – Practical music assessor 1

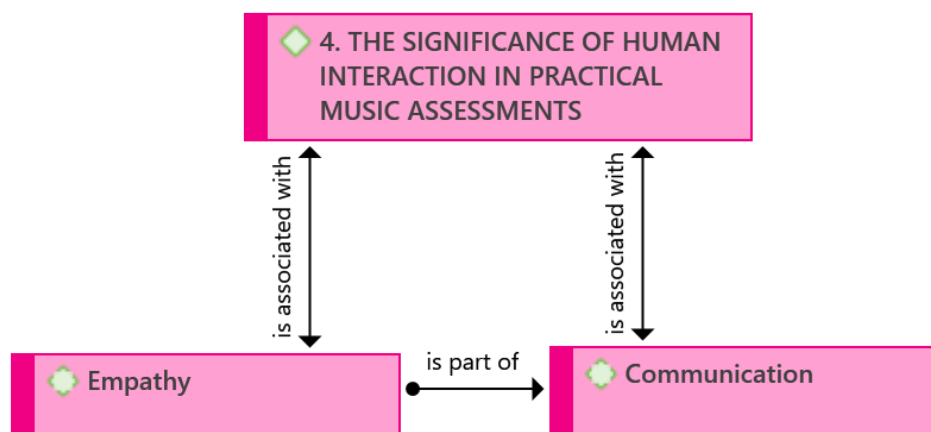


Figure 9: The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments

The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments became a prominent theme that was further categorized into two distinct aspects: communication and empathy (Figure 9). These categories highlighted the importance of interpersonal connections and understanding in the assessment of music during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.4.1 Communication

Through discussions with the participants, a notable observation emerged regarding the importance of connecting and communicating with students during practical music assessments. This emphasis on establishing a strong rapport was aimed at creating an environment that would alleviate stress and anxiety, thus enabling students to fully showcase their musical abilities.

It was evident that practical music assessors had to work harder to make that connection within the online, live assessment platforms (via MS Teams/Zoom) as students were not physically present in the same room as the assessor. Practical music assessor 2 stated: "for me it is so important to see the person because you immediately get an impression and make a connection. Both parties will feel more at ease, and they will enjoy the musical experience, which is not always the case with online assessments".

Verbal communication was instrumental in cultivating that trust and rapport with the student, as practical music assessor 2 stated, “for in-person examinations, you can collect the student from the waiting room, perhaps meet the parents, bring them into the exam room and make them feel comfortable in the room”. Fostering effective communication during online, live practical music assessments (via MS Teams/Zoom) necessitated clear, concise instructions that involved “talking slightly slower or repeating yourself when you give instructions” to minimize confusion and for alleviating potential stress and anxiety that students might experience during the online practical music assessment.

With pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions) there was no communication. Practical music assessors felt that it was very clinical since there was no one present and their inability to communicate with the student left them feeling isolated. During in-person eisteddfodau, the practical music assessors traditionally engaged in direct interaction with the performers, providing verbal feedback that included physical demonstrations to explain concepts or ideas. Practical music assessor 4 stated: “instead of only writing a few remarks, you talk and demonstrate because it’s difficult to write exactly what you want to show; so, it’s easier to show them a physical movement or play them what you trying to explain”.

4.4.2 Empathy

Discussions revealed that practical music assessors adopted a more empathic approach during the COVID-19 pandemic assessment period and several factors contributed to this disposition, including the recognition of the emotional well-being and circumstances of the students, the perseverance displayed by students in continuing with their music assessments despite minimal in-person music teaching and to do so, by utilising a novel online platform. Practical music assessor 3 explained, “I think I was more lenient because of the circumstances, and I was grateful that they are still making the effort to continue with music assessments. I do think that I was more lenient with my marks during COVID”.

Discussions revealed a sense of understanding and acknowledgement among practical music assessors that the COVID-19 pandemic presented shared challenges for all students, requiring them to adapt and “make the best of it”, as noted by practical music assessor 2. This understanding included considerations relating to the music instruments used, recording equipment, sound quality and the physical setting in which the music assessments took place, aiming to ensure fairness and maintaining continuity so that “it does not count against the candidates”, as stated by practical music assessor 5.

4.5 Theme 5: Benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms

*"It has opened the door to a new way of assessing, an alternative way of assessment." –
Practical music assessor 8*

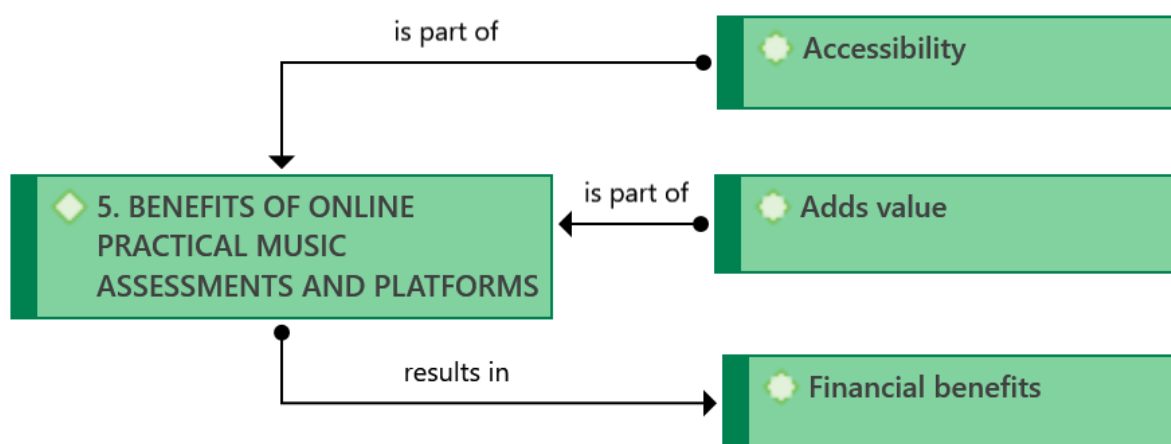


Figure 10: Benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms

Figure 10 illustrates Theme 5 that pertains to the benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms, highlighting three notable categories, namely accessibility, financial benefits and added value.

4.5.1 Accessibility

The study's findings showed that for practical music assessors, online practical music assessments offered the convenience and flexibility to participate in online assessments from any location thus eliminating the need for extensive travel, therefore saving time and money. They also appreciated the benefits of not being bound by rigid schedules and that assessing pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions) allowed them to have more control over their time and more freedom to work at their preferred pace, with minimal disruption to their professional lives. The statement made by practical music assessor 4, "I could work on my own schedule, in my own time" reflected the flexibility that online practical music assessments provided to practical music assessors, allowing them the freedom to manage their own time.

By eliminating geographical barriers, online practical music assessments allowed participants from diverse locations to engage in assessment processes. Practical music assessor 3 stated that "someone in a rural area in Botswana or someone in a farm area who can't travel to an exam centre now has the option to do an exam". Eliminating the need for the student's physical

presence expanded the reach of those who were previously unable to access in-person assessments and so provided opportunities for them, as explained by practical music assessor 3, "I had candidates playing from the United States and from Kenya, Nigeria".

4.5.2 Financial benefits

The study's findings showed that the nature of online practical music assessments enabled practical music assessors to reach a wider pool of candidates, as stipulated by practical music assessor 6, "it could enhance the number of entries and include more students". Practical music assessors all agreed that there was a cost-saving implication for the music institution in terms of venue hire, as well as flight and accommodation costs of the practical music assessor, making online practical music assessments viable and financially sustainable. Traditionally, students had to bear the financial burden of travelling to centres to be assessed in person; however, the shift to online assessment processes resulted in a financial benefit for students and their parents as well.

4.5.3 Adds value

The shift to the online music assessment environment not only brought financial benefits for music institutions and students, but also added value to the overall assessment experience. Practical music assessor 5 explained that "It's maybe not preferable, but I think it has given us a lot of options; a lot of answers to difficult questions". The study's findings indicated that students benefited from this alternative way of assessment, primarily because of the increased exposure. Practical music assessor 4 stated, "It opens the world up for everybody. Now you can enter competitions in other countries, and you don't necessarily have to be there". Practical music assessor 5 said, "online assessments should never replace in-person assessments, but it can add to it".

The study's findings revealed that online and in-person practical music assessments shared a common goal of assessing musical abilities but differ in terms of delivery, experience and the level of direct interaction between practical music assessors and students. Practical music assessors stated, "I think if you are struggling technically, it will always show on online or in-person", "whether they're in-person or online, if they have a bad bow hold, it won't make a difference whether it's online or in-person" and "even if the instrument on which they are performing is not that good, you can see and hear a good performer whether it's online or in-person". These comments indicated that even though the assessment platforms are different, both are capable of providing a viable means of practical music assessment.

4.6 Theme 6: Challenges of online practical music assessments and platforms

*"It is a different experience but the one is not superior to the other one." –
Practical music assessor 5*

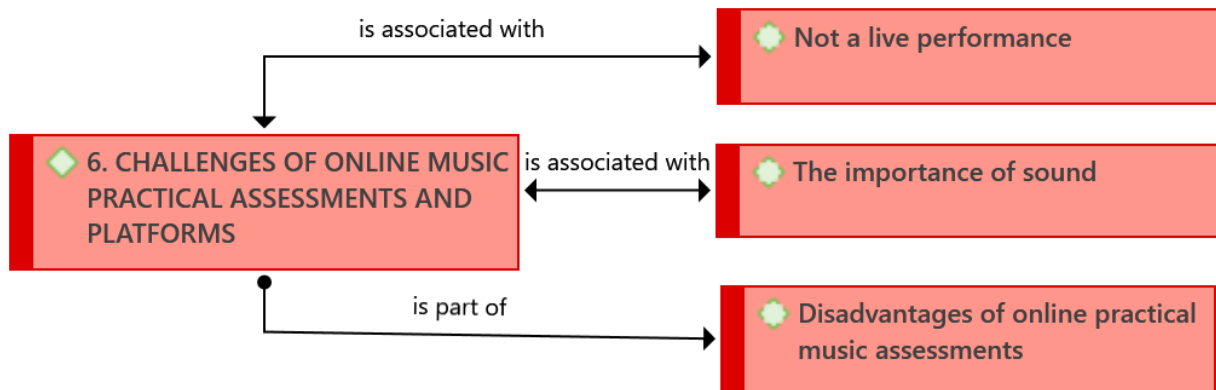


Figure 11: Challenges of online music practical assessments and platforms

The final theme (Figure 11) that emerged from the data analysis revolves around the challenges associated with online music practical assessments, giving rise to the associated categories including the disadvantages of online music practical assessments, the importance of sound, and the view that online assessments are not live performances.

4.6.1 Disadvantages of online music practical assessments

This study's findings emphasise many disadvantages of online music practical assessments including connectivity issues, environmental disturbances, lack of human interaction, and both sound and recording quality. It was evident that the practical music assessors agreed that online music practical assessments were not a true reflection of an in-person music practical assessment, and mentioned certain limitations and differences that played a significant role in capturing the essence and experience of an in-person assessment. Practical music assessor 2 stated "It was not the easiest of examinations, because you're not always quite sure about the quality of playing of the candidate. You also had to contend with all kinds of disturbances. With online assessment, you see half the person, or you see just the face. Sometimes you lose the connection, and you can't stop the examination. It must go on". Practical music assessor 3 stated that "environmental interferences like car noises or other people in the room" were also problematic. Practical music assessors noted that online assessments may not capture the same level of artistry, expressiveness and musical interpretation that can be observed in a live, in-person environment because of the limited visual access and clarity of sound.

4.6.2 The importance of sound

Through discussions with the participants, a prominent challenge was raised regarding online music practical assessments. They constantly reiterated that the quality of sound is of paramount importance since it is the primary medium through which a music performance is assessed. Practical music assessor 1 mentioned that “we might not actually see all the bad technical things, but we are able to hear it” and all the practical music assessors made constant reference to the principle that “sound comes first” and “I rely on the sound that is produced.” Unstable internet and connectivity issues influenced the quality and clarity of overall sound production. Practical music assessor 3 stated that “if the connection is bad, then it will influence what I hear and how I assess, in comparison to seeing the student in person, walk on stage, bow, perform and hear the audience clapping.”

It was evident that participants recognised that compromised connectivity and unstable internet can undermine their ability to fully perceive and assess the overall performance, which could therefore impact on the result. Practical music assessor 4 stated: “The sound quality of the videos was not always pleasing, and you can't really hear what's being done musically.” When asked if online music practical assessments were a true equivalent of in-person music practical assessment, practical music assessor 8 replied “sometimes the sound quality is not great and there are disturbances within the environment whilst doing an online assessment. With in-person assessments, all students make use of the same venue, the same room, the same acoustics and the same piano and that makes it fair.”

4.6.3 Not a live performance

The data analysis of this study revealed the crucial observation that online music practical assessments do not replicate the experience of a live performance. Practical music assessor 5, who performs regularly, explained, “when I perform live, I like to feel the audience there, the silences, the florescent light in the background, that's all part of the musicking. A recording removes that element of live energy that's in the room and that live energy is what makes the examination or concert exciting”.

Practical music assessor 1 asked: “Can one say that a performer who is playing online is giving a performance, and if so to whom?”. Performing “live” on an online platform to an online community who serve as the audience is different from an in-person music performance, since the live atmosphere and energy of the audience cannot be captured by digital means. This view highlights the observation that the lack of an audience or practical music assessor during a music assessment could affect the performer and the performance. Practical music assessor 1 stated that “when the assessor is in the room, the element of anxiety changes the performance

elements which is very different to playing to a camera. So, I think there are serious variables there that impact not only on the quality of the sound but also the quality of the performance”.

As stated previously, practical music assessors wondered about the authenticity of video recordings. Practical music assessor 4 stated: “by using a recording device, you know that the recording can be done several times, not only once as in live performances. When the assessor is in the room with the student during the assessment, they don’t have that as an option”. They asserted that the practical music assessor’s presence during a practical music assessment plays a critical role in elevating the concept of performance and allows the assessor to have a first-hand experience of the performer’s presence, energy and artistic expression, especially since “the performer is preparing for a live performance career, as it were”, as noted by practical music assessor 1. This study’s findings revealed that practical music assessors perceived online practical music assessments as part of “back-up plans”, but not as the main assessment platform because “the ideal platform is a live, in-person assessment. Music is a live thing”.

5. Conclusion

This chapter presented six themes derived from my study, namely, the relationship between the practical music assessor and the music assessment process, significant characteristics of online and in-person practical music performances, changes in the practical music assessor’s listening behaviour and experience, the significance of human interaction, benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms, and the challenges of online practical music assessments and platforms. Twenty categories were identified and described in detail, supported by quotations from the interviews. The next chapter presents a discussion of these themes by extracting key findings from the study to draw meaningful conclusions.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter includes the interpretation and discussion of the key findings highlighted in Chapter Four, which will also address the research aims of this study. The intention of the study was to explore the music assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the lockdowns imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further aims were to identify and understand the similarities and differences between the in-person and online practical music assessment environments, to describe how the approaches of WAM performances may be different or be adapted in the in-person and online practical music assessment environments, and to assess the sustainability of online practical music assessments in South Africa. The discussion and interpretation of the key findings also take into account the literature discussed in Chapter Two. The limitations of the study will be outlined, the implications highlighted and recommendations for further research will be proposed.

5.1 Summary of findings

Findings will be discussed and interpreted in relation to the six main themes highlighted in Chapter Four which are listed below:

1. The practical music assessor's influence on the music assessment process;
2. Attributes of online and in-person practical music performances;
3. Changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour;
4. The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments;
5. Benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms;
6. Challenges of in-person practical music assessments and platforms.

Based on the data analysis conducted, six main themes emerged as central focal points of the eight practical music assessors' assessment experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. Theme 1 emphasised the significant influence that the practical music assessor has on the assessment process, including aspects such as the practical music assessor's anxiety, skills and experience, bias, flexibility and approach. Theme 2 highlighted the attributes of online and in-person practical music performances, addressing influential aspects such as sound quality, resources, the physical presence of the practical music assessor in the assessment room, and performance aspects in terms of technique and music expression. Theme 3 was identified as changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour, emphasising aspects such as focus and energy levels of the assessor, the physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor, and how the listening environment might transform the listening experience and listening behaviour of the practical music assessor. The importance of

interpersonal connection in the form of communication and empathy with students during music assessments was identified as Theme 4. Theme 5 emerged as the benefits of online practical music assessments revealing categories such as accessibility, financial benefits and adding value. Theme 6 highlighted the challenges of online practical music assessments and platforms with reference to the disadvantages of online practical music assessments, the importance of sound, and the fact that online practical music assessments are not based on a live performance.

Table 2 illustrates the six themes, twenty categories and the corresponding literature as reviewed in Chapter Two. A detailed discussion and interpretation of the results will follow, including how the six themes integrate with the reviewed literature and themes.

Table 2: Themes, categories, and corresponding literature

THEMES	CATEGORIES	LITERATURE RELATED TO THE THEMES
THEME 1: The practical music assessor's influence on the assessment process	· Practical music assessor's anxiety · Practical music assessor's skills and experience · Practical music assessor's flexibility	Johnson (1996) and Juslin <i>et al.</i> (2021): Musicians and non-musicians do not assess from the same place of knowledge Wadell <i>et al.</i> (2019): Exceptional performers do not necessarily make effective practical music assessors Winter (1993); Johnson (1996); Abeles (1973); Bergee (2003); Ciorba & Smith (2009); Thompson <i>et al.</i> (1998); Kinney (2007): Trained musicians are more likely to have reliable assessment skills Shih (2018): Comparability between a computerised assessment programme, Smart Music, and a human assessor.
	· Practical music assessor's bias	Wapnick <i>et al.</i> (1997) and Zentner (2010): Influence of physical appearance, mannerisms, gestures and non-verbal communication Flôres & Ginsberg (1996): How unfamiliar repertoire and the order of performance advantage and disadvantage performers

THEMES	CATEGORIES	LITERATURE RELATED TO THE THEMES
		Thompson & Williamon (2003): Personal preference for certain instruments; unease and inadequacy when assessing unfamiliar instruments McPherson & Thompson, (1998): Factors such as the mood of the assessor, fatigue and the time of day, prior knowledge and information of a performer and personal distractions may influence the assessor.
	· Practical music assessor's approach	Saunders & Holahan (1997); Ciorba & Smith (2009): Criteria-specific approach is consistent and reliable Mills (1991); Johnson (1997); Sadler (2009): Holistic approach assesses the quality of the entire performance and not only in terms of specific criteria and is thus more realistic and musically more credible Stanley <i>et al.</i> (2002): Examiner's perceptions of the effects of using criteria in music assessments (positive and negative)
THEME 2: Attributes of online and in-person practical music performances	· Sound quality · Physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor	Shoda & Adachi (2015) and Shoda <i>et al.</i> (2016): Effect of the presence and absence of an audience on a performance. Audience-present performance was rated as better. Shoda <i>et al.</i> (2016): Audiences were more attentive during the live performances and heart rates possibly influenced by the physical presence of the performer. Sense of artistry, expressivity and affective nuances felt more in a live context than in the recorded context.
	· Resources	Yadigaroglu (2021): Inequality of education opportunities, technical problems

THEMES	CATEGORIES	LITERATURE RELATED TO THE THEMES
		experienced, and assessment and evaluation processes were unreliable. Biasutti (2018); Biasutti <i>et al.</i> (2021 & 2023); Güsewell & Terrien (2021); Joseph & Lennox (2021): Technological frustrations with online teaching including poor sound quality or time delays. Mojala & Mudau (2022); Güsewell & Terrien (2021): Digital divide influenced and affected music assessments
	Performing aspects: Technique and Music Expression	Shoda & Adachi (2012); Shoda <i>et al.</i> (2016); Swarbrick <i>et al.</i> (2019); Cupido (2022): Listening conditions, practices and mediums can affect music expression. Kinney (2009); Sadler (2009); Parkes (2010); Wadell <i>et al.</i> (2019): Assessment provides a critical link between teaching and learning Juslin (1997): Link between emotion and expression in music Davidson (1993); Vines <i>et al.</i> (2010): Expressive playing influences the listener's appreciation of the performance and therefore influences the listeners' judgment as well
THEME 3: Changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour	- Focus and energy levels - Physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor - Listening experience and listening behaviour of practical music assessor	Tsay (2013): Participants rated the performance higher when they were able to see the performers, irrespective of the quality of sound produced. Vines <i>et al.</i> (2010): Seeing a musician can enhance, complement and act with the sound to impact the music experience. Shoda & Adachi (2015); Shoda <i>et al.</i> (2016): Effect of the presence and absence of an

THEMES	CATEGORIES	LITERATURE RELATED TO THE THEMES
		audience on a performance. Audience-present performance was rated as better. Shoda <i>et al.</i> (2016): Audiences were more attentive during the live performances and heart rates possibly influenced by the physical presence of the performer. Sense of artistry, expressivity and affective nuances felt more in a live context than in the recorded context.
THEME 4: The significance of human interaction	· Communication · Empathy	Kinney (2009); Sadler (2009); Parkes (2010); Wadell <i>et al.</i> (2019): Assessment provides a critical link between teaching and learning.
THEME 5: Benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms	· Accessibility · Financial benefits · Adds value	Yadigaroglu (2021): Allows for continuation of education and the ability to access the course anywhere. Limited research is available on practical music assessments conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa
THEME 6: Challenges of in-person practical music assessments and platforms	· Disadvantages of online practical music assessments · The importance of sound · Not a live performance	de Bruin & Merrick, B (2023): How instrumental music students in the University of Melbourne's Conservatorium of Music (Performance Teaching) engaged and were supported in their learning via the online platforms. Váradi <i>et al.</i> (2023): Investigated music teachers' computer technical skills and potential offerings of online music education during the COVID-pandemic. Limited research is available on practical music assessments conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

5.2 Theme 1: The practical music assessor's influence on the assessment process

It is evident from the findings that the practical music assessor holds a critical and influential position in the music assessment process, and each practical music assessor has skills, experience, anxieties, biases, flexibilities and individual assessment approaches that accompany them into the assessment room or assessment platform.

Sadler (2009:1) states that the outcome of an assessment speaks to the level of the student's performance quality and ability. I concur with this view; however, it is important to emphasise that a proper assessment can be achieved only under fair and consistent conditions. With the introduction of online music practical assessment offerings (online practical music assessments via MS Teams or Zoom/pre-recorded practical music assessments) during the COVID-19 pandemic, for these conditions to be fair and consistent, they had to equate those of in-person practical music assessments. According to data collected for this study, the choice of assessment platform influenced the practical music assessor and affected the assessment process; therefore it is imperative that the practical music assessor embodies the necessary experience, expertise and adaptability. Much research suggests that skilled, musically trained musicians or practical music assessors are more likely to have reliable assessment skills (Abeles, 1973:246; Winter, 1993:34-39; Johnson, 1996:84; McPherson *et al.*, 1998:15-16; Kinney, 2009:33-34; Ciorba & Smith, 2009:12-14).

Undoubtedly, the practical music assessor plays the central role in music assessments, and I would postulate that the shift to a new online assessment environment was not only a challenge to the practical music assessor's experience and expertise, but exposed their personal attributes, character and attitude. Online practical music assessments presented an additional layer of technical intricacies such as connectivity issues, sound quality, technical problems and environmental disturbances that the assessor must calmly navigate whilst maintaining fair and consistent standards. I concur with the findings of Abeles (1973:246), Winter (1993:34-39), Johnson (1996:84), McPherson *et al.* (1998:15-16), Kinney (2009:33-34) and Ciorba and Smith (2009:12-14) that trained musicians are more likely to have reliable assessment skills. Furthermore, my findings suggest that practical music assessors can ascertain early in the assessment whether the performance warrants a sixty, seventy or eighty percent, thereby showcasing the assessor's high level of skill and experience. However, I contend that despite the high level of skill and experience evinced by the participants in the current study, they still encountered challenges in dealing with the remoteness implicit in the online assessment platform.

Practical music assessors 2 and 3 reported they that did not have control over the “room”, as they would have with in-person assessments and noted that “it is out of your hands”, indicating feelings of vulnerability and anxiety experienced during online practical music assessments. Practical music assessor 3 reported that her objective was to ensure that her frustrations do not influence the assessment process and outcome in any way; however, she acknowledged that she is only human. It is this human element that not only creates the sense of vulnerability, but also allows for adaptability, sensitivity and discernment within the music assessment process and what affords the human assessor the tolls to be more reliable; this is in line with Shih’s research on the comparability between a computerised assessment programme, Smart Music and a human assessor (Shih, 2018:113). Human traits like patience, forgiveness, flexibility and empathy contributed to the qualities of a good music assessor, but could inadvertently also have an influence over the practical music assessor’s mood, well-being, preferences, leniency and biases. Practical music assessors 1 and 7 acknowledged that the demeanour of the student, their emotional state, the time of day as much as the quality of the performance influenced the assessment process, which supports the findings of the research conducted by McPherson and Thompson (1998:16). To mitigate biases, Juslin *et al.* (2021:5) promote the development of self-insight, which can be described as the extent to which the practical music assessor understands their own judgement policy and which criteria are weighted more than others when assessing.

In this study it was evident that the practical music assessor became more flexible during the COVID-19 pandemic, but generally they adhered to their preferred assessment approach. Six of the eight participants followed the criteria-specific approach (Saunders & Holahan, 1997:250-260; Ciorba & Smith, 2009:12-14) and the two adopted the holistic approach (Mills, 1991:173; Johnson, 1997:173; Sadler, 2009:19). One of the interesting findings that emerged is that a consistent assessment approach was maintained across both in-person and online music assessments. This observation confirms the reliability of the online assessment process, since the same in-person assessment criteria, methods and techniques were followed. An important distinction between the online and in-person music assessments, as reported in the study, lies in the “emotional presence” of the practical music assessor, since their physical presence in the assessment room compelled them to remain engaged and focused, which in turn ensured a fair assessment process.

The six criteria-specific practical music assessors in my study stated that using the assessment criteria is a “necessity” to keep them objective and fair, especially towards students who opted for a live, in-person practical music assessment. Practical music assessors seemed to perceive online, in-person (via Ms Teams/Zoom) and pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions) as less demanding for students and comparatively easier to cope with in terms of stress levels. The two practical music assessors who preferred the holistic approach prioritized

listening to the performance as a whole and relying on their gut instinct before referring to the detailed assessment criteria to determine the final mark. This three-step holistic approach aligns with research conducted by Stanley *et al.* (2002:46-56), as discussed in Chapter Two. It emerged that the participants of this study believed that the assessment criteria and their gut instinct are inseparable and should be viewed as functioning in unison. Moreover, the study indicated that the two practical music assessors' gut instincts became more prevalent during online practical music assessments. I posit that the remote nature of the assessment, the physical and digital distance (during online assessments via MS Teams/Zoom) or absence (during pre-recorded assessments) of the practical music assessor and the diminished sound and video capacity possibly influenced the practical music assessors to rely more on their gut instinct.

5.3 Theme 2: The attributes of online and in-person practical music assessments

The attributes of both online and in-person practical music assessments relied heavily on acoustic components such as sound quality, clarity, balance, dynamics, timbre and the acoustics of the assessment venue. With in-person practical music assessments, the practical music assessor evaluated the assessment in its immediate, natural form, in contrast to online music assessments which were transmitted through speakers of digital devices such as tablets, laptops or cellular phones.

This study indicated that practical music assessors assessed sound first; they relied on sight to compensate for technical issues such as distorted video submissions, or delayed sound as a result of poor internet connectivity during the recording process or live, online music assessments. The quality and type of music instrument used during online practical music assessments influenced the sound quality and projection ability, and is very much dependent on the availability of resources. My study's findings suggested that the digital divide – as discussed by Güsewell and Terrien (2021:8) and Mojala and Mudau (2022:276) – affirmed the observed disparities of resources during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. Some students had the advantage of utilising professional recording equipment, an acoustically sound assessment venue with a well-maintained music instrument that allowed for superior sound production and video quality, whilst others had access only to their cellular phones. These disparities of resources were a challenge to maintaining the fairness and consistency of the assessment process. In my view the online practical music assessors manifested greater flexibility, and adapted their in-person assessment strategies to make provision for the physical and digital distance characteristics of online music assessments that affected sound quality, while upholding their assessment standards.

The current study indicated that the physical presence of the practical music assessor in the same room as the student whilst the music assessment takes place, may have a significant influence on the practical music assessor, the performer and in turn may influence the assessment outcome. Participants emphasised the importance of the performer communicating the music effectively to the listener irrespective of the platform; the practical music assessor's presence in the same room allowed for them to be "faced with everything that the students bring" to their performance. Their physical presence allowed the practical music assessor to form part of the music-making process, to hear the true sound, to see the performer and experience how the performer responds and reacts. My findings are aligned with studies conducted by Vines *et al.* (2010:157) who suggest that seeing a musician can enhance, complement, and act with the sound to impact on the music experience. Tsay's findings (2013:14583) showed that performances were rated higher when they were able to see the performers, irrespective of the quality of sound produced. I agree that seeing the performer complements the performance; however, my study provided clear evidence that sound was prioritized as the key factor for practical music assessments, irrespective of the assessment platform. It is predominantly through sound that practical music assessors assessed technical and expressive performance aspects, and this remained consistent, regardless of the assessment platform.

Findings of this study indicated that technique is regarded as the foundation upon which music expression is built and if technique is underdeveloped, this can be heard, regardless of the assessment platform. A significant finding of this study highlighted that music expression is more difficult to hear, see and feel within the online practical music platform and participants reported that music expression often "got lost" in the performance. This finding aligned with studies conducted by Shoda and Adachi (2012:928) that indicated that expressivity and artistry are felt more effectively in a live context, which led me to question whether the research findings by Zentner (2010:117-118) and Tsay (2013:14583) were accurate. Do mannerisms, visual cues and gestures, and non-verbal communication of the performer elicit emotional responses from the listener and does this visual information sway practical music assessors away from recognising the best performance?

My findings were in contrast with those of Zentner (2010:117-118) and Tsay (2013:14583). This study suggested that all the practical music assessors do not enjoy excessive body movement and find it distracting, disturbing, overwhelming and at times somewhat of a needless "spectacle". Practical music assessors agreed that there is a visual side to music performance that aids expression, but the sound always comes first. This is confirmed by the research of Davidson (1993:112) and Vines *et al.* (2010:159), who found that expressive playing influences the listener's appreciation of the performance. I posit that online music performers employed exaggerated and excessive body movements to enhance expressivity and artistry to bridge the

gap created by the remote nature of the assessment and to compensate for the physical and digital distance of the practical music assessor.

5.4. Theme 3: Changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour

It was evident that listening experiences and listening behaviour varied across the assessment platforms and the presence or absence of the practical music assessors influenced their own levels of focus, energy and behaviour. The study drew attention to two distinguishing features of online practical music assessments in the context of pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions), namely the practice of the practical music assessors listening repeatedly to performances and the option for the student to re-record performances whereas in-person practical music assessment is a live, immediate event that takes place in the same space as the one inhabited by the practical music assessor.

The act of re-listening to an assessed performance contradicts the traditional practice of "assessing in the moment". I argue that having the option of re-listening to a performance that forms part of an assessment is less authentic as a method of assessment than in-person music assessments. Listening to practical music assessments multiple times could narrow the music assessor's focus, leading to a heightened level of scrutiny that could produce a more critical but admittedly more comprehensive form of feedback. This could be to the advantage or disadvantage of the online student, since the in-person student is not put through the same level of scrutiny.

Practical music assessors indicated that re-listening was not always feasible because of time constraints and consequently reserved the act of re-listening for sound-impaired assessments or very short performances. In fact, practical music assessor 8 interestingly stated that whilst watching a huge volume of pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions), she made a conscious decision to view them as in-person practical music assessments instead, for the sake of time and fairness. During the process of pre-recorded practical music assessments (video-submissions) the performers could review the recorded videos, refine and adjust as needed before submitting the final assessment, whereas in-person practical music assessments take place in real-time and there is but one opportunity to deliver the best performance.

This study's findings indicated that the choice of music assessment platform, whether in a live or recorded context, and in the presence or absence of a practical music assessor, played a significant role in changing the practical music assessor's listening experience and listening behaviour. The study's results indicated practical music assessors were more musically engaged, focused and attentive when conducting live, in-person assessments; this aligns with

the findings of Shoda *et al.* (2016:11). In the study by Shoda *et al.* (2016:11) the audience's physiological response was tested by monitoring their heart rates and nerve activities during both listening contexts: live (with the performer in the room) and recorded (through speakers and without the performer in the room) and found audiences more attentive during the live performances. They also reported increased heart rates measured in audience members which may be because of the physical presence of the performer. I am of the opinion that the digital distance introduces a layer of separation between the performer and the practical music assessor that affects how we perceive music, which influences the way that we listen and respond to music.

5.5 Theme 4: The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments

This study provided evidence that verbal communication within the in-person practical music assessment environment, in the context of music examinations and music eisteddfodau, contributes to the overall assessment experience for the practical music assessor as well as the performer. It creates a personal connection that establishes trust and alleviates anxiety for the performer, which could enhance confidence and motivation levels.

Pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions) were experienced as cold and clinical, and the lack of communication left the practical music assessor feeling isolated and removed from the music-making process. This is in line with Berleant's (1999:77) research which emphasised that the immersive aspects of a live performance may lead to a heightened perceptual experience for the listener. These findings contrast research by Auslander (2004:5), Pitts (2005:257) and McCormick, (2006:126), who viewed sound recordings as legitimate performances, despite the absence of a listener and, furthermore, they found no influence on the performance for the performer and the listener.

It was evident that the practical music assessors had to work harder at establishing a personal connection during live, online practical music assessments, incorporating measures such as speaking clearly and slowly, and repeating instructions to minimize confusion and create undue stress for the performer. Kennedy and Lautenbach (2020:222) and Joseph and Lennox (2021:251) highlighted the difficulties and anxieties that educators and students experienced with the shift to online teaching because of the very practical and interactive nature of the subject. Demonstrating technical concepts such as legato playing, correcting hand positions or bow holds, or demonstrating expressive playing, posed significant challenges and music teachers feared that students would not acquire the necessary skills to excel during their assessment.

This study suggested that music practical music assessors recognised these fears, understood the challenges that the online teaching environment and the platform presented and therefore adopted a more empathetic, lenient approach to students who continued with practical music assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consideration was given to various factors that influenced the practical music assessment process such as the type and quality of the music instrument, standard of recording equipment, unstable internet connection, sound quality and production, physical setting of the music assessment and the challenges music teachers faced with teaching music in an online environment.

5.6 Theme 5: The benefits of online practical music assessments and platforms

One of the significant benefits of online practical music assessments and online platforms highlighted in this study include the accessibility that it offers to music teachers, students and institutions on a national and international level. It allowed students who had limited access to in-person practical music assessments the opportunity to participate in music assessments from anywhere in the world, since it eliminated the need for the student's physical presence at the assessment venue. Findings of this study suggested that online practical music assessments provided students with more performing opportunities to develop and grow their musical skills, expand their exposure and improve their overall musicianship. It afforded students the opportunity to continue with their music education despite their geographical location; this aligns with research conducted by Yadigaroglu (2021:427), who highlighted the advantages of online assessment such as accessing the online platform remotely and the continuation of educational objectives. For practical music assessors, online practical music assessments eliminated the need for excessive traveling, saving valuable time and energy, and in the context of pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions), allowed practical music assessors the freedom to assess in their own time, according to their schedule.

Financial benefits included cost-saving implications for the practical music assessor, student/parent and the examination body or music institution. The accessibility and flexibility of online practical music assessments enabled a wider reach, increasing the number of entries that in turn led to increased participation and revenue, and ultimately, a revived interest and growth in music and music examinations. Additionally, with the costs of travel, accommodation, meals, and venue hire eliminated, online practical music assessments become more financially viable, whilst minimizing administrative and logistical issues that accompany in-person practical music assessments.

The study's findings suggested that online practical music assessments added value as an alternative option to in-person practical music assessments. In my opinion, this alternative option makes music more inclusive and makes provision for students from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It can provide students who live in rural areas or impoverished communities that cannot afford the travel costs, or disabled students with physical limitations who are not able to travel, with the benefit of a practical music assessment that may not have been available to them otherwise. It affords all students an opportunity to learn new repertoire, showcase their musical talent, be assessed, obtain valuable feedback from a musical expert, and gain recognition in the form of music certification.

5.7 Theme 6: The challenges of online practical music assessments and platforms

This study highlighted the challenges associated with online practical music assessments including internet connectivity issues, environmental disturbances, the lack of human interaction, quality of music instrument, venue, sound and recording quality. It was evident, from the practical music assessor's experience, that online practical music assessment was not a true equivalent of in-person practical music assessment, and that it cannot fully be replicated. The true essence and level of artistry, musical expression and musical interpretation cannot be fully captured on the online assessment platform. My findings aligned with the findings of Shoda and Adachi (2012:928), Shoda *et al.* (2016:11), Swarbrick *et al.* (2019:1) and Cupido (2022:9) which suggest the student's performance environment could influence how successfully they communicate the music. I posit that the assessment platform influenced the performance and the assessment outcomes in this study as well. Furthermore, in live, in-person practical music assessments the sound quality and acoustical properties of the venue are more conducive to expressive performance that could also affect the outcome.

The study's findings indicated that practical music assessors prioritize sound as the fundamental criterion that directly influences all performance aspects as illustrated in Table 1 (page 38). Sound is the core element that interconnects the assessment criteria and if the sound is compromised, this posed challenges for the student and practical music assessor. Another significant finding highlighted in the current study is the fact that online practical music assessments are not truly live performances. The practical music assessor's presence in the same room plays a critical role in the concept of a live performance as well as the real-time aspect, in contrast to a recording that could have been re-recorded multiple times. An interesting finding in my study suggested that practical music assessors felt an obligation to prepare students for live music performing careers that should in effect be 'live'. Practical music assessors viewed in-person practical music assessments as the ideal assessment platform.

Research findings from studies by de Bruin and Merrick (2023:149) and Váradi *et al.* (2023:7) support my findings. De Bruin and Merrick (2023:149) and Váradi *et al.* (2023:7) indicated that instrumental learning and practical music performances are best delivered in person, so that all parties involved are fully engaged in the music-making process, especially in cases where the performer depends and thrives on the presence of an audience or practical music assessor. Figure 12 (below) is an overview that summarises the findings of my study.

HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW: ONLINE PRACTICAL MUSIC ASSESSMENTS

ONLINE PRACTICAL MUSIC ASSESSMENTS

1. Live, online practical music assessments

- Sound quality/resources/connectivity/instrument/venue

2. Pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions)

- Multiple recordings
- Authenticity

Practical music assessor skills

PRACTICAL MUSIC ASSESSOR'S SKILLS

- Skills & experience
- Verbal communication
- Technological skills (computer)
- Calm & collected/Flexible
- Self-insight

PRACTICAL MUSIC ASSESSOR'S APPROACH

- Criteria-specific/Assessment criteria
- Holistic approach/Gut instinct
- Assess sound first
- Communicate music
- Physical presence is key

Selected assessment platform affects listening conditions, behaviour and experience

LISTENING CONDITIONS

- Reliable, fast internet
- Digital device with good sound output
- Good instrument & venue
- Limited noise levels

LISTENING BEHAVIOUR

- Focused
- Emotionally present
- Human interaction
- Verbal communication
- Empathy

LISTENING EXPERIENCE

- Positive
- Musically meaningful
- More interactive

Practical music assessment outcomes

PRACTICAL MUSIC ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

- Shared musical experience
- Assessment feedback
- Opportunity to perform
- Encouragement/competition
- Recognition
- Effective instruction
- Qualification/Certification

BENEFITS

- Increase in number of entries
- Financial gain
- Saves time and money
- Accessibility & inclusivity
- Flexibility & convenience
- Less administration & logistics

CHALLENGES

- **Disadvantages:** connectivity, environmental disturbances, lack of human interaction, instrument, venue, sound & recording quality
- The importance of sound
- Not a true live performance

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT ONLINE PRACTICAL MUSIC ASSESSMENTS

- Gut instinct more prevalent in online practical music assessments
- Online practical music assessments less stressful/less demanding for students
- Technique was not affected in the online platform
- Music expression "got lost" in the online platform
- Viewed as cold & clinical
- Practical music assessors were more empathetic/lenient during COVID-19 pandemic

Figure 12: High-level overview of online practical music assessments based on the findings of the current study

5.8 Integration of themes

It became evident that there was a significant mutual influence among the six themes. Figure 13 below depicts how the six themes are integrated and interconnected with each other, followed by a detailed discussion of how and in what way the themes influence each other.

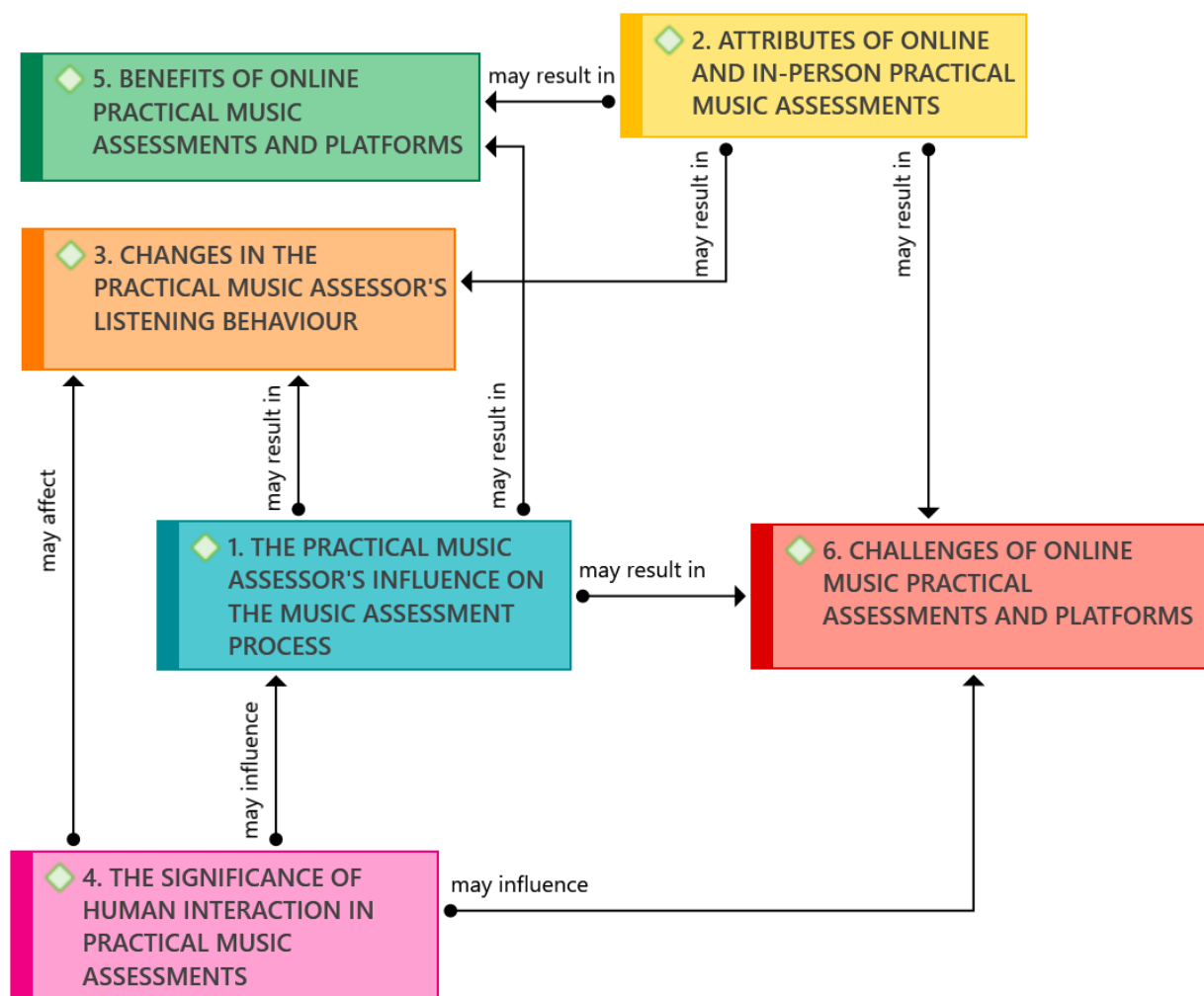


Figure 13: Integration of the six themes

The key findings of this study suggested that the practical music assessor has a significant influence over the music assessment process (Theme 1), which may result in changes to the practical music assessor's listening behaviour (Theme 3). The practical music assessor's attitude, anxiety (and control over this anxiety), experience, skills, bias, flexibility and assessment approach are influential factors in shaping their individual perception of online practical music

assessments and platforms as either beneficial or challenging, as reported in Theme 5 and Theme 6.

Findings illuminated that the attributes of online and in-person practical music assessments (Theme 2) differ and factors such as performing aspects (technique and music expression), the physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor, the sound quality and availability of resources play an important role in the success and reliability of online practical music assessments. These attributes may result in changes to the practical music assessor's listening behaviour (Theme 3). Favourable listening conditions where the sound is not compromised, and there is stable internet connection with minimal environmental disturbances may contribute towards, and result in, benefits of online practical music assessments (Theme 5). Conversely, if listening conditions are not ideal, this may contribute to and result in challenges for online practical music assessment and platforms (Theme 6).

Music expression, which forms part of the attributes of online and in-person practical music assessments (Theme 2) was reported as more difficult to see, hear and feel on the online music assessment platform. I contend that music expression is easier to convey when the performer and the practical music assessor are in the same room. Sharing the same performing space influenced the music assessor's level of focus and musical engagement, significantly impacting on how connected the practical music assessor felt to the performance. This changed the practical music assessor's listening behaviour (Theme 3) affecting the outcome which can be viewed as representing another challenge inherent in online music practical assessments and platforms (Theme 6).

The significance of human interaction in practical music assessments (Theme 4) brought about changes in the practical music assessor's listening behaviour (Theme 3) and may be central to the practical music assessor's influence on the assessment process (Theme 1) which may result in the online assessment and platform becoming a challenge (Theme 6). The study emphasised the importance of human interaction in practical music assessments and that the physical presence of the practical music assessor enhances the shared musical experience and connection between the practical music assessor and performer.

5.9 Limitations of this study

The findings of this study must be seen in the light of some limitations. Firstly, the study was confined to practical music assessments of only Western Art Music (WAM), as well as being limited to the traditional forms of WAM teaching and learning that takes place in music schools

(private or institutions), primary and secondary schools as well as conservatories at tertiary institutions. This may limit the generalisability of the findings to other genres or musics.

The introduction of online practical music assessments in South Africa is relatively recent, thus limiting the number of participants with extensive experience of online practical music assessment in all types of music assessment categories (music examinations, music eisteddfodau, music competitions, orchestral placements) and this could be viewed as a limitation. The perspectives and views shared by the practical music assessors in this study were confined to South Africa, and therefore may not be representative of all practical music assessment experiences in other countries which can be viewed as another limitation.

5.10 Implications and future research

There is limited scholarly research on the topic of practical music assessments in South Africa, and more specifically classical music performances that were assessed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The current literature deals with music teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, while this study will contribute to research on practical music assessments conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study's findings indicated the practical music assessor's influential role in music assessments, highlighting the specific attributes and qualities that practical music assessors should possess. This information could be beneficial to music examination bodies or music institutions and could be used to determine selection criteria to identify new music practical music assessors, or to form part of music assessor training and development. Furthermore, the study provided valuable information that can be utilised to enhance the existing online practical music assessment process and could lead to new online offerings. Music teachers and students can gain valuable insight into and knowledge about the assessment criteria and assessment approaches used by practical music assessors, which could lead to more effective teaching, improved assessment preparation and positive, more constructive assessment outcomes.

The implications of this study can inspire further research by delving deeper into the following aspects:

- To explore the in-person and online practical music assessment experiences of music teachers and students in relation to the student's motivation and self-esteem;
- To explore the enhancement, diversification and implementation of new online practical music assessment offerings in South Africa;
- To investigate music expression in an online practical music assessment environment;

- To investigate the influence of practical music assessments on current music teaching in South Africa;
- To explore and compare the online music practical assessment experiences of South African and international practical music assessors.

5.11 Answering the research question

The study aimed to investigate the following:

- To ascertain how eight South African practical music assessors described their experiences of assessing classical music performances during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- To identify and understand the similarities and differences between the in-person and online practical music assessment environments, to describe how the assessment approaches of classical performances differed or had to be adapted within the in-person and online practical music assessment environment; and
- To assess the sustainability of online practical music assessments in South Africa.

5.11.1 Practical music assessment experiences

Their assessment experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic included in-person practical music assessment with COVID-19 protocols in place. Secondly, the participants assessed online, live practical music assessments making use of a digital platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams to conduct music examinations, and lastly, they assessed music eisteddfodau, orchestra placements, high school matriculation subject music examinations, university music examinations and music competitions by means of pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions). It became evident that the practical music assessor has a significant influence on the assessment process and the success of that process. Extensive music skills and experience were needed; however, online platforms introduced an extra layer of technological intricacies that highlighted important attributes that the practical music assessor should possess. The ability to remain calm, flexible and adapt were requirements equally as important as assessment experience and skill. All the practical music assessors reported that the remote nature of online practical music assessments, the lack of human interaction and their physical presence affected their music assessment experience. They agreed that they were more empathetic and lenient towards students under such conditions; however, assessment criteria and assessment approaches remained the same in both practical music assessment environments.

5.11.2 Similarities and differences between in-person and online practical music assessments

Compromised sound quality and the physical presence or absence of the practical music assessor during the practical music assessment were the significant differences between the two music assessment environments. Sound was related to all assessment criteria and when it was compromised, the practical music assessor relied on sight. Technique was experienced the same in both assessment environments, but music expression was more difficult to hear, see and feel in the online music environment. The digital distance adds a layer of separation between the practical music assessor and performer that influenced the practical music assessor's listening behaviour and listening experience. Practical music assessors were less focused, less attentive and experienced challenges in remaining emotionally present during online practical music assessments. A notable difference between the in-person and online music assessment environments was the practical music assessor's ability to re-listen to pre-recorded practical music assessments and the performer's ability to refine performances by making multiple recordings before submitting it for assessment. The issue of the authenticity and fairness of pre-recorded music assessments was brought to the forefront, since in-person and live online practical music assessment students have only one opportunity to perform.

It was clear that the transition to an online platform, led to notable differences that affected the experiences of the practical music assessors during the online music assessment process. Successfully replicating the practical elements of a music performance on a digital platform, while upholding the integrity and authenticity of the music assessment is challenging and may affect the assessment outcomes.

5.11.3 Sustainability of online practical music assessments

The emergence of online practical music assessment had several benefits highlighted by my study which include increased accessibility, inclusivity, flexibility, convenience, cost-effective implications and higher rates of participation. Additionally, online practical music assessments simplified the logistical and administrative processes associated with in-person practical music assessment.

The biggest challenge that could affect the sustainability of online practical music assessments is compromised sound. Sound served as a fundamental aspect that interconnected all music assessment criteria and was at the heart of musical communication and expression. Sound was often compromised because of poor internet access, lack of resources, use of inadequate digital devices, inadequate instruments, and environmental disturbances. However, if these challenges

were addressed, online practical music offerings may expand to make online practical music assessment a sustainable and viable option in South Africa.

5.12 Recommended framework for online practical music assessment

By drawing on the insights of the literature reviewed and the findings in my study, I have concluded that key elements must align to arrive at an effective, fair and positive online practical music assessment experience that is equivalent to that of in-person practical music assessment. My recommendations are summarized in Figure 14, followed by a brief description that explains the framework.

RECOMMENDED FRAMEWORK FOR ONLINE PRACTICAL MUSIC ASSESSMENT

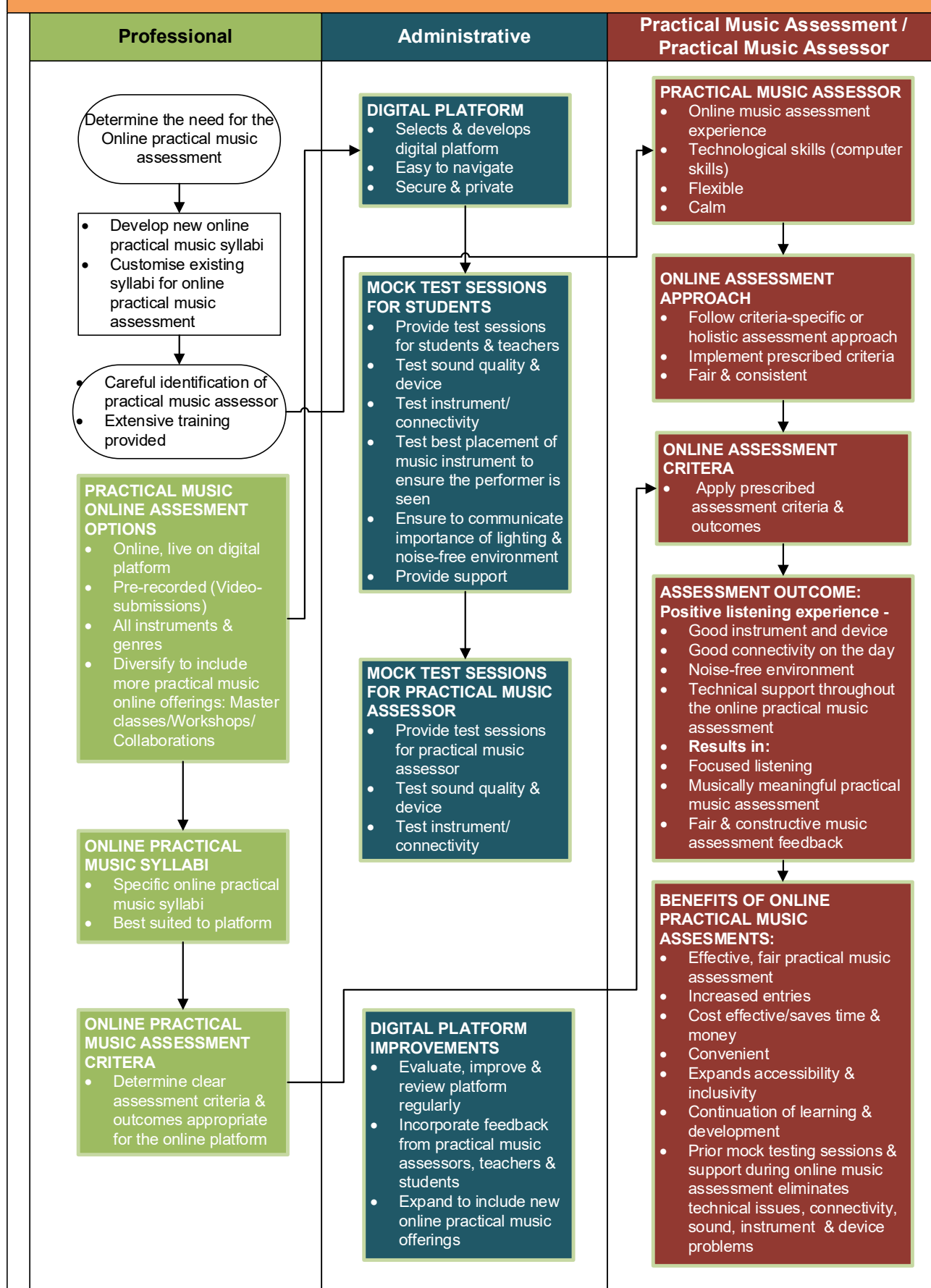


Figure 14: Recommended framework for online practical music assessments

Figure 14 highlight a recommended framework for online practical music assessments that is based on the literature review in Chapter Two and the findings of this study.

Three important role players in a music institution or music examination body are needed for the successful implementation of an online practical music assessment framework, namely the professional staff, the administrative staff and the practical music assessor who will conduct the music assessments. Professional staff are essential in identifying the need for online practical music assessment offerings. They provide academic oversight by developing new online practical music syllabi or customising the existing in-person music syllabi to suit the needs of a digital platform. They are intended to identify, train and equip practical music assessors to cope with the stressors created by online practical music assessments. A strong recommendation is that practical music assessors should have previous online practical music assessment experience and advanced technological skills, as well as personal attributes such as the ability to remain calm and flexible during technical difficulties, should they occur.

This framework should be supported with clear, realistic music assessment criteria and assessment outcomes that relate to the online practical music assessment syllabi. Another recommendation is the development of firm rules and regulations for online music assessment processes and procedures for students/teachers participating in online practical music assessments. This refers to all online assessment options, but specifically to pre-recorded practical music assessments (video submissions), and such rules will include no post-editing of videos, one simultaneous take with hands and posture clearly visible. Only two recording attempts will be permitted to ensure fairness and the student should complete and sign a declaration affirming that only two attempts were made. Other rules should encourage the use of a good instrument and assessment venue with good acoustics, limited noise and environmental disturbances to ensure the best video and sound recording quality. Students should commence their online practical music assessment by verifying their identification by introducing themselves, showing their birth certificate or identity document, student registration number and signed declaration at the beginning of the video.

Online practical music assessment options will be discussed in consultation with the professional, administrative and information and communications technology (ICT) staff. The ICT staff can advise on the best digital platform to implement practical music aspects, focusing on the primary importance of sound in practical music assessments. Recommended digital platforms should be private, secure, easy to navigate for administrative staff, practical music assessors, students and music teachers, and make provision for future improvements and

additions. Compulsory mock sessions for online music assessment testing for students and practical music assessors are strongly recommended. Mock test sessions will provide the opportunity to focus on the sound quality, internet connectivity, quality of the assessed music instrument, quality, and placement of digital device as well as the noise-levels and lighting of the assessment venue.

On the day of the online practical music assessment the administrative staff will lend technical support to both the practical music assessor and the student should the need arise. The practical music assessor should remain calm, flexible, and apply their assessment approaches together with the prescribed assessment criteria. The mock test sessions and the technical support provided during the online practical music assessment will result in good listening conditions, lead to a positive listening experience that will be focused, engaged and musically meaningful. This will culminate in fair and constructive music assessment feedback, which could maximize the benefits of online practical music assessments and optimize the use of the online music assessment platforms in South Africa.

5.13 Conclusion

As stated previously, the purpose of classical practical music assessment is to measure musical achievement, to learn, improve and refine areas of musical performance and to gain musical understanding. The outcome of a practical music assessment speaks to the level of performance quality and ability that may impact affectively on the student and influence their future learning experiences (Sadler, 2009:1). Practical music assessment serves as a platform for students to showcase their music talent and be validated by a music expert, someone other than their music teacher, as was my personal experience as a young child.

I would advocate that, where possible, traditional in-person practical music assessments should be encouraged as there are certain attributes of a live, in-person music performance, in front of an audience, that cannot be replicated online. However, I would also advocate for new digital technologies to be embraced, explored and improved on to simulate the characteristics of a live music performance so that greater accessibility and inclusivity can be achieved. The traditional music assessment platforms can be digitally transformed and enhanced to enable continuous learning and ongoing musical development across diverse and remote population groups. By acknowledging the limitations, addressing the challenges highlighted in this study and employing effective strategies to optimize the online practical music assessment environment and experience, a new era of digital practical music assessments awaits us, and the possibilities and opportunities are endless.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABRSM. 2020. Music Performance Grades. <https://hk.abrsm.org/media/64528/00-qualification-specification-music-performance-grades-290620.pdf> Date of access: 22 February 2022.

ABRSM. 2022. Our history. ABRSM: The beginning. <https://gb.abrsm.org/en/about-us/our-history/> Date of access: 03 March 2022

Abeles, H. 1973. Development and validation of a clarinet performance adjudication scale. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 21(3), 246-255.

Alharahsheh, S. T., & Pius, T. M., 2020. Exploring the impact of e-learning on teaching and learning in Jordanian universities: A qualitative study. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25(5), 3855-3877.

Alper, A., 2021. A Resource Recommendation for Improving Musical Expression and Narration in Piano Education: An Examination of Loeschhorn Op. 65 Etudes. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 16(5), pp.189-201.

Andriamasy, A., 2023. Music as an Universal Language for Peacebuilding: A Review of Counter-arguments. *Journal of Ethics in Higher Education*, (2), pp.45-67.

Antonini Philippe, R., Kosirnik, C., Ortuno, E. and Biasutti, M., 2022. Flow and music performance: professional musicians and music students' views. *Psychology of Music*, 50(4), pp.1023-1038.

Arshinova, I., 2022. Elements of piano education and the evolution of piano pedagogy. *Journal for the Interdisciplinary Art and Education*, 3(2), pp.81-97.

Atterbury Piano Competition. (2022). Atterbury Piano Competition <https://sasmt-savmo.co.za/?p=1768> Date of access: 03 March 2022

Asmus, E. P. 1999. Music Assessment Concepts. *Music Educators Journal*, September 1999, Vol. 86, No. 2, Special Focus: Assessment in Music Education (Sep.1999), pp. 19-24.

Auer, L. (1980). Violin Playing as I Teach It. Dover Publications.

Auslander, P., 2004. Performance analysis and popular music: A manifesto. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 14(1), pp.1-13.

Barry, N.H., 2009. Evaluating music performance: Politics, pitfalls, and successful practices. In *College Music Symposium*. Vol.49, 246-256. College Music Society.

Bergee, M.J., 2003. Faculty interjudge reliability of music performance evaluation. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 51(2), pp.137-150.

Berleant, A., 1999. Notes for a phenomenology of musical performance. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, pp.73-79.

Biasutti, M., 2018. Strategies adopted during collaborative online music composition. *International Journal of Music Education*, 36(3), pp.473-490.

Biasutti, M., Antonini Philippe, R. and Schiavio, A., 2022. Assessing teachers' perspectives on giving music lessons remotely during the COVID-19 lockdown period. *Musicae Scientiae*, 26(3), pp.585-603.

Biasutti, M., Antonini Philippe, R. and Schiavio, A., 2023. E-learning during the COVID-19 lockdown: An interview study with primary school music teachers in Italy. *International Journal of Music Education*, 41(2), pp.256-270.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3:2, 77-101, DOI: [10.1191/1478088706qp063oa](https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa)

Brinkman, S., & Kvale, S. 2008. Ethics in Qualitative Psychological Research. In: Willig, C. & Rogers, W.S., ed. 2017. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 2nd ed. London. SAGE Publication.

Brinkman, S. 2013. *Qualitative Interviewing: Understanding Qualitative Research*. 1st ed. United States of America. Oxford University Press.

Brophy, T.S., 2019. Assessment in music education: The state of the art.

Caelli, K., Ray, L. and Mill, J., 2003. 'Clear as mud': toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 2(2), pp.1-13.

Chiba, G., Ozaki, Y., Fujii, S. and Savage, P.E., 2021. Sight vs. sound in the judgment of music performance: Cross-cultural evidence from classical piano and Tsugaru shamisen competitions [Stage 1 Registered Report]. *Peer Community in Registered Reports*, 10.

Ciorba, C. & Smith, J. E. (2009). Measuring intonation accuracy in young musicians: Effects of test type and difficulty. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 57(1), 22-33.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. 2018. *Research Methods in Education*. 8th ed. London. Routledge.

Cornwall Hill College, Music Academy Website. 2023 <https://cornwall.co.za/music/>

Creswell, J. W. 1998. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among eight traditions*. London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3rd ed. London. SAGE Publication.

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. 2018. *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative & mixed methods approaches*. 5th ed. London. SAGE Publication.

Cupido, C., 2022, 'Music, emotion and imagery', in C. Cupido (ed.), *Music, Art and Emotion: Depictions of the Night Inspired by Romantic Art Song*, pp. 1–20, AOSIS Books, Cape Town. <https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2022>. BK 333.01

Davidson, J. W. 1993. Visual Perception of Performance Manner in the Movements of Solo Musicians. *Psychology of Music*, 21, pp. 103-113.

Davies, S., 1994. *Musical meaning and expression*. Cornell University Press.

Daubney, A., & Fautley, M. (2021). U-turns in the fog: the unfolding story of the impact of COVID-19 on music education in England and the UK. *British Journal of Music Education* (2021), 38, 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051721000048>

de Bruin, L. and Merrick, B., 2023. Creative pedagogies with technology: Future proofing teaching training in Music. In *Creative Provocations: Speculations on the Future of Creativity, Technology & Learning* (pp. 143-157). Cham: Springer International Publishing

- de Villiers, A.C., 2021. (Re) organizing the music curriculum as multicultural music education. *International Journal of Music Education*, 39(4), pp.383-393.
- Douglass, D., 2012. The violin: Technique and style. *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, pp.168-183.
- Dunn, A.L. and Moore, L.L., 2020. Significant Learning of Peer-Mentors within a Leadership Living-Learning Community: A Basic Qualitative Study. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 19(2).
- Elliott, D., 1987. Assessing musical performance. *British Journal of Music Education*, 4(2), pp.157-184.
- Ely, M., & Van Deuren, A.E. 2009. *Wind Talk for Brass: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching Brass Instruments*. United States of America. Oxford University Press.
- Fink, S. (1992). *Mastering Piano Technique: A Guide for Students, Teachers, and Performers*. Amadeus Press.
- Flesch, C. (1939). *The Art of Violin Playing*. C. Scribner's Sons.
- Flick, U. 2007. *Designing Qualitative Research*. 1st ed. London. SAGE Publication.
- Flôres Jr, R.G. and Ginsburgh, V.A., 1996. The Queen Elisabeth musical competition: How fair is the final ranking? *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series D (The Statistician)*, 45(1), pp.97-104.
- Forte International Music Competition and Festivals. 2022. Rules and regulations. <https://fortemusicart.org/competition/rules-and-regulations/#1596631877254-011c8d3f-9347>
Date of access: 01 March 2022
- Fulford, R., Ginsborg, J. and Goldbart, J., 2011. Learning not to listen: the experiences of musicians with hearing impairments. *Music Education Research*, 13(4), pp.447-464.
- Gabrielsson, A., 1999. Studying emotional expression in music performance. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, pp.47-53.
- Gavel, L., 2022. On Improving Piano Technique: Experiences reducing tension and discomfort applied to the Etudes Op. 10 by Frédéric Chopin.
- Gibbs, G. 2007. *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. 1st ed. London. SAGE Publication.

Godlovitch, S., 1998. *Musical performance: A philosophical study*. Routledge.

Goebel, W. (2017). Movement and touch in piano performance, In B. Muller & S. I. Wolf (Eds.

Goebel, W. and Palmer, C., 2013. Temporal control and hand movement efficiency in skilled music performance. *PloS one*, 8(1), p.e50901.

Goldin, C. & Rouse, C. (2000). Orchestrating impartiality: The impact of “blind” auditions on female musicians. *American Economic Review*, 90(4), 715-741.

Gracyk, T., 1997. Listening to music: Performances and recordings. *The Journal of aesthetics and art criticism*, 55(2), pp.139-150.

Gravett, S., & McNaught, C., 2021. Where to from here? In *Embedding Social Justice in Teacher Education and Development in Africa* (pp. 230-234). Routledge.

Griffiths, N. and Reay, J., 2018. The relative importance of aural and visual information in the evaluation by musicians and non-musicians of classical music performance. *Music Perception*, pp.364-375.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. ,1994. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*.

Güsewell, A. and Terrien, P., 2021. Professional music training in times of COVID-19: the impact of distance education on teaching methods and wellbeing at work. *Journal of music, health and Wellbeing*.

Gutsch, K.U., 1965. Evaluation in instrumental music performance: An individual approach. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, pp.21-29.

Hamann, D.L., 1982. An assessment of anxiety in instrumental and vocal performances. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 30(2), pp.77-90.

Hammersley, M. 2013. *What is qualitative research?* 1st ed. Great Britain. Bloomsbury Academic publishing.

Havas, K.,1981. A new approach to violin playing. Bosworth.

Heidon, T. M., & Arnold, D. H., 2021. Alternative Assessments in Music Education: Examining a Teacher's Perspective. In: *Research Studies in Music Education*, 43.

Holmes, A.G.D., 2020. Researcher Positionality--A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research--A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), pp.1-10.

Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music

Huiqi, Q. and Jia, L., 2023. Modern Piano Performance Technique and Aesthetic Research. *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture*, 33, pp.3383-3390.

Ibrahimov, T. and Al Bakri, T., 2020. The Importance of Proper Posture for Beginner Violinists. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 47(3).

Il Vento National Competition for Strings, Brass and Woodwinds. (2022). Il Vento National Competition for Strings, Brass and Woodwinds. <https://sasmt-savmo.co.za/?p=1768>
Date of access: 03 March 2023

Iusca, D., 2014. The effect of evaluation strategy and music performance presentation format on score variability of music students' performance assessment. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 127, pp.119-123.

Jaap, A. and Patrick, F., 2015. Teachers' concepts of musical talent and nurturing musical ability: music learning as exclusive or as opportunity for all?. *Music Education Research*, 17(3), pp.262-277.

Jacobs, G.S. 2010. *The viability of music as an academic subject at secondary school level*. Pretoria: University of South Africa. (Dissertation — MA).

James, B. 2018. Pianism: Performance Communication and the Playing Technique. *Frontiers in Psychology*, November 2018, Volume 9, Article 2125.

Jarvin, J., & Subotnik, R.F. 2010. *Wisdom from Conservatory Faculty: Insights on Success in Classical Music Performance*, *Roeper Review*, 32:2, 78-87, DOI: 10.1080/02783191003587868

Johansson, M. 2015. On the relationship between technique and style: the case of the violin, *Music Education Research*, 17:2, 127-140, DOI: 10.1080/14613808.2014.930114

Johnson, C.M., 1996. Musicians' and nonmusicians' assessment of perceived rubato in musical performance. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 44(1), pp.84-96.

Johnson, P. 1997. Performance as experience: the problem of assessment criteria. *British Journal of Music Education*, 14(3), 271-282.

Jones, B., ed. 1999. *The Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music*. 1st ed. New York. Routledge

Joseph, D. and Lennox, L., 2021. Twists, turns and thrills during COVID-19: music teaching and practice in Australia. *Music Education Research*, 23(2), pp.241-255.

Juslin, P. N. (1997). Emotional communication in music performance: A functionalist perspective and some data. *Music Perception*, 14(4), 383-418.

Juslin, P. N. (2003). Five facets of musical expression: A psychologist's perspective on music performance. *Psychology of Music*, 31(3), 273-302.

Juslin, P.N. and Lindström, E., 2010. Musical expression of emotions: Modelling listeners' judgements of composed and performed features. *Music Analysis*, 29(1-3), pp.334-364.

Juslin, P.N., Barradas, G. and Eerola, T., 2015. From sound to significance: Exploring the mechanisms underlying emotional reactions to music. *The American journal of psychology*, 128(3), pp.281-304.

Juslin, P.N., Ingmar, E. & Danielsson, J., 2021. Aesthetic judgments of music: Reliability, consistency, criteria, self-insight, and expertise. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/aca0000403>

Kennedy, D.M. and Lautenbach, G., 2021. A pragmatic approach to assessment in a time of crisis in South Africa. In *Embedding Social Justice in Teacher Education and Development in Africa* (pp. 217-229). Routledge.

Kenny, D.T., 2004, July. Treatment approaches for music performance anxiety: what works. In *Music Forum* (Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 38-43).

Kidd III, R.L., 1975. *The construction and validation of a scale of trombone performance skills*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Kim, H., Ramoneda, P., Miron, M. and Serra, X., 2022. An overview of automatic piano performance assessment within the music education context.

Kinney, D.W., 2009. Internal consistency of performance evaluations as a function of music expertise and excerpt familiarity. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 56(4), pp.322-337.

Krause, A.E. and Davidson, J.W., 2021. A qualitative exploration of aged-care residents' everyday music listening practices and how these may support psychosocial well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, p.585557.

Lamb, N., & Cook, S. 2002. *Guide to teaching strings*. 7th ed. United States of America. McGraw-Hill.

Last, J. (1980). The role of technique in musical performance. *British Journal of Music Education*, 7(1), 9.

Laukka, P., 2004. Instrumental music teachers' views on expressivity: a report from music conservatoires. *Music Education Research*, 6(1), pp.45-56.

Leavy, P. 2017. *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. 1st ed. United States of America. The Guildford Press.

LeBlanc, A., 2021. A theory of music performance anxiety. *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 16(5), p.34.

Lee, H.A., 2003. *Towards a dynamic pedagogy: Contemporary pedagogical approaches to basic violin technique*. University of Washington.

Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2015). *Practical research: Planning and design* (11th ed.). Pearson.

Lehmann, A.C., 1997. The acquisition of expertise in music: Efficiency of deliberate practice as a moderating variable in accounting for sub-expert performance. *Perception and cognition of music*, 1, pp.161-187.

Leimer-Giesecking. (1938). Piano technique. Dover Publications

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. 1986. But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. In: Williams, D.D., ed. Naturalistic evaluation (pp. 73-84). New Directions for Program Evaluation, No. 30. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Majola, M.X. and Mudau, P.K., 2022. Lecturers' Experiences of Administering Online Examinations at a South African Open Distance E-Learning University during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 8(2), pp.275-283.

Maré, S. 2020. Lockdown: Bethlehem Eisteddfod 2020 goes digital.

<https://www.thesouthafrican.com/lifestyle/lockdown-bethlehem-eisteddfod-2020-goes-digital/>

Date of access: 25 February 2022

Mathiba, G. 2020. COVID-19 and South African universities: A raft of problems to ponder.

Daily Maverick, 09 April. [https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2020-04-09-COVID-19-](https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2020-04-09-COVID-19-and-south-african-universities-a-raft-of-problems-to-ponder/)

[and-south-african-universities-a-raft-of-problems-to-ponder/](https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2020-04-09-COVID-19-and-south-african-universities-a-raft-of-problems-to-ponder/) Date of access: 14 February 2022

Maxwell, J.A. 2013. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication.

McCormick, L. (2006) 'Music as Social Performance', in R. Eyerman and L. McCormick (eds), *Myth, Meaning, and Performance: Toward a New Cultural Sociology of the Arts*, pp. 121–44. Boulder and London: Paradigm.

MacDonald, R., 2021. The social functions of music. *Routledge international handbook of music psychology in education and the community*, pp.5-20.

McPherson, G.E., & Thompson, W.F., 1998. Assessing music performance: Issues and influences. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 10(1), pp.12-24.

McPherson, G.E. and Schubert, E., 2004. Measuring performance enhancement in music. *Musical excellence: Strategies and techniques to enhance performance*, 4, pp.61-82.

Mehr, S.A., Scannell, D.A. and Winner, E., 2018. Sight-over-sound judgments of music performances are replicable effects with limited interpretability. *Plos one*, 13(9), p.e0202075.

Merriam, S.B. 2002. *Qualitative research in practice*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S.B., & Tisdell, E.J. 2016. *Qualitative research a guide to design and implementation*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mills, J., 1987. Assessment of solo musical performance-a preliminary study. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, pp.119-125.

Mills, J. 1991. Assessing musical performance musically. *Educational Studies*, 17(2), pp. 173-181.

Mkhize, N., Ndimande-Hlongwa, N., Ramrathan, L. and Smit, J.A., 2020. Teaching and learning in higher education in the time of COVID-19. *Alternation African Scholarship Book Series (AASBS)*, p.1.

Morse, J.M., 1991. Strategies for sampling. *Qualitative nursing research: A contemporary dialogue*.

Motala, S., & Menon, K., 2020. In search of the 'new normal': Reflections on teaching and learning during COVID-19 in a South African university. *Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production*, 26(1), pp.80-99.

Mustul, Ö. and Aksoy, Y., 2023. Opinions of lecturers in music education department about assessment and evaluation of the violin and viola exams. *Rast Müzikoloji Dergisi*, 11(2), pp.289-307.

National Association of Teachers for singing (NATS), 54th NATS National Conference, The Art of Being a Great Adjudicator, July 10, 2016
<https://nats.sclivelearningcenter.com/MVSite/MVVideo.aspx?SessionID=219486&presentationID=106772>

National SASMT Pretoria Ensemble Competition (NSPEC). (2023)
<https://sasmt-savmo.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2023-NSPEC-RulesRegulations.pdf>
Date of access: 03 March 2023

National Youth Music Competition. (2022). <https://www.nymc.co.za/competition-information.php> Date of access: 03 March 2023

(No author) SA news, 2020. President Ramaphosa announces a nationwide lockdown. *South African Government News Agency*, 23 March. <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/president-ramaphosa-announces-nationwide-lockdown> Date of access: 07 February 2022.

Nelson, S., 1994. *Twentieth-century violin technique: The contributions of six major pedagogues*. University of South Carolina.

Newsome, E. 2015. A Search for Balance: The Development of a Performance Assessment Form for Classical Instrumental Music in the Tertiary Context. In: Lebler, D., Carey, G. & Harrison, S.D., eds. *Assessment in Music Education: from Policy to Practice*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 153-170.

Nevill, A.M. and Holder, R.L., 1999. Home advantage in sport: An overview of studies on the advantage of playing at home. *Sports Medicine*, 28, pp.221-236.

Nielson, L.E. and Rosfeld, M., 2010. Technique and Musicality: the indispensable and eloquent duo. *Clavier Companion*, 2(5), pp.22-27.

North-West University, 2019. *BaSSREC Ethics application checklist and short form*. Checklist to guide researchers and scientific committees on recommendations for full ethics review <https://humanities.nwu.ac.za/basic-and-social-sciences-research-ethics-committee-bassrec> Date of access: 12 March 2022

Parkes, K.A., 2010. Performance Assessment: Lessons from Performers. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 22(1), pp.98-106.

Paschal, M.J., & Mkulu, D.G., 2020. Online classes during COVID-19 pandemic in higher learning institutions in Africa.

Paterson, A., Vally, Z., Keevy, J. & Osman, A. 2021. An Early Research Response to the Impact of COVID-19 on South Africa's Education System. In: *Learning and 'Building Back Better*. Keevy, J., Vally, Z., Paterson, A., Janda, M. & Osma, A. pp. 3-21. Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021

Patton, M.Q. 2015. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation methods*. 4th ed. United States of America. SAGE Publication.

Pitts, S.E., 2005. What makes an audience? Investigating the roles and experiences of listeners at a chamber music festival. *Music and letters*, 86(2), pp.257-269.

Pretoria Eisteddfod. (2023). Pretoria Eisteddfod <https://www.pretoriaeisteddfod.co.za/>
Date of access: 03 March 2023

Riman, M.S. and Rauf, R.M.U., (2022) Analysis of Breathing Techniques in Flute Playing.

Rink, J., 2018. The work of the performer. *Virtual Works Actual Things*, p.89.

Ritchie, L. and Sharpe, B.T., 2021. Music student's approach to the forced use of remote performance assessments. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, p.641667.

Rolland, P. (1979). The Teaching of Action in String Playing. In *Musicians on Music: For Piano and Violin* (pp. 120-130). University of California Press.

Ross, V. 2009. External music examiners: micro–macro tasks in quality assurance practices, *Music Education Research*, 11:4, 473-484.

SABC News. 2020. Universities, TVET colleges to shut down: Nzimande.
<https://www.sabcnews.com/universities-tvet-colleges-to-shut-down-nzimande/> Date of access:
24 February 2022

Sadler, D. R. 2009. Indeterminacy in the use of pre-set criteria for assessment and grading in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34, 159-179.

Sadler, D.R. 2015. Backwards Assessment Explanations: Implications for Teaching and Assessment Practice. In: Lebler, D., Carey, G. and Harrison, S.D., eds. *Assessment in Music Education: from Policy to Practice*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 9-19.

Salaman, W. 1994. The role of graded examinations in music, *British Journal of Music Education*, 11 (3), pp. 209-221

Salmon, P. (1990) Music Performance Anxiety and Its Relationship to Various Aspects of Perfectionism. In: *Psychological Reports*, 67(3), pp. 1059-1069.

Sandelowski, M., 2000. Whatever happened to qualitative description?. *Research in nursing & health*, 23(4), pp.334-340.

Saunders, T.C. & Holahan, J.M., 1997. Criteria-specific rating scales in the evaluation of high school instrumental performance. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 45(2), pp.259-272.

Saldaña, J. 2016. *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication.

Schubert, E., 2009. The fundamental function of music. *Musicae Scientiae*, 13(2_suppl), pp.63-81.

Schumann, R. 1876. *Music and Musicians: essays and criticisms*. Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/musicmusicianse00schu/page/146/mode/2up> Date of access: 14 February 2022.

Shepard, L.A., 2000. The role of assessment in a learning culture. *Educational researcher*, 29(7), pp.4-14.

Shenoy, V., Mahendra, S., & Vijay, N. (2020). COVID 19 lockdown technology adaption, teaching, learning, students engagement and faculty experience. *Mukt Shabd Journal*, 9(4), 698-702.

Shih, Y.J., 2018. *Evaluation of Music Performance: Computerized Assessment Versus Human Judges* (Doctoral dissertation).

Shoda, H., & Adachi M. (2012). *Effects of the listening context on the audience's perceptions of artistry, expressiveness, and affective qualities in the piano performance*. In: Cambouropoulos E, Tsougras C, Marvromatis P, Pasteris K, eds. *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition and the 8th Triennial Conference of the European Society for Cognitive Sciences of Music*, 2012. pp. 925-929.

Shoda, H. and Adachi, M., 2015. Why live recording sounds better: a case study of Schumann's *Träumerei*. *Frontiers in psychology*, 5, p.1564.

Shoda, H., Adachi, M., & Umeda, Y. (2016). The influence of listening condition on the evaluation of musical performance. *PloS One*, 11(11), e0166147.

Siddell-Strebel, J., 2007. The effects of non-musical components on the ratings of performance quality.

Sloboda, J. 2000. Individual differences in music performance. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* – Vol. 4, No. 10, October 2000, pp. 397-403.

Small, C. 1999. Musicking—the meanings of performing and listening. A lecture. *Music education research*, 1(1), pp.9-22.

South African College High School (SACS), 2023. <https://sacshigh.org.za/cultural/clubs-societies/music/> Date of access: 03 March 2023

Southcott, J. (2017). Examining Australia: The Activities of Four Examiners of the Associated Board for the Royal Schools of Music in 1923. *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, Vol. 39 (1): 51-77

Stanley, M., Brooker, R., & Gilbert, R. 2002. Examiner Perceptions of Using Criteria in Music Performance Assessment. *Research Studies in Music Education*, Number 18, 2002, pp. 46-56.

Stellenbosch Eisteddfod, 2021. <https://stellenboscheisteddfod.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Video-and-Presentation-Upload-Instructions.pdf>. Date of access: 25 February 2022

Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival. (2022). About Us. Retrieved from <https://sicmf.co.za/about-us/> Date of access: 03 March 2023

Swarbrick, D., Bosnyak, D., Livingstone, S.R., Bansal, J., Marsh-Rollo, S., Woolhouse, M.H. and Trainor, L.J., 2019. How live music moves us: head movement differences in audiences to live versus recorded music. *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, p.2682.

Swanwick, K. 1998. The perils and possibilities of assessment. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 10, 1-11.

Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. 2015. Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and management. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, 68 (3): 226.

Taborsky, E. (2007) Music Performance Anxiety: A Review of the Literature. In: *Music Educators Journal*, 93(1), pp. 15-20.

The World Federation of International Music Competitions (WFIMC), 2023. <https://www.wfimc.org/federation> Date of access: 03 March 2023

Thompson, S., & Williamon, A. (2003). Evaluating evaluation: Musical performance assessment as a research tool. *Music Perception*, 21(1), 21-41.

Tracy, S. 2020. *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. 2nd ed. United States of America. John Wiley & Sons.

Training and Resources Ethics Evaluation (TREEE) Ethics online training course, 2023.

[TRREE: About TRREE https://elearning.trree.org/mod/page/view.php?id=70](https://elearning.trree.org/mod/page/view.php?id=70)

Date of access: 31 May 2023

Trinity College of London (TLC), 2020 [Music Examiner Role description.docx \(trinitycollege.com\)](#) Date of access: 13 August 2023

Trinity College London (TCL), 2022. Digital grades and diplomas.

<https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/digital/digital-grades-diplomas/record>. Date of access: 25 February 2022

Tsay, C. J. 2013. Sight over sound in the judgment of music performance. *Psychological and Cognitive Sciences*, 3 September 2013, Vol.110, no.36, pp. 14580-14585.

Tygerberg International Eisteddfod. 2021. <http://virtual.tygerbergeisteddfod.co.za/> Date of access: 03 March 2022

Tygerberg International Eisteddfod, 2022. <https://tygerbergeisteddfod.co.za/wp-content/uploads/GENERAL-INFORMATION-1.pdf> Date of access: 03 March 2022

Tygerberg International Eisteddfod, 2023. <https://tygerbergeisteddfod.co.za/wp-content/uploads/TIE-2023-General-Information.pdf> Date of access: 03 March 2023

UNISA, Directorate Music, 2020. Online Practical Examination Guidelines and Requirements. (n.d.).

https://www.unisa.ac.za/static/corporate_web/Content/About/Directorate%20Music/Documents/Online%20Practical%20Examinations%20-%20Complete.pdf. Date of access: 24 February 2022

UNISA National Music Piano Competition, 2023.

https://www.unisa.ac.za/static/corporate_web/Content/About/Unisa%20Music%20Foundation/Documents/Brochure%20Unisa%20Piano%20Competition%202023.pdf

Date of access: 03 March 2023

UNISA, Directorate Music. <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/Human-Sciences/Schools,-departments,-centres,-institutes-&-units/School-of-Arts/Music/Directorate-Music> Date of access: 03 March 2023

United Nations. 2020. Policy brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond. August 2020.

[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_COVID-](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_COVID-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf)

[19_and_education_august_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_COVID-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf) Date of access: 22 February 2022

University of Pretoria, College of Humanities, <https://www.up.ac.za/yearbooks/2023/HUM-faculty/UD-programmes/view/01132003> Date of access: 03 March 2023

University of Pretoria, School of the Arts,

https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/754/2019/documents/2020-hum_uq-final.zp176067.pdf

Date of access: 03 March 2023

Vaisberg, J.M., Martindale, A.T., Folkeard, P. and Benedict, C., 2019. A qualitative study of the effects of hearing loss and hearing aid use on music perception in performing musicians. *Journal of the American Academy of Audiology*, 30(10), pp.856-870.

van Dyk, L. 2016. *The enduring presence of Trinity College London in music in Johannesburg: a case study*. Potchefstroom: North-West University. (Dissertation – MA).

Váradi, J., Józsa, G., Fodor, A.S., Molnár-Tamus, V. and Szűcs, T., 2023. Investigating music teachers' ICT skills and technical possibilities in the field of online music education during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Heliyon*.

Victoria K Bennett Music Competition. (2022). Victoria K Bennett Music Competition.

https://www.vkbmusic.co.za/http://victoriakbennett.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Victoria-K-Bennett_Rules_2023-2.pdf Date of access: 03 March 2023

Vines, B.W., Krumhansl, C.L., Wanderley, M.M. and Levitin, D.J., 2006. Cross-modal interactions in the perception of musical performance. *Cognition*, 101(1), pp.80-113.

Vines, B.W., Krumhansl, C.L., Wanderley, M.M., Dalca, I.M. and Levitin, D.J., 2010. Music to my eyes: Cross-modal interactions in the perception of emotions in musical performance. *Cognition*, 118(2), pp.157-170.

Voices of South Africa National Opera Singing Competition, 2020.

<https://www.voicesofsouthafrica.org/application> Date of access: 03 March 2022

Waddell, G., Perkins, R. and Williamon, A., 2019. The Evaluation Simulator: a new approach to training music performance assessment. *Frontiers in psychology*, 10, p.557.

Wapnick, J., Darrow, A.A., Kovacs, J. and Dalrymple, L., 1997. Effects of physical attractiveness on evaluation of vocal performance. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 45(3), pp.470-479.

Wesolowski, B.C. 2012. Understanding and developing Rubrics for Music Performance Assessment. *Music Educators Journal*, March 2012, Vol. 98, No. 3, pp. 36-42.

Western Cape VIRTUAL Eisteddfod (WCVE), 2022.

<https://sites.google.com/rjjs.org.za/wcve/home> Date of access: 25 February 2022

Williamon, A., 1999. The value of performing from memory. *Psychology of Music*, 27(1), pp.84-95.

Williamon, A. ed., 2004. *Musical excellence: Strategies and techniques to enhance performance*. Oxford University Press.

Wiles, R. 2013. *What are qualitative research ethics?* 1st ed. Great Britain. Bloomsbury Academic Publishing.

Winter, N. 1993. Music performance assessment: A study of the effects of training and experience on the criteria used by music examiners. *International Journal of Music Education*, 22, 34-39.

Yin, R.K. 2016. *Qualitative Research: From start to finish*. 2nd ed. United States of America. The Guildford Press.

Zdzinski, S. 1991. Measurement of Solo Instrumental Music Performance: A Review of Literature: Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, Summer, 1991, No. 109 (Summer, 1991), pp. 47-58

Zdzinski, S.F. & Barnes, G.V., 2002. Development and validation of a string performance rating scale. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 50(3), pp.245-255.

Zentner, M 2010, 'Homer's prophecy: An essay on music's primary emotions', *Music Analysis*, vol. 29, no. 1/3, pp. 102–125.

Zhukov, K. 2015. Challenging Approaches to Assessment of Instrumental Learning. In: Lebler, D., Carey, G. and Harrison, S.D., eds. *Assessment in Music Education: from Policy to Practice*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 55-70.

Yadigaroglu, Z., 2021. Examination of Music Teacher Candidates' Opinions Regarding Distance Teaching Practice Course during the Pandemic. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 9(4), pp.419-432.

APPENDIX A: INTERMEDIARY SCRIPT

Dear _____

My name is _____ and I have been asked to contact you on behalf of Mrs Collette Isaacs. She is currently registered for the Master of Music in Musicology at North-West University and would like to know if you would consent to form part of her research study. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may decline, or withdraw from the study at any time. Would you like to hear more about the study?

(If they decline, thank them, and say goodbye – only proceed if they would like more information.)

The research topic is 'Exploring the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic'. You have been identified as a prospective participant based on your involvement as a music educator and performer, your experience as a practical music assessor in in-person and online environments as well as your qualifications.

This study is an investigation of the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic and will involve the use of semi-structured interviews over a period of 8 to 10 weeks. Follow-up interviews will be arranged, to check if your answers have been captured correctly. These interviews will take place in-person, or via Zoom or Microsoft Teams at a day and time that suits you. Approximately 8 participants will be included in this study. You will remain completely anonymous, and your information will be protected.

Should you agree, I will send you an information sheet via e-mail, and you can take up to two weeks to decide if you are willing to participate. Once again, you can say no and there is no pressure to participate. If you proceed with the study and would like to withdraw, that is allowed as well. If you do agree, please do so by responding to my e-mail and I will inform Mrs Isaacs. Once we have your initial consent, Mrs Isaacs will personally contact you by telephone to explain the NWU participation leaflet and consent form. Once everything has been explained, you will be required to sign the Informed Consent Form before the commencement of the study.

Thank you for your time.

Intermediary

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET

(Issued by the intermediary)

Title of the study:

Exploring the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic

Name of researcher:

Mrs Collette Isaacs

Purpose of the Study:

As part of the requirements for the Master of Music in Musicology at North-West University, Mrs Isaacs has to carry out a research study. The study will explore the assessment experiences, in-person and online, of eight South African practical music practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What will the study involve?

The study will involve one-on-one interviews, and follow-up interviews, spanning over a period of eight to ten weeks. These interviews will be scheduled in-person or via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, at a convenient time that suits your professional and personal schedule. A set of questions and follow-up questions dealing with your music assessment experiences, will be asked, recorded, and transcribed. If necessary, a follow-up interview will be scheduled. Transcriptions of the interviews will be shared with the participants, to confirm that your answers have been captured correctly.

Why have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked because you are a professional music educator or music performer who is formally trained in Western Art Music, with the necessary skillset and experience to assess classical performances that include music examinations, music eisteddfodau and music competitions, in in-person and online assessment environments.

Do you I have to participate?

The answer is no! – participation is completely voluntary. Participants may decline to participate or withdraw from the study, at any time. You may retain their anonymity if you do not wish to participate. Participants will be given 2 weeks to indicate whether they are willing to participate.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. The researcher will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. Pseudonyms will be assigned to research participants to protect their privacy.

What will happen to the results?

The results will be presented in a thesis which will be published on the NWU repository and a journal article. Raw data and voice recordings will be stored for five years in a password-protected cloud storage for safekeeping; after five years of storage, the data will be permanently deleted.

What are the possible risks?

Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted, but the researcher will still apply strict Covid-19 protocol. Comfort breaks of ten minutes will be given, to avoid tiredness. Interview slots will be assigned according to the participants availability to avoid infringing on other personal or professional commitments.

What are the benefits?

Should you participate, valuable empirical data will be collected that can benefit music examination bodies, music institutions, teachers, and students. The findings of the study could be utilised to improve the existing in-person and online music assessments, implement new type of online offerings, and impart knowledge, from the perspective of the assessor, regarding the processes and expectations of music assessments, in general.

Will I be compensated?

No compensation will be received, but participants will not incur any expenses. Data bundles will be provided if internet access is a concern; in-person interviews will be held at a place of their choosing to minimize costs.

Who has reviewed this study?

The MASARA Research Committee and the Research Ethics Committee of North-West University have approved the research study.

Any further queries?

If you need any further information, you can contact me: *(Provide intermediary's details):*

Name & Surname: _____

E-mail address: _____

Cell Number: _____

APPENDIX C: PROCESS TO GAIN INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent must be given freely, without coercion, and must be based on a clear understanding of what their participation involves. Below is the step-by-step process of gaining informed consent:

Step 1: After the recruitment process was followed, the researcher will e-mail the NWU participant information leaflet and consent form to the participants. To avoid undue pressure, participants will be given a week to carefully read the document. The researcher will schedule a telephonic appointment with the participant, at a time that suits them.

Step 2: After a week, the researcher will telephone the participants, explaining the consent form in more detail highlighting the following:

- What the study is about and how they could benefit by participating in the study.
- Why and how they have been selected to participate in the study.
- Provide a detailed timeline explaining the expected duration of the participant's participation as well as their responsibilities during the study.
- Explain that the interviews will be recorded but they will remain anonymous throughout the study; strict procedures, in line with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), will be observed to protect their identity and privacy.
- Personal information collected will include mainly their music assessment background and experience, qualifications, race, age, and gender; this information will be protected by making use of pseudonyms.
- Explain the possible risks which include that lengthy interview sessions, loadshedding and exposure of Covid-19; to mitigate the risks, comfort breaks will be allocated, and Covid-19 protocol will be observed to safeguard all participants; if loadshedding should impact the scheduled interviews, interviews will be re-scheduled.
- Only the researcher will have access to the data; a transcriber or coder will not be used.
- Raw data and voice recordings will be stored for five years in a password-protected cloud storage for safekeeping; after five years of storage, the data will be permanently deleted.
- No compensation will be received, but participants will not incur any expenses.
- Data bundles will be provided if internet access is a concern; in-person interviews will be held at a place of their choosing to minimize costs.

- The research findings will be published in the form of a thesis on the NWU repository and a journal article.
- Participants should feel free to ask questions throughout the research process and my contact details will be provided.

Step 3: After the NWU participant information leaflet and consent form, have been explained in detail, and the participant agrees to participate, the form is signed by the researcher, participant, and witnesses. Should the participant, at any time, have any concerns or complaints which are not adequately addressed, they may contact the supervisor, Prof Conroy Cupido at conroy.cupido@nwu.ac.za or 018 299 1697 and/or the chair of the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Prof Erharbor Idemudia) at 018 389 2899 or Erharbor.Idemudia@nwu.ac.za

Step 4: A copy of the signed NWU participant information leaflet and consent form is e-mailed to the participants for their own records.

Step 5: One-on-one interviews, and follow-up interviews, spanning over a period of eight to ten weeks, in-person or via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, will be scheduled, at a time that best suits their professional and personal schedules.

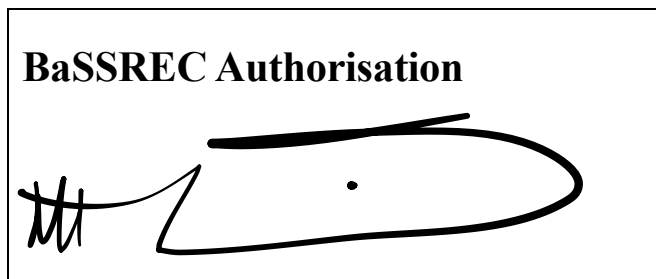
As primary researcher, I will carefully monitor my biases, my beliefs and relationship with the participants. By means of a continual internal dialogue throughout the research process and critical self-evaluation of my positionality, I will take responsibility for the impact, I might have on the research and the participants.

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM



Basic Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC)

DATE: 23 August 2022



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

Title of the research project	Exploring the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic
Ethics number	NWU-00990-22-A7
Principal investigator	Mrs Collette Isaacs
Student number	44557132
Address	[REDACTED]
Email address	[REDACTED]
Contact number	[REDACTED]

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my **Master of Music in Musicology** degree. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary**, and you are free to decline to participate. If you say

no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part. Prior to publication of the study's results (or the point that publication is in process), you may also withdraw the data you generate.

This study has been approved by the **Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) of the Faculty of Humanities of the North-West University (NWU – 00990-22-A7)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (2010) and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records to make sure that we (the researchers) are conducting research in an ethical manner.

What is this research study all about?

- This study is an investigation of the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic and will involve the use of semi-structured interviews as part of a basic qualitative study.
- The researcher has been trained to use the above-mentioned methods.
- Approximately 8 participants will be included in this study.
- The objectives of this research are:
 - To explore the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic

Why have you been invited to participate?

- You have been invited to participate because you are a South African practical music assessor who have experience to assess classical performances that include music examinations, music eisteddfodau and music competitions, in in-person and online assessment environments during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- You have also complied with the following inclusion criteria: You are professional music educators or music performers who are formally trained in Western Art Music, with the necessary skillset and experience to assess classical performances that include music examinations, music eisteddfodau and music competitions, in in-person and online assessment environments
- You will be excluded if you do not have the necessary skillset and experience to assess classical performances that include music examinations, music eisteddfodau and music competitions, in in-person and online assessment environments.

What will your responsibilities be?

- You will be invited to participate in the noted study by means of an assigned intermediary. The intermediary will contact the participants by means of an initial telephone call, where a brief explanation of the study and their role in the study, should they choose to participate, will be given. One-on-one interviews spanning over a period of

8 to 10 weeks, on either via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, will be conducted once consent is given.

- You will have 2 weeks to indicate whether you would be willing to participate.
- You will be requested to sign this Informed Consent Statement before the commencement of the study.

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- The direct benefit for you as a participant is to gain more insight and a deeper understanding of how you and other practical music assessors adjudicated performances during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The indirect benefit will probably be that through your participation in the study that valuable empirical data will be collected that can benefit music examination bodies, music institutions, teachers, and students. The findings of the study could be utilised to improve the existing in-person and online music assessments, implement new type of online offerings, and impart knowledge, from the perspective of the assessor, regarding the processes and expectations of music assessments, in general.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research and how will these be managed?

The possible risks in this study, and how these will be managed, are summarised in the table below:

Possible risk	Mitigation strategy
COVID 19 risk during face-to-face interviews.	Due to the potential of Covid-19 infection, online interviews will be held on Zoom or Microsoft Teams.
Tiredness and discomfort.	Comfort breaks of 10 minutes.

- *However, we do believe that the benefits to you and to science (as noted in the previous section) outweigh the risks we have listed. If you disagree, then please feel free not to participate in this study. We will respect your decision.*

Who will have access to the data?

The following procedures will be observed in line with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA):

Principle	How will this be done?	When will this be done?
Anonymity	Anonymity will be ensured by choosing fictitious names. The researcher (Collette Isaacs) will assign a fictitious name/code to you before the interview starts. Only this name will be used in the research process.	Before the interview commence.
Confidentiality	Confidentiality will include the use of pseudonyms/codes) for participants,	During the recruitment process.

	organisations and locations. It involves not disclosing any information gained from an interviewee deliberately or accidentally in ways that might identify an individual, organisation and location.	Before the fieldwork commences. During the fieldwork. After the fieldwork has been completed During analysis and the write-up of findings. During the reporting of findings. During the publication of findings in the form of articles, books, conference proceedings, etc.
De-identification of data	All identifiable personal information will be de-identified to ensure that no information identifies any participants, organisations and locations.	After the fieldwork has been completed. After you, as participant, has signed-off on the interview transcripts/responses/any other relevant information sent to you to check. Before data analysis and the write-up of findings start.
Data storage	All data collected for the purpose of the research will be stored safely in electronic format/hardcopy format for a period of five years after which it will be destroyed. The primary investigator will ensure data that both hard-(printed) and soft copy (electronic) are safely locked away and password-protected, respectively. Only approved people in my research team (<i>if applicable</i>) will/may have access to my raw data where the need arises. At the analysis stage, as will be the case throughout, the use of coding will reinforce participants' non-identification, hence upholding the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.	During the recruitment process. Before the fieldwork commences. During the fieldwork. After the fieldwork has been completed During analysis and the write-up of findings. During the reporting of findings. During the publication of findings in the form of articles, books, conference proceedings, etc.
Privacy	<i>Privacy</i> will be ensured by not probing unnecessarily if you do not wish to discuss particular matters.	During the fieldwork. During follow-up fieldwork.
Transcription/coding of data	I will not use a <i>transcriber</i> for the purpose of the transcripts after the interview. I will not use a <i>statistician/coder</i> for the purpose of the transcripts after the interview.	<i>If the primary investigator is responsible for transcribing/coding the data:</i> The primary investigator will be responsible for transcribing the data.

		Therefore, no other person will have access to the data. The primary investigator will be required to sign a NWU Confidentiality Agreement before the study commences.
Translation/interpreter services	I will not use a <i>translator/interpreter</i> for the purpose of the interviews/explaining the informed consent, etc.	This person will be required to sign a NWU Confidentiality Agreement and will not be permitted to share any information relating to the study with anyone else.

Collection of only relevant personal information:

Collection of only relevant personal information	I, the principal investigator and members of the research team (if applicable), will only collect personal biographical and opinion-related data about the topic I/we are studying.	Personal information entails: Music Assessment experience Qualifications Race, age and gender
--	---	--

What will happen to the data?

The data from this study will be reported in a findings chapter in my final MMus thesis. In all of this reporting, you will not be personally identified. This means that the reporting will not include your name or details that will help others to know that you participated.

This is a once-off study, but the data may be re-used for a research article.

Will you be paid/compensated to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No, you will not be paid/compensated to take part in the study. Since all interviews will be conducted on online platforms, no traveling will be done. There will thus be no costs involved.

How will you know about the findings?

- The general findings of the research will be shared with you by e-mail.
- If you would like feedback on your personal results, I will send it to you via e-mail.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact **Collette Isaacs** at **072 394 7868** and isaaccl@unisa.ac.za if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.
- You can contact the chair of the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Prof Erharbor Idemudia) at 018 389 2899 or Erharbor.Idemudia@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own record

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I _____ agree to take part in a research study entitled: 'Exploring the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic'

I declare that:

- I provide *informed consent*.
 - Thus, I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
 - Thus, I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher (if this is a different person), and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I provide *voluntary consent*.
 - Thus, I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
 - Thus, I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
 - Thus, I am aware of the fact that I may request that the researcher does not continue with said recording if I request it.
- I provide *specific consent*.
 - Thus, I understand that what I contribute (what I report/say/write/draw/produce visually) could be reproduced publicly and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity.
 - I provide *specific consent*. Thus, I consent to an audio and/or audio-visual recording of the interviews.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) _____ 20 _____

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

- | | |
|--|--|
| • You may contact me again | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| • I would like a summary of the findings of this research | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| • I would like feedback on my functioning/wellbeing as reflected in the questionnaires I completed | ☐ Yes ☐ No |

The best way to reach me is:

Name & Surname: _____

Postal Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who does not live with me and who will help you to contact me:

Name & Surname: _____

Phone/ Cell Phone Number /Email: _____

Declaration by person obtaining consent (if not the researcher/primary investigator)

I (*name*) _____ declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to _____
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) _____ 20 ____

Signature of person obtaining consent

Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher/primary investigator

I, *Collette Isaacs*, declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to _____
- I encouraged them to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.

- I am satisfied that they adequately understand all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____ 20 _____

Signature of researcher

Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher and participant

Personal face-to-face interviews during Covid-19 restrictions (if applicable)

Additional declaration by participant in those instances where the participant requests to participate in a personal face-to-face semi-structured interview:

By signing below, I _____, acknowledge the following information related to the required measures regarding Covid-19:

I declare that:

- It is my personal choice and preference to participate in a personal face-to-face semi-structured interview with the researcher.
- This requires that I consent to the following strict measures to safeguard the personal health and safety of myself and that of the researcher/interviewer/primary investigator:
 - I consent to the researcher taking my temperature before the interview using a thermometer. ☐ Yes ☐ No
 - I confirm that my temperature measured at _____ degrees. ☐ Yes ☐ No
 - I consent to use the three-ply mask provided by the researcher. ☐ Yes ☐ No
 - I consent to wear the three-ply mask for the full duration of the interview. ☐ Yes ☐ No
 - I consent to the researcher sanitising the interview context using a sanitiser with an 80% alcohol content before the commencement of the interview. ☐ Yes ☐ No
 - I consent to the researcher using a sanitiser with an 80% alcohol content before and during the interview if required. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____ 20 _____

Signature of participant

Signature of researcher

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe the different types of music assessments you have assessed **prior** to the COVID-19 pandemic and how you assessed them.
2. Describe the different types of music assessments you have assessed **during** the COVID-19 pandemic and how you assessed them.
3. Do you make use of assessment criteria when assessing a performance? Describe what is important to you, musically, when you listen to a performance.
4. Do you ever disregard the assessment criteria and rely on your "gut instinct" when assessing performances? Please elaborate.
5. In which way (if at all) did you adapt your assessment approach during the COVID-19 pandemic? Please elaborate.
6. Describe the importance of the technical and expressive aspects in a performance. Kindly elaborate in detail.
7. In what way does the type of assessment platform (in-person and online) influence the quality of the technical and expressive aspects of the performance? Kindly elaborate in detail.
8. Describe how the following aspects might influence your assessment, during in-person and online assessments:
 - a) Your physical presence in the room, or lack thereof.
 - b) The performer's visual cues and body movements, or lack thereof.
 - c) Do you rely more on visual cues and body movements if the sound quality of an online assessment is impaired?
 - d) An audience's presence, or lack thereof.
9. Describe what you think the role of online assessment platforms will be in the future? Please elaborate.
10. Do you think that an online performance is a true reflection of an in-person performance? Please elaborate.

APPENDIX F: NWU APPROVAL LETTER AND CONTINUATION LETTER



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Fax: 018 299-4910

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics

Tel: 016 103 4448

Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

23 August 2022

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) on 2022/07/20, the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Exploring the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof C Cupido

Student/Research Team: CL Isaacs (44557132)

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	0	9	9	0	-	2	2	-	A	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Institution

Study Number

Year

Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single study

Commencement date: 25/07/2022

Risk: Low

Expiry date: 25/07/2023

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

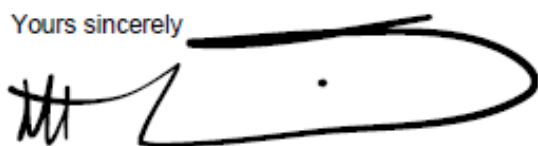
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor (principal investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the BaSSREC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the BaSSREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.

- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and BaSSREC reserves the right to:*
 - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
 - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
 - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
 - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
 - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the BaSSREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
 - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
 - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*
- *BaSSREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via BaSSREC-Admin@nwu.ac.za.*

The BaSSREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the BaSSREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof E. Idemudia

Chairperson NWU Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

24 July 2023

APPROVAL FOR CONTINUATION OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Ethics number: NWU 00990-22- A7

Study title: Exploring the assessment experiences of eight South African practical music assessors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study leader/supervisor: Prof. C. Cupido

Student: C.L. Isaacs

Application type: Single study

Risk level: Low

Dear Researcher

You are kindly informed that this application was reviewed for monitoring at the meeting of the North-West University Basic and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC), Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, held on 19/07/2023. Following the review of the application, it has been decided that the study is approved for continuation.

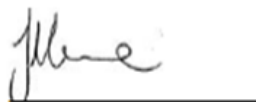
Suspension	
Continuation	X
Termination	

Approval date: 19/07/2023

Expiry date: 19/07/2024

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact BaSSREC.

Yours sincerely



Doctor Janelize Morelli Deputy Chairperson: NWU-BaSSREC

Current details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.3 Letters Templates\9.1.5.3.6_Gatekeepers_Letter_HREC.docm
30 April 2018