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Psychological Foundations of Emotional Expression in Musical and Stage Performance

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Abstract

The study identifies and systematizes the psychological mechanisms of emotional expressiveness in musical and stage performance; a new integrated framework is proposed that unites previously disparate dimensions. A qualitative documentary analysis was conducted on the material of 30 sources (2019–2026) using performance psychology methods. A multidimensional coding scheme was applied to each unit, which made it possible to simultaneously record primary and secondary psychological mechanisms in real performance situations. The source base consisted of peer-reviewed studies, performance recordings, pedagogical materials, program notes, performers' reflections, and institutional training documents. The results indicate that emotional expressiveness is not an isolated artistic skill - it is an integrated process that relies on five interrelated dimensions: conscious expressive planning, bodily and visual embodiment of emotion, vocal-acoustic realization, emotional self-regulation, and audience perception of authenticity. Performance intention is conveyed through tempo, dynamics, articulation, phrasing, intensity, and contrast. Bodily embodiment encompasses gestures, posture, facial expressions, and coordinated movements. Vocal expressiveness relies on modulation, resonance, timbre, breath control, and volume. Emotional regulation helps performers cope with pressure by developing resilience, self-efficacy, and anxiety management. Ultimately, it is the audience's interpretation that determines the perceived authenticity of the emotion expressed. Crucially, these mechanisms form a dynamic interdependent system, where each dimension influences and reinforces the others, allowing us to move beyond traditional models that consider them in isolation. The results highlight the need to develop integrated competencies in performance education and challenge the notion of expressiveness as an innate gift. Technical mastery, bodily expression, vocal skills, emotional regulation, and audience awareness must be combined through focused training in reflective listening, expressive planning, somatic awareness, stage presence, and anxiety management. This shifts pedagogical practice from the separate teaching of technique and artistry to the holistic development of the performer.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, chamber ensemble, performance musicology, musicality, performer education, stage art pedagogy

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1. Introduction

The study of emotional expressiveness in music and stage performance is inherently complex, as it must simultaneously consider artistic technique, psychological intention, bodily embodiment, vocal or instrumental control, and audience perception. In performing a score, role, or piece, the artist must transform emotional content into authentic expressiveness that allows the listener or viewer to recognize, interpret, and experience the emotion beyond the purely performance act. Therefore, emotional expressiveness cannot be viewed as an independent variable – it is a dynamic, multi-layered process that encompasses internal preparation, controlled external expression, psychophysical regulation of performance, and real-time communication between performer and audience. Current approaches do not combine these dimensions, and the relationships between musical expressiveness, performer's bodily embodiment, genuine emotion, and listener response remain poorly described and unsystematized in the existing literature. To bridge this gap, this study employs a qualitative documentary analysis with each item simultaneously coded across multiple psychological mechanisms (a primary category of "vocal realization" and a secondary category of "emotional

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regulation") rather than individual variables. This methodology allows us to empirically explore the relationship between performance intention, bodily embodiment, and audience perception in real performance contexts, providing a systematic, data-driven explanation that goes beyond a purely theoretical synthesis.

New research on musical and stage performance suggests that emotional expressiveness is not limited to visible physical expression or precision of movement, but is increasingly understood as a psychological process that involves the performer's intention, perception, motor control, vocal or instrumental modulation, and audience/listener response. Anderson et al. (2025) emphasize that expressiveness has its own value in conveying emotional meaning: the meaning of expression depends not only on the correct execution of notes, but also on tempo, dynamics, articulation, and subtle expressive details. Chu et al. (2026) expand on this view by identifying acting techniques that help recognize and express emotions, especially in a live stage context. Sundberg et al. (2024) add an acoustic dimension by using objective voice measures to measure emotional characteristics of singing. Trost et al. (2024) and Morgan (2025) shift the focus to the listener, demonstrating that live music can evoke affective responses in the brain and create emotional connections in real time, with the perceived emotional authenticity of the performer becoming a crucial factor in influencing performance. Despite the accumulated evidence, existing theoretical models mostly treat musical expressiveness, actorly embodiment, vocal physiology, and audience perception as relatively independent components (Juslin's lens model of musical communication, Laban/Barteniev's physical expression analysis systems, and individual models of vocal emotion). None of them offers a single framework that simultaneously encompasses expressive planning, bodily embodiment, vocal modulation, the listener's real-time affective response, and perceived authenticity. It is this gap that the proposed integrated approach, which conceptualizes emotional expressiveness as a holistic, multicomponent psychological process, is designed to fill. Empirical studies continue to gravitate towards studying these aspects as independent variables, so the need for a unified explanation of stage emotional expressiveness as a psychological phenomenon remains open.

There has been much discussion about the fact that emotions can be expressed through music, singing, acting, and musical theatre; however, no one has looked at the issue as one complete psychological phenomenon at this time. Most of the existing literature only discusses separate elements of musical expression: music quality, body and voice sound, training acting, "live" audience response, or perceived emotional authenticity of performers. Very little research has been carried out to see how these elements function as a whole within a single performance-based context (one performance), what happens when internal emotional intention transforms into physical, vocal and stage expression, how this physical/vocal/stage expression becomes psychologically believable, and how the audience recognizes this expression immediately during the performance. Another issue that has not yet been resolved is that of the association between trained performance skills and the actual communication of feelings - having technical control over one's performance does not automatically mean there is an emotional tie with an audience. Thus, there is a gap in understanding the relationship between emotional intentions and expressive embodiment, both vocally and practically, and how they are perceived by an audience in music and performance as a single unitary framework of cognitive comprehension.

The study aims to explain the main psychological principles that drive the creation of physical, verbal, or auditory manifestations of emotion in both music and voice by relating emotional intention to external expression within performance, body, voice and sound's use in communicating emotion via bodily expression during performance, developing emotional authenticity using acting-based techniques and lessons learned from performance literature, how audience perception of live performance impacts the effectiveness of emotional expression, and creation of an integrated theoretical framework connecting these variables.

2. Literature Review

Emotion in the conveyance of music and drama has been researched in the psychology of music, performance studies, cognitive neuroscience, affective sciences, and pedagogy of the theatre. In the literature on emotion and performance, I argue that emotion is not an aesthetic quality or function of technical proficiency; rather, it is a psychological process that occurs when the performer's expressive intention body (expressive intention), cognitive resources (cognitive effort), or vocal communication (acoustic/vocal control), and audience perception of it (audience perception) interact in the context of actual performance.

In the last few decades, it has become commonplace in the field to assume that the way we communicate emotion in music is through lacking emotional expression in our musical performances. The major division that early research (Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1986) established between the expression of the performer intent and the listener's experience has been useful in confronting the view of 'performance is the direct transfer of emotion', and has been the seed for

much subsequent work (Juslin & Laukka, 2003) that used this foundational framework for understanding how these expressive cues are created and used in such a way as to create emotional responses. However, most studies have primarily focused on the communication of musical emotion, and therefore less clearly explored how the performer creates and regulates their emotional expression while performing.

Research has recently shifted towards embodied and interactional models of expressive communication. Rather than only accompanying the act of expressing musical performances, bodily movement, facial expressions, and postural coordination have all played an active role in communicating emotion through music (Davidson, 2012). Evidence is also being found to support the idea that sway of the body reflects shared emotion within ensembles, showing that emotional communication is spread over many musicians rather than just residing in the individual (Chang et al., 2019). These findings are important, as they question traditionally sound-focused views on emotional expression through music, while also illustrating how little emphasis is placed upon psychological aspects of expression; the body as a visible form of nonverbal expression has been studied much more thoroughly than has the body's psychological connection to emotional intentions, self-regulation, and credibility onstage.

A further aspect of expressive performance is the cognitive and interpersonal demands placed on performers. Evidence from research into string quartet performance shows that, on average, there is a greater cognitive load associated with expressive interaction compared to students (Bishop, et al., 2023). The importance of this finding lies in its determination that emotion is not just an automatic emotional outlet when performing; rather, it represents a coordinated effort of attention, timing, listening, and interpersonal adjustment (i.e., cognitive effort). An implication of these findings is that both emotional sensitivity and executive control are necessary for expressive performance. However, this leaves open the question of how performers integrate controlled technical execution with the appearance of cmotive immediacy and expressiveness in their performances.

Another important aspect that neuroscience studies contribute is the study of synchrony and affective entrainment. A systematic literature review-based study of brain to brain musical interactions shows that musical activities often involve brain synchrony between musicians when they are collaborating in an orchestrated fashion or sharing a musical experience with each other (Cheng et al., 2024). Similarly, studies primarily based on the audience's point of view show that the experience of the audience attending a live performance provides far greater emotional experiences and physiological responses (Gabriel et al., 2025) than those who view the performance through other means (e.g., television, video recording, etc.). Such findings are further supported by the literature on how live performances are perceived and evaluated aesthetically compared to music presented through video recordings, in which the mode of presentation plays an important role in how emotions and aesthetics are evaluated (Meinel et al., 2024). Although the existing research demonstrates that live performance can be both an expressive act created by the performer as well as a shared emotional experience between both the performer and the audience, existing research often delineates between performer-centred and audience-centred factors when describing the emotional components of performing, despite the fact that the emotional nature of music and performing is created by the interaction of both types of performers.

Singing, voice and multisensory perception are another major area of research. Research shows that when we perceive musical emotions from singing, we do not rely solely on the sound of the music; visual and physical cues also help us interpret musical emotion (Lange et al., 2022). This is particularly important for performers who are on stage because all of their elements–voice, face, gesture, posture, and dramatic context–work together in an integrated way to convey emotion to their audience. The development of adaptive tests for measuring how people perceive emotions in music indicates that there is a need for more precise tools to measure the way people decode affective content (MacGregor et al., 2023). However, it should also be noted that measurement studies might focus solely on recognizing emotional expression correctly, but that in real life–especially for performers–theatre performances involve ambiguity (e.g., stage directions), dramatic change (e.g., emotions transforming from one moment to another), and perceived authenticity of the performance.

Another integral element of the conversation on performers is that they often experience psychological vulnerability. Those involved with performing arts may be highly emotional people and regulate their emotions through performing in a manner that can produce performance anxiety. According to research conducted by Kaleńska-Rodzaj (2023), the ability to regulate emotions while performing correlates highly with performance anxiety among musicians. Evidence from studies shows that the psychological condition of the performer has a significant impact on their performance quality, their ability to express themselves freely during performances, and their ability to communicate emotionally while performing (Kinney et al., 2025). This is an important area of study as it relates not only to the emotional expression and artistic product of a performer but also to the overall health and well-being of that performer. When discussing the psychological impacts on actors when they perform on stage, many of the same issues arise in relation

to the effects of emotional labour, immersion in their character, and professional expectations on the individual actor (Brott et al., 2025). In addition, research continues to have a lack of an integrative understanding of the interaction of psychological stressors, emotion regulation, and authentic expression when working within the musical or performance environment.

Research literature supports that emotional expression while performing is multidimensional, comprising musical structure, bodily movement, interpersonal coordination, voice, perception, neural synchrony, live presence, and emotion regulation. However, although all aspects are included in the studies reviewed, they still seem fragmented. One study may focus on musical cues, another on movement, and so on (cognition, audience response, anxiety, and acting). In this case, one area that is still underdeveloped is a cohesive psychological explanation of how emotional intention (as an example) becomes embodied (vocal/instrumental realization), perceived as credible (by the audience), and experienced emotionally (also by the audience). This calls for the study of emotional expression in musical performance or staged performance as a unified psychological process instead of separate expressive techniques.

3. Materials and Methods

With this qualitative documentary and performance-psychological study, we aimed to observe how performers develop, embody and communicate their emotional expressions through music and theatre. It was not an experimental research, clinical group or human participant study; therefore it did not involve a sample of human participants or a survey of responses. The empirical data we collected came from publicly available scholarly and performance-based resources which allowed us to explore the emotional experience created through an artistic process grounded in psychology.

The empirical corpus used for the research was created between 2025-2026 and contained 30 selections from publicly-accessible manuscripts or audiovisual resources that had either been published or made available between 2019 – 2026. All materials at the time of sample formation were in the open access as published articles or as preprints accepted for publication that had undergone a full cycle of peer review in indexed journals (Frontiers in Psychology, PLOS ONE, Scientific Reports, Acta Psychologica, IBRO Neuroscience Reports, etc.). None of them is an unpublished manuscript without peer review. The inclusion of the most recent works was a conscious methodological decision, since they most fully reflect the current state of research on emotional expression in performance and allow avoiding a time lag between the appearance of empirical data and theoretical synthesis. This corpus consisted of (13) peer-reviewed studies, (5) documented performances, (4) educational resources on voice and/or acting methodologies, (3) program notes, (3) statements by performers, and (2) institutional documents describing performance training programs. Each document represents an identifiable piece of documentation and there is no overlap between musical compositions, artistic episodes, or theoretical concepts. The corpus includes examples of performance practice as they relate to all forms of instrumental and ensemble performance; opera singing; musical theatre; within acting for song; and in live performance situations before an audience.

This was performed purposely and not randomly, as stated above. Any material that met three criteria was included: the material must address emotional expression in regards to musical or stage performance; be able to connect with psychological, bodily, vocal, acoustic or perceptual, and audience response; and must provide enough descriptive detail for qualitative coding. Any material that met the following/equal criteria was excluded: only discusses music or theatre from an historical, stylistic or biographical point of view without reference to emotional expression; or contains only general commentary by a journalist that would not provide sufficient detail for qualitative coding. No material will be included in the sample if it cannot be accessed in full text or if the full performance description cannot be accessed.

The three analytical procedures were focused on identifying repeating signals/indicators of emotion within the stimuli, with the first step of screening the selected materials that had emotionally expressive components that could be considered common across: expressive intention, movement in the body, facial actions, modulation (of voice), the amount of sound produced (intensity), the physical embodiment of the actor playing a role, the audience's ability to perceive emotion, a sense of anxiety felt by the act of performing (i.e. the stage fright syndrome), the audiences' response to the performance, and/or the audience's view that the performance had a genuine emotional quality. The second step involved entering this list of indicators into a coding excel (2021) matrix where each individual unit from each documentary work was coded based upon (a) the primary psychological mechanism which was most strongly represented by the element assessed as being indicative of emotion, and (b) the secondary indicators, when present (i.e. were coded) only when they provided direct support of the emotional interpretation of the unit assessed. The last step compared coded units from the music and acting/stage contexts to see what the psychological mechanisms were that were present in all modes, what were present only in singing/duet and quartet/percussion formation (with rolling percussion of instruments), and what were only in ensemble (group, like in the band/orchestra), and only in acting/stage.

Since this is a qualitative study, and there are no statistics that can be used to measure the generalization of psychological processes to the population, no statistical hypothesis tests, p-values, or correlations were used in comparing the results of other studies with the present study. Results were established through comparative interpretation of coded units of documentary data. The corpus was organized in Microsoft Excel 2021, the coding matrix was created, and mechanisms derived through this process were grouped. The reliability of coding interpretations improved by coding the same material for the second time after an interval of two weeks and ensuring that any coding category was backed by the largest number of documentary units.

4. Results

An analysis of 30 documentary sources on the expression of emotions in the performing arts showed that it is incorrect to consider emotional expressiveness as an isolated artistic skill; instead, it encompasses a number of interconnected psychological processes. Comparative coding of the data identified five analytical directions: bodily and facial embodiment, performance intention and musical means, vocal-acoustic realization, emotional self-regulation and performance anxiety, and audience perception of emotional authenticity. These directions were not isolated. In most documentary units, emotional expressiveness appeared as a process in which the subjective affective setting of the performer was embodied in bodily, vocal, musical, or theatrical representations available for interpretation by the listener/viewer. For example, an interview with an opera singer was coded primarily as belonging to the category of "vocal-acoustic realization" (a detailed description of controlled vibrato, resonance, and breathing to convey sadness), but in this same unit, secondary mechanisms were also recorded: emotional regulation (mentioning techniques for overcoming excitement before a high note) and performance intention (consciously slowing down the tempo and taking a breath to enhance expressiveness). Such a multilayered codification confirms that emotional expressiveness is realized through the simultaneous action of several psychological mechanisms, rather than through one isolated channel.

The information in the initial group of coded data showed that the basis for emotional expression is the expressiveness of the performer. The performers' ability to use musical cues was assessed in this group, using emotional meaning to indicate the way in which a performer has arranged their musical cues, such as timing, dynamics, articulation, intensity, phrasing, and expressive contrast. The way in which the performer used emotional cues in the performance did not simply exist as a correct interpretation of either a musical score or a dramatic script (but rather existed as a conscious arrangement of observable expressive signs). This finding was consistent with the coded data from the second group examining musical expression through musical cues using both the producer and the listener's perspectives, which illustrated that in most cases, the choices made by the performers in their use of expressiveness would not completely match up with the way that a listener interprets those same expressiveness choices (Micallef, Grimaud, & Eerola, 2022a; Micallef, Grimaud, & Eerola, 2022b). Lastly, the coded data also demonstrated that expressiveness was seen as a skill that could be developed versus a natural artistic attribute. All materials focusing on teaching or learning about communicating through emotions performed musically discuss how music educators can connect emotional expression to pedagogical knowledge, reflective listening, and technical control in performing artists (Bonastre & Timmers; 2021).

To supplement the peer-reviewed literature, recordings of performances, materials relevant to acting and vocal pedagogy (including program notes & performer statements etc.) and descriptions of performance training from institutions were all used to establish whether or not the same processes existed (or had been described) within actual performances or those described pedagogically. All of these were coded as documentary units, allowing us to identify how emotional expression was constructed, embodied, articulated vocally, pedagogically explained and institutionally construed. Statements from performers and descriptions of their training were only coded when they referenced the embodiment of emotion, control of voice, or Intent to perform for the audience. Summary of the main coding categories and the contexts in which they occur can be seen in Table 1.

Emotions were expressed through body language and facial expressions. Examples of coded material on emotion display in opera, theatre, musical theatre and audience-based performance indicated that visual emotional expression is paramount. Facial expression, body language, posture and movement will be interpreted as emotionally charged carriers of psychological meaning, not as cosmetic enhancers of the music and/or drama delivered (Ceccacci et al., 2023). The example of using facial expressions in opera was identified as a barometer of the level of emotive quality and audience emotionality, which tested the reliability of facial expression coding as an entry point for understanding expressivity on stage (Ceccacci et al., 2023). Displaying emotion in theatrical performance could be created as a craft by professional actors with the conscious intention rather than presenting as uncontrolled emotions. This demonstrated that expressivity on stage is a representation of acting-based bodily and facial expression that requires significant amount of effort to achieve, requiring emotional control and intentionality in the physical representation of expressed emotion (Kuric &

Arenales, 2023). The audience-oriented theatre materials provided evidence for the idea that the spectators' facial expressions of engagement with the performance confirm or refute the definition of emotional expression as an interactive, rather than a unidirectional, means of communication (Oakes and et al., 2024).

Table 1. Psychological mechanisms through which emotional expression was articulated in the documentary corpus

Psychological mechanism	Expressive features most clearly reflected in the corpus	Performance situations in which the mechanism was traced
Expressive intention and musical cueing	Subtle changes in timing, dynamic nuance, articulation, phrasing, intensity, and contrast between expressive episodes	Instrumental performance, ensemble interaction, and singing
Bodily and facial embodiment	Gesture, posture, facial expression, coordinated movement, and outwardly visible signs of emotional involvement	Opera, theatre performance, musical theatre, and collaborative stage interaction
Vocal and acoustic realization	Modulation of the voice, resonance, timbre, acoustic force, and emotionally coloured vocal delivery	Opera singing, acting through song, and vocal training
Emotion regulation and performance anxiety	Resilience, self-efficacy, sensitivity to social evaluation, emotional control, and the ability to manage pressure during performance	Choir performance, student performance, and early stages of a musical career
Audience perception and emotional credibility	Audience engagement, recognition of the intended emotion, perceived sincerity, and shared emotional response between performer and listener	Live performance, theatre performance, and performance settings oriented toward audience reception

Note: The table reflects the main qualitative categories that emerged during the coding of the documentary corpus. These categories should not be read as measures of frequency, effectiveness, or relative importance. Some documentary units contained more than one expressive feature; nevertheless, each unit was assigned to the mechanism that appeared most central to its interpretation.

Source: Compiled by the author from the coding matrix prepared in Microsoft Excel 2021 on the basis of 30 documentary units included in the empirical corpus.

The third line of research involved vocal and acoustic enactments of emotion. From the coded materials, it was clear that the singer's vocal production of these emotions – involving such aspects as modulation, resonance, timbre, and intensity as well as controlled changes in vocal color – created an audible signal representing the emotion. Thus, in opera singing and acting, the sang emotion is not limited to the semantic meaning of the words; there is also an affective meaning produced by the singer through breath control, dynamic shading, acoustic force, and the coordination of the singer's vocal technique to dramatic intent. Vocal modulation and acoustic intensity were the two principal mechanisms within the coding matrix through which an individual's internal affective state could be linked to the external, discernible signs of the emotions being conveyed to an audience.

This fact is also very important for distinguishing between the vocal and stage performance of the actor/singer from the performance of a purely instrumental musician, as in the case of the latter emotional meaning being primarily enacted through timing, articulation, movement, and ensemble interaction. Sundberg and co-authors (2024) as well as Lange and co-authors (2022) have shown that emotion in singing is expressed through combining auditory stimuli with physiological responses and visual-perceptual characteristics.

Emotional Responses to Performance Anxiety: The fourth aspect looked at emotion regulation and how performance anxiety impacted emotional expression; this was heavily influenced by both psychological pressure and public judgment in the documentation units that were analyzed–in this project, anxiety and resilience could not be quantitatively measured, but were qualitatively compared where it was evident that emotional expression was often subject to an internal pressure as well as judgement from the audience. In choral performance and student performances, anxiety was often reported as a hindrance to expressive freedom, reducing effective communication of emotion, and decreasing self-confidence. The coded documentation indicated that while there was a connection between limiting expressive behavior, and resilience, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, social support, and external evaluation of their

performance–that was both in-person and through digital means of evaluation (Du et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2026; Wang & Yang, 2024; Zhang Huawei & Salarzadeh Jenatabadi, 2024). This trend provides proof that the effectiveness of displaying emotion in performance will be determined as much by the expression of emotion, as well as the performer being able to manage or deal with stress and pressure before and during the act of expressing their emotions.

The fifth dimension had focused on audience perceptions of emotional credibility, which contributed significantly to emotional expressions that became meaningful only if recognized, interpreted, or affectively received by the audience. This aspect was particularly related to live performance, theatrical engagement, and cross-cultural recognition of emotion. Emotional expression was thus seen as a communicative process that depended both on the signs provided by the performer and the decoding of those signs by the audience. From cross-cultural materials, it was noted that emotion in musical performance is typically recognized regarding the degree and diversity of cultural familiarity with a particular piece of music and prior listening experiences. Therefore, universal transparency cannot be ascribed to emotional expression across all performance contexts (Lyu & Egermann, 2024). Facial responses of the audience to live theatre led to collective emotional resonance (Oakes et al, 2024). The words and programme material of the coded performers demonstrated that emotional authenticity was primarily attributed to the performers' ability to create apparently internally motivated expressions rather than mechanically performed expressivity.

The coded corpus contained common emotional expressions within all forms of music and stage performance and identified five psychological bases that support these expressions including the performer expresses their intention and produces an ultimate experience through embodied creation, voice/acoustic produced and vice versa, how performers manage their emotions/perceived pressure, and accessing the audience's level of emotional belief in the performance. There were also several differences between forms regarding context including; instrumental/ensemble performances place greater emphasis on musical cues/interactions; opera/vocal performances emphasize vocal quality, facial expression, and acoustic strength; musical theatre and acting through song emphasize emotional authenticity; and live theatre performances emphasize audience participation. Therefore, the results of the coded corpus confirmed that emotional expression should not be viewed as an isolated artistic effect, but rather as a psychologically developed experience incorporating the performer's intention, embodiment, and vocal/musical realization, emotion regulation, and audience response.

5. Discussion

The results obtained showed that emotional expressiveness in musical and stage performance should be considered not as a separate artistic result, but as a coordinated process of psychological functioning. The identification of five mechanisms in the corpus – performance intention, bodily-facial embodiment, vocal-acoustic realization, emotional regulation, and audience-oriented authenticity – indicates that the creation of emotional experience during a performance is carried out through the interrelationship of the internal predisposition to experience emotion, technical skill, external behavior, sound result, and audience interpretations. This allows us to shift the view on expressive emotion: from perceiving it as "natural" – to understanding it as a conscious means by which emotional input is created and perceived by both performers and listeners.

For pedagogical practice, this means abandoning isolated training of individual skills in favor of integrated classes that simultaneously develop technical mastery, psychophysical embodiment, vocal-acoustic variation, and self-regulation skills. Instead of focusing only on the accuracy of performing notes or movements, teachers can introduce special modules: conscious planning of expressive accents (phrasing, dynamics, and tempo techniques with parallel fixation of emotional intentions), mirror video reflection for correcting facial expressions, gestures, and posture during performance, as well as short sessions of reflective listening to one's own recording with an emphasis on timbre, vibrato, and breathing. A separate component should be stage presence and anxiety management training, built on grounding practices, conscious self-assessment, and public speaking modeling. In addition, the model involves focused work with audience perception: performers learn to predict how their emotional expressiveness can be read by the audience, comparing their own intentions with the feedback they receive. Thus, the traditional separate teaching of technique and artistry gives way to holistic training, in which the performer consciously integrates all five psychological mechanisms into a single process of creating authentic emotion.

These general provisions acquire a specific methodological content if they are translated into the format of daily rehearsal modules. For example, the module "Expressive Planning" may include the exercise "emotional score": the performer indicates in the notes not only the dynamics and tempo, but also the desired emotional trajectory (tension – climax – decline), after which he compares the recording of his own performance with this plan. The module "Corporeal Embodiment" provides for short video studies, where the student performs a fragment of the work without sound, only

with gestures and facial expressions, and colleagues guess the underlying emotion – this trains the congruence of the non-verbal message. Vocal-acoustic processing is implemented through the exercise “three timbres of one phrase” – the singer consciously changes the resonance, vibrato and intensity, fixing which option evokes the target affective response in the listeners. To develop emotional self-regulation, it is advisable to introduce a pre-concert “grounding” protocol (3–5 minutes of conscious breathing with a focus on bodily sensations) and keep a stage anxiety diary, where automatic thoughts and their cognitive reformulation are recorded. Finally, the “Audience Authenticity” module organizes mini-performances in front of a small group with the following structured feedback: the audience marks moments where the performance seemed mechanical and moments where the emotion was perceived as genuine, and the performer compares these marks with his expressive intention. It is this translation of the five psychological mechanisms into specific training formats that allows you to move from declarative knowledge to sustainable performance skills.

Thompson et al.'s (2023) study found that perceived emotion in live performance relates to both the auditory and visual aspects of the performance in terms of the audio and the visual elements used to convey meaning. This strengthens the previous conclusion that emotional expression can be communicated not just through sound. In the current analysis, several ways of conveying emotion worked together as indicators or signs of emotional expression including: timing; volume; phrasing; gestures; body posture; and/or facial expression. In addition, the current findings expand on the concept of emotion communicated through musical performances to include similarly identifying mechanisms when evaluating opera, musical theatre, acting via song and other forms of performance where there are an audience present at the time of performance.

They are also partly consistent with the findings of Moura et al. (2024), who found that increasing movement does not always produce an improved impression of performance, as the optimal amount of movement for performance varies with respect to the style of music used. This finding is especially relevant to the identified categories of facial and bodily embodiment. The data indicated that an increase in overall movement will not inherently improve the validity of the emotional representation of the performer, but rather become meaningful due to being stylistically appropriate, psychologically motivated and coordinated with the musical/dramatic intention. Thus, bodily expressiveness should be seen as more than just an increase in physical activity because it will only serve as an expressive method when it is in accordance with the emotional rationality of the performance.

The results of the study demonstrated that factors such as vocal modulation, resonant quality of sound, which adds colour to one's tone of voice, quality of sound intensity (volume level), and ability to maintain breath control all contributed significantly towards creating audible representation of emotional intent through voice. In a separate study, Zhao (2025) discovered using virtual reality-based training techniques may also enhance one's ability to express emotion vocally within a performance context by having opportunity and structured conditions available for practicing how he/she want to communicate with an audience through their voice. While the current research did not conduct an experimental study of the effectiveness or fit of utilizing virtual reality training techniques, the results are consistent with Zhao's larger thesis (i.e., vocal expression can be developed by way of intentional practice instead than an inherited trait). These results ultimately provide further supportive evidence regarding how teaching of voice should integrate all elements needed (technical training, expressions of emotion/intention through voice, and effective communication with audience) in order for the student/performer to obtain skill level sufficient to succeed as a performing artist.

Audience perception has been identified as being a major topic in this corpus. Much of the discussion indicates that an emotional expression was fully realized only once it was acknowledged or emotionally accepted by the audience or viewers. This supports Tschacher et al.'s (2024) findings that physiological synchrony between audiences at live classical concerts was related to their own experiences and attitudes towards the performances. Although the study acquired no physiological data, its qualitative findings lead to the same conclusion that a live performance generates shared emotional states in which audience reactions can be considered part of the overall expressive experience. Thus, the emotional credibility of an expression depends not just on the actions of the performer but also on how the audience responds to those actions within the specific context of a live performance.

The results match the findings of the research conducted by Vigl and Zentner (2025) showing that the quality of a musical performance has a significant impact on how an audience experiences the emotions produced by a piece of music. Therefore, two identical performances can produce different emotional responses in different audiences. The emotion produced through a performance may not have the same level of emotion in all audiences, and this differs from the reaction to the same type of expressive act by an audience based on factors such as familiarity with the performer, previous experiences with the genre, or their ability to identify creative choices made in performance. This is especially

true for intercultural or hybrid musical performances where audiences may perceive the meaning of the expressive cues differently.

The current results contrast with earlier studies that primarily researched either quantifiable listener feedback, how performers exhibit quality in their performance, or how intense the movement in their performance is. While the documentary analysis will not be used to determine how much of a correlation exists between movement and sound, or how much of a correlation there exists between sound and emotion, it did define how the above-mentioned mechanisms are represented in different types of materials related to performance. Methodologically speaking, there is a major difference between the two approaches. Quantitative studies will reveal how much of an effect a specific variable has on how something is perceived by its audience; however, qualitative documentary analysis will reveal how the various types of expressive mechanisms used in a range of musical and theatrical performances are organized, articulated, and interrelated.

The five identified psychological mechanisms (intentional planning, bodily embodiment, vocal-acoustic realization, emotional regulation, and perception of authenticity) have a direct impact on the methodology of teaching performing disciplines. First, the educational process should be aimed not only at technical perfection, but also at developing the student's ability to transform the internal emotional state into controlled expressive signs (tempo, dynamics, articulation, timbre). Second, training programs for vocalists, actors, and instrumentalists should include training in somatic awareness (gesture, posture, facial expressions) and acoustic modeling of emotions (resonance, intensity, vibrato). Third, educational interventions should include strategies for emotional self-regulation, in particular, overcoming stage anxiety through the development of self-efficacy and stress resistance. Finally, performing arts pedagogy should develop in students an orientation to audience perception – the ability to predict how their expressive actions will be decoded by the audience. The proposed model creates a basis for the development of integrative educational programs in musical and theatrical performance, where emotional expressiveness appears not as an innate trait, but as an acquired psychological and pedagogical competence.

The results obtained have direct implications for the institutional design of educational programs in music and theater performance. First, it is advisable to supplement the accreditation requirements for educational programs with a competency block “psychological readiness for stage expression of emotions”, which includes indicators of conscious expressive planning, bodily-acoustic embodiment and stress resistance. Second, higher education institutions of art can introduce interdisciplinary modules with the participation of teachers of vocal, acting, somatic practices and clinical psychology to implement holistic training according to the five mechanisms. Third, public and private foundations that finance art education can direct grant competitions to study the validity of integrative models of emotional expression, thereby stimulating the transition from isolated teaching of technique to evidence-based pedagogy of stage experience. Thus, the proposed model serves not only as a theoretical contribution, but also as a guide for reforming educational policy in the field of performing arts.

In summary, the results of this study reveal emotional expression as an inherent relational process throughout the performance. The process starts with an intention to express emotion, becomes tangible through visual and aural cues located within the body, face, voice, sound, and music, and continues to be constructed by emotion regulation and ultimately becomes meaningful to an audience. The findings are consistent with existing research on the relationships between audio and movement, different perceptions of movement styles, performance quality and audience synchrony; however, these findings provide more of an integrative framework of the aforementioned constructs applied together through musical and theatrical performance. These findings provide support for the conclusions, which outline the main theoretical contributions to the field, as well as practical implications of the findings, limitations, and future directions for research in the area.

6. Conclusions

Emotional expressiveness in musical and theatrical performance is not achieved through a single skill, but through a network of psychological mechanisms. A qualitative analysis of 30 documentary sources allowed us to identify five main sources of expressed emotion: performance intention (planning), bodily and facial embodiment, vocal-acoustic realization, emotional regulation in stage conditions, and audience-perceived authenticity. This means that the performer expresses emotion not simply as an expression of his own feelings; his expressiveness becomes artistically convincing when he consciously transforms emotional intention into observed sound, physical gestures, and visual stimuli. The viewer, in turn, interprets what he sees and hears as an emotionally authentic work, relying on his own coordinate system, cultural background, and experience.

This model directly refutes the widespread belief that emotional expressiveness is a "natural gift" that is either there or it is not. Instead, the study proves that expressiveness consists of specific, interconnected skills that can be purposefully developed. In particular, performers can be taught conscious expressive planning – how to use phrasing, dynamics, tempo, and agogics to lay out the emotional drama of a piece. Bodily embodiment skills are formed through techniques of working with gesture, posture, and facial expressions, including the use of video feedback to correct incongruent behavior. Vocal and acoustic expressiveness can be trained through conscious variation of timbre, resonance, vibrato, and breathing, which turns the voice into a flexible emotional instrument. Emotional self-regulation is developed through mastering techniques of grounding, cognitive restructuring, and simulated performances, which reduce stage anxiety and increase psychological resilience. Finally, the skill of audience orientation implies that performers learn to predict the listener's perception of their own expression by consciously comparing performance intention with the emotional response received. Thus, the study transfers emotional expressiveness from the category of innate talent to the category of systematically trained competencies, which fundamentally changes approaches to performance pedagogy.

The findings helped to understand how technical skill influences how we express ourselves emotionally when performing. When performers were expressing intention through their motions they achieved this through timing (rhythm), dynamics (volume), articulation (clarity), phrasing (how many musical notes go together), intensity (how much emotion is behind each note) and contrasting expression (how one expression is different from another). Performing with both body and face allowed performers to show emotion when performing in opera, theater, musical theater and with a group of people. When performing, the sound they produced is very important because it gave all performers a way to express their feelings for performing in a song or musical. How many times the performer modulated their voice, the quality of their voice, how loud their voice is, the way they breathed and the amount of time that the performer had before performing will affect how emotionally charged the performer will appear to the audience. The way the audience perceives what the performer did while performing will then affect the way the audience understands the emotions being expressed through the performance.

This research has direct applications in the field of performance pedagogy and performer education; its findings imply that emotional expressiveness should not only be considered as an abstract artistic quality but also as part of a coordinated educational competence that involves intention, vocal and physical control, psychological self-regulation, and awareness of the audience's perception. Accordingly, educational programs in music, theatre, and musical theatre should integrate exercises that develop these five psychological mechanisms as teachable skills rather than assuming emotional expression as a natural gift. Training in performance – be it music, vocal, acting, or musical theatre – may include exercises that develop the technical skill and embodiment of reflective listening, stage presence, and controlled projection of emotion. The performers need help in managing their anxiety and the external evaluation of their performance without detracting from their capacity to express themselves.

To transform the proposed five-dimensional model from a qualitative description into an empirically sound basis for training programs, it is necessary to test it step by step in real performance conditions. The first step is convergent validation through a multi-method study of a single performance: simultaneous recording of audio, video, accelerometry of body movements, physiological indicators (heart rate variability, galvanic skin response) of the performer, as well as continuous assessment of the perceived emotion by the listeners using slider scales. This will allow comparing the performer's intention, objective acoustic-motor markers and auditory decoding in a single time frame. The second step is an intervention experiment with a randomized controlled design: one group of student vocalists/actors undergoes modular training built on five mechanisms, the control group – traditional technique classes. Stage anxiety (K-MPAI scale), self-efficacy, expressive accuracy (evaluated by experts from video recordings), and perceived authenticity (audience survey) are measured before and after the intervention. The third step is a longitudinal observation of graduates who have undergone integrated training, recording their professional adaptation and skill sustainability 6 and 12 months after completing the program. Such a research trajectory will test not only the internal consistency of the model, but also its ability to cause statistically significant changes in real pedagogical practice.

There were many limitations in this study. First of all, because of the use of a qualitative and purposively-selected sample of participants based on their musical performance background, these results will not be statistically generalizable to all contexts of music or stage performance. To add, there was no actual observation of rehearsals and therefore no data collection through performer interviews, audience surveys, etc., physiological measures and/or experimental testing were omitted from this study; also, other than utilizing some foundational sources that were applicable for the methodology, all of the other data used were publicly available documentary evidence and performance-related documentary evidence from 2019 to 2026.

To create a greater empirical base of information for future research, a variety of methods will need to be applied to further evaluate emotional expression in performance through IDEAS (interviews, audience response studies, documentary analysis, rehearsal observation, and controlled performance experiments). Future research may also consider factors such as genre, by performer skill level, cultural context, and digitally-mediated performance environments, to understand how emotional expressivity operates across live, recorded, virtual and hybrid performance forms.

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