THE SOLOIST IN THE CHOIR: AUDITORY, PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TIMBRE

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Abstract
This poster explores the skills required for blending a voice into a collective sound or, in contrast, standing out as a soloist with a distinct timbre. Timbre is a complex perceptual phenomenon, one we all recognise but find hard to articulate in words. Over the past 30 years singers, teachers and voice scientists have shared terminology of timbre with an increasing level of understanding and new technology has played a part in establishing clearer framework for discussion. The pilot study follows on from research into perceptions of timbre experienced by singers during performance, and explorations of identity in singers of all ages. Classical and Music Theatre performers were asked about their experiences singing as a soloist and as part of a chorus. Singers speak about ‘holding back’ in choral singing and enjoying the ‘overtones’ created in the blend of sound, while at the same time as soloists they feel more ‘in control’ and more aware of their ‘own sound’. Different singers relate to the physical sensations of performance but it is principally aural perception taking place. Aspects of vocal identity are examined with cross-disciplinary links to voice science, psychology, audiology and pedagogy.

Bibliography
Yarnall-Monks S. J. (2017) The ‘real’ me: practical application of research into the perception of vocal timbre.