

WHAT IF FLORENCE F. JENKINS WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CRITICAL? ON SINGERS SELF-EVALUATION

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With the exception of Florence Foster Jenkins, professional singers are expected to sing accurately. Generally, developing proficiency in a specific domain is associated with accurate self-evaluation. In the case of singing, the relation between proficiency and self-evaluation abilities might be more complex. For instance, previous studies indicated that untrained singers perform more accurately than they think. In order to clarify this relation, the present study examines performance quality, evaluation and self-evaluation abilities in highly trained classical singers. Eighteen soprano singers were invited to evaluate the pitch accuracy of other singers in a pairwise comparison paradigm. The task was then repeated, such that their own performance (previously recorded) was included in the set of performances to evaluate. All performances were analyzed acoustically with regard to the parameters shown as relevant to “define” pitch accuracy in complex signals, such as operatic voices (Larrouy-Maestri, Morsomme, Magis, & Poeppel, 2017). Results confirm that professional singers develop a consistent and precise concept of singing accuracy, irrespective of their ability to perform melodies accurately, their age, or their training. However, when it comes to their own performances, they tend to rely on their “ideal” singing abilities rather than on their actual recordings (i.e., overestimation). Interestingly, the most accurate singers were the most critical toward their own performances. They were also more realistic in their judgments. Together, these results highlight the complex relation between self-evaluation abilities, goal achievements, and singing proficiency in trained singers.