

## SELF-EXPLORATION AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION: REFLECTIVE JOURNALING IN MALAY ART SONG: 'ENIGMA HATI' BY MARZELAN SALLEH

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**SUMMARY.** Reflective journaling emerges as a strong instrument for artists seeking self-discovery and artistic progress in the arena of music, where emotion and creativity intersect. This research endeavors to investigate the utilization of reflective journaling within the framework of acquiring proficiency in performing the Malay art song “Enigma Hati,” composed by Marzelan Salleh. The objective of this study is to provide insight into the various advantages of engaging in reflective journaling in the context of music performance. Specifically, it seeks to emphasize the potential of reflective journaling to improve musicians’ understanding of their performance process, strengthen their self-awareness, and boost their overall set of skills. Through the utilization of a first-person standpoint, the researcher-singer explores the profound influence of reflexive practices, underscoring their effect on the behaviors, thoughts, values, and identity of a performer. The study not only highlights the importance of engaging in reflective journaling but also examines other facets of music performance, encompassing the difficulties associated with phrasing, dynamics, spoken dialogue, and high notes. The researcher demonstrates the potential to address these problems and achieve emotionally impactful performances through diligent practice and the application of mental imagery techniques. In summary, this research offers a thorough exploration of the realm of music and the utilization of reflective journaling as a methodological approach. This analysis emphasizes the essential significance of emotional attachment, technical expertise, and imaginative interpretation in the execution of art songs, while also demonstrating the transformational and empowering potential of reflective journaling as a means for musicians to enhance their pursuit of artistic excellence.

**Keywords:** malay art song, artistic research, reflective journaling, interpretation

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## Introduction

In the realm of music, where creativity and emotions come together, a simple notepad transforms into a pathway, to self-discovery and artistic development. Keeping a journal is a practiced technique across various domains like nursing education, teacher training, physical therapy, sports science education and music performance. Known as writing well, this process enables musicians to explore their practice more profoundly by addressing their feelings, thoughts and convictions concerning their music. This introspective journey can significantly aid musicians as they navigate the intricacies of their odyssey<sup>3</sup>.

The concept of practicing as research for musicians has garnered attention in times by acknowledging that artistic practice can yield insights and knowledge. Through embracing journaling musicians can proactively assess their practices and develop a deeper comprehension of their artistry. Reflective journaling allows musicians to critically examine their playing, explore their emotions and thoughts related to their musical performance, and gain new perspectives on their own musical abilities and growth. Through the act of reflective journaling, musicians become more aware of their feelings and knowledge, ultimately transforming their beliefs and perspectives. This transformative process can be highly beneficial to musicians in particular.

The main goal of this research is to investigate the use of journaling in enhancing proficiency in performing the Malay art song “Enigma Hati,” composed by Marzelan Salleh in 2022. It also aims to explore the advantages of using an approach to support performers through the learning and performance phases of a complex art song. This study serves as an investigation for journaling, serving as an evolving mechanism for discovery.

As the singer and researcher in this study I have intentionally chosen to adopt a first-person perspective to showcase two points. Firstly, I aim to demonstrate how reflective journaling can significantly enhance a performer understanding of their performance process. Secondly, I aim to highlight that engaging in practice can deepen a performers’ insight into their actions, thoughts, values and identity while improving their awareness, observation skills and expertise<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Aggett, C. (2014). *Australian art song: Pedagogical learning and teaching strategies framed for singers and singing teachers* (thesis). University of Western Sydney, Sydney.

<sup>4</sup> Health professionals and students’ experiences of reflective writing in learning: A qualitative meta-synthesis. *BMC Medical Education*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-021-02831-4>

## **Reflective and Reflexive Exploration of Poetry's Role in Shaping Art Songs**

Practicing self-reflection and introspection is becoming more crucial in the music industry, enabling musicians to delve deeper into their performances and enhance their skills. According to a study conducted by Barrett in 2004 it is essential to provide musicians with opportunities to express their thoughts through mediums and engage in analysis. This method helps musicians interpret their experiences and advance their learning process. Another study, by Barrett highlights the significance of encouraging musicians to discuss, reflect on and write about their journeys. This does not aid in understanding their progress. It also contributes to their professional development<sup>5</sup>. The concept of being a practitioner is widely acknowledged in music education.

Journaling reflections on singing serves as a tool for singers to enable them to record and assess their experiences and personal growth methodically. Through journaling singers can. Scrutinize their vocal development journey effectively gaining meaningful insights into their progress, as singers. Additionally keeping a journal while singing can serve as a way for singers to assess their own performances pinpoint areas needing improvement and establish goals, for future growth. This practice helps singers deepen their understanding of their techniques and abilities, fostering development and progress. The process of journaling allows singers to track their learning journey recognize challenges they face along the way and monitor their advancements over time. By engaging in journaling singers do not document their experiences but also gain insight into their vocal development while nurturing self-reflection and personal growth. This approach encourages individuals to evaluate their thoughts, actions and experiences in a way. Overall maintaining a journal provides singers with a tool for self-reflection and enhancement of skills. Reflective journaling in singing offers advantages to singers on a level. It can also serve as a valuable tool, for educators. Teachers can leverage these journals to evaluate student development pinpoint areas needing enhancement and offer tailored feedback and support. Ultimately incorporating journaling in singing benefits singers by promoting self-reflection and personal development while simultaneously enriching the experience, in vocal training<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Forsblom, A., & Ala-Ruona, E. (2012). Professional competences of music therapists working in post-stroke rehabilitation. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v12i3.647>

<sup>6</sup> Rodríguez Marconi, D., Morales Cárdenas, C., Gaete Antilen, L., Garrido Ormeño, M., & Pardo Reyes, C. (2018). Level of physiological, anatomical and pathological knowledge of the singing voice on the part of professional and amateur singers. *Revista CEFAC*, 20(5), 621–631. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-021620182054118>

Journals serve as a tool to support self-learning and promote the growth of practitioners. Through engaging in journaling singers can deepen their self-awareness. Enhance their understanding of their vocal techniques. Reflective journaling is commonly used by professionals, in areas like teacher training and science education to improve learning outcomes and encourage introspection. It offers singers a platform not to track their progress and development but to ponder over their learning journey and obstacles they encounter. Additionally reflective journaling enables singers to identify patterns in their progress, offering insights into areas of strength and areas needing improvement. The focus of the journal entry revolves around Art Song, a genre of music that combines poetry with music. Originating in Europe towards the century especially in Italy Art Song features concise lyrics and emotive melodies to convey thoughts and emotions effectively. Performances of Art Songs require attention to detail with singers showcasing their prowess to breathe life into the poetic text.

Art songs aren't just compositions; they're a blend of artistic expression and skilled singing. According to Proehoeman (2013) art songs involve more than singing. They require diction to convey meaning. Singers performing art songs must focus on pronunciation, enunciation of vowels and consonants and even the ending sounds of words. The accompaniment plays a crucial role in art songs. It provides a harmonic and melodic foundation for the singer, enhancing the overall musical experience. The piano is the most common instrument used for accompaniment in art songs. Its versatile and expressive nature allows it to complement the vocal line and add depth to the composition. The role of the accompanist is to support and interact with the singer, creating a seamless musical partnership. They must have a deep understanding of the style and structure of the art song, as well as the ability to interpret the nuances of the text<sup>7</sup>.

Poetry holds a significant place in art songs. The use of poetry in art songs adds depth, emotion, and meaning to the music<sup>8</sup>. The text of the poem is carefully chosen to evoke specific emotions and create a narrative within the song. Using carefully selected poems, art songs have the power to transport listeners to a different world and evoke a range of emotions. Art songs are not just about music; they are a fusion of poetry and music, creating a unique artistic expression. Art songs provide a platform for artistic expression,

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<sup>7</sup> Bowen, J. A. (1996). Performance practice versus performance analysis: Why should performers study performance. *Performance Practice Review*, 9(1), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.5642/perfpr.199609.01.03>

<sup>8</sup> Zamani, M. F., & Abd Gani, A. F. (2020). Razak Abdul Aziz's 10 pantun settings: Imagery behind the chosen texts. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(6). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v10-i6/7465>

allowing composers and performers to convey emotions, tell stories, and connect with audiences on a deeper level. Through the combination of music and poetry, art songs offer a unique opportunity for composers and singers to express their creativity and interpretive skills. Art songs allow for the exploration of complex emotions and themes, as well as the opportunity to showcase the technical and expressive abilities of both the composer and performer. The composition techniques in art songs are highly sophisticated, particularly when it comes to piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment in art songs is not simply a background support, but rather an equal partner to the vocal line<sup>9</sup>. It intertwines with the voice to create a harmonious and expressive musical experience.

The composer's emotional involvement, intellectual grasp, and physical understanding of the text inform their music and shape the composition of the art song<sup>10</sup> (Abd Wahab & Md Noor, 2022). They carefully select and interpret the poems, considering the historical context, poetic and musical form, as well as the internal harmonic, melodic, and motivic structures. These compositional choices are aimed at enhancing the emotional impact of the music and effectively conveying the poet's ideas through musical expression. Art songs are often based on lyrics from famous poets, adding a highly literary element to the composition. Furthermore, the compositional structure of art songs can also be influenced by social and cultural factors. The creative process of composing an art song involves a combination of cognitive competence and technical abilities. Composers draw on their knowledge of music theory, harmony, melody, rhythm, and form to create a cohesive and meaningful musical structure. They skillfully navigate the complexities of musical composition, employing techniques such as modulation, counterpoint, and thematic development to craft a compelling and evocative musical narrative.

## **Journaling Enigma Hati**

### **The Composer**

Marzelan Salleh, a contemporary Malaysian composer, combines his multicultural background with Western classical music. He believes in the connection between art and intercultural influences. Salleh explores traditional

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<sup>9</sup> Mohamed Razali, C. S., & Salleh, M. (2021). Intercultural creativity and exploration through Gamelanistic elements in Marzelan Salleh's Puteri Gunung Ledang and John Cage's dream. *Revista Música Hodie*, 20. <https://doi.org/10.5216/mh.v20.65011>

<sup>10</sup> Abd Wahab, A. F., & Md Noor, K. D. (2022). From Forest to a song; a process of extracting the soundscape of nature into art songs. *Formosa Journal of Applied Sciences*, 1(3), 285–292. <https://doi.org/10.55927/fjas.v1i3.1080>

music as a source of creative ideas and techniques. He integrates both traditional and foreign styles, exploring new dimensions in music by incorporating elements from different cultures. Marzelan's modern intercultural music blends Malaysian and foreign elements, resulting from personal experiences and synthesis of two worlds. He critically analyzes compositional processes, employing foreign compositional techniques.

### **Learning the poem**

The first thing that I will do when I get a new art song is trying to understand the poem. Understanding the poem is essential to fully grasp the meaning and emotions behind the song. By analyzing the figurative language and imagery used in the lyrics, I can gain a deeper understanding of the poet's intentions and purpose. Additionally, understanding the poem also helps in effectively conveying the message of the song to the audience. Listening to music is an enjoyable experience, but if we do not grasp the meaning of the song through understanding the figurative words commonly used in the song, our appreciation for the music may be limited<sup>11</sup> (Bowen, 1996).

As a performer, having a comprehensive understanding of the poem's narrative plays a crucial part in expressing a single feeling throughout the song. When we first learn about art songs, we must understand the poem that the song's lyrics are based on. Understanding the poem is important because it helps us figure out how to understand and enjoy the art song. When we listen to a poem as part of an art song, it's important to understand what it means and how it works. By understanding the poem, we can get a sense of the feelings, themes, and images that the composer wants to show through the music. Enigma Hati enlightens us on a song that offers a prayer to God, asking for inner serenity and direction. We can acquire a more profound comprehension of the verse's subject matter as well as its message if we examine the indirect phrases and symbols contained within the poem. An examination of the indirect phrases contained in a poem can make it simpler for the reader to comprehend the poem's subject matter and unearth the poem's underlying significance. In addition, looking closely at the odd words and phrases that are contained inside the verse might reveal extremely helpful insights on the meaning that the poet was going for.

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<sup>11</sup> Bowen, J. A. (1996). Performance practice versus performance analysis: Why should performers study performance. *Performance Practice Review*, 9(1), 17–34.  
<https://doi.org/10.5642/perfpr.199609.01.03>

### ENIGMA HATI

Tertanyaku mengapakah kau hadir  
Debarannya oh hati ini bila kau tiba  
when you arrive  
Getarnya menusuk disanubariku  
Oh inikah rahsia cinta oh benarkah

Degup hati apabila kau muncul  
Ku merasa oh bahagia dalam jiwaku  
Denyutan mencengkam dalam hati ini  
Oh inikah dinamakan kasih yang sebenar

Kau dengarlah hatiku ini memanggilmu

Ya tuhan kau berikan kekuatan  
untukku tempuh semuanya

Aku mencari sesuatu  
Yang belum lagi kutemu

Enigma hatiku ini keliru  
Oh tuhan kau kurniakan  
Kekuatan buatku trima segalanya

Oh dan ku reda

### MYSTERY OF THE HEART

I wonder why you have appeared  
The palpitations, oh my heart,

The tremors pierce through my soul  
Oh, is this the secret of love, is it true?

My heart races when you appear  
I feel happiness deep within my soul  
The throbbing grips my heart  
Oh, is this what true love is called?

Can you hear my heart calling out  
to you?

Oh Lord, grant me the strength  
to face it all

I am searching for something  
That I have not yet found

The enigma of my heart is confused  
Oh Lord, you have bestowed  
Strength upon me to accept  
everything  
Oh, and I am content

### Poem: Enigma Hati by Marzelan Salleh

When I read the poem, it sounds like a love song, but that's just the surface. What's really going on is that it's a metaphor for why God is with us and how worried we are when we talk to God. By looking at how "Enigma Hati" uses indirect language, I can figure out its greater spiritual meaning and learn more about the poet's relationship with God. When I think about God, I feel love and peace. This poem's reading is based on how the reader feels about love and faith, which may differ for each person. I can also tell from the poem that the writer talks about how God gives her strength to get through the trip and guidance when things are hard or unclear. This is clear in words like "In every trial, I find strength" and "God's love is my anchor in the storm." These phrases show that the poet looks to God for help and support. By using heuristic reading, hermeneutic reading, and looking at hypograms and intertextual connections, we can dig deeper into the layers of meaning in "Enigma Hati." Heuristic reading means going into the work with an open mind and letting our own experiences and feelings help us figure out what it means.

### Phrasing with Poetry: Connecting Lyrics and Music

One of the difficulties that I found when practicing this song is phrasing. The phrasing from bar 5 until bar 19 is quite demanding because of the long phrases. Long-phrase singing requires careful breath management and consistent vocal support throughout the passage. To effectively convey the intended message and emotion of a musical phrase, I precisely articulate it essentially for the listener to understand and connect with the lyrics when I sing. Utilizing the correct phrasing technique allows for the seamless flow of musical phrases, enhancing the overall musicality of the performance<sup>12</sup>. This is where the technique of singing to improve singers' phrasing comes into play. By practicing singing through a piece, singers can develop their awareness of the phrasing and learn how to connect each musical phrase in a cohesive manner<sup>13</sup>.

**Fig. 1**

The musical score for 'Enigma Hati' by Marzelan Salleh, covering bars 5 to 12, is presented for Soprano Solo (S. Solo) and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'A tempo'. The dynamics range from piano (pp) to mezzo-piano (mp). The lyrics are: 'Ter - ta-nya ku me-nga-pah-kah kau ha - dir\_ De-ba-ran-nya\_ oh ha-ti i - ni\_ bi - la kau ti - ba'.

**Bar 5 – bar 12, Enigma Hati by Marzelan Salleh**

<sup>12</sup> Suzuki, M., Hosoya, T., Ito, A., & Makino, S. (2006). Music Information Retrieval from a singing voice using lyrics and melody information. *EURASIP Journal on Advances in Signal Processing*, 2007(1). <https://doi.org/10.1155/2007/38727>

<sup>13</sup> Zhang, D., & Wang, X. (2022). Optimization of vocal singing training methods based on multimedia data analysis. *Mathematical Problems in Engineering*, 2022, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/7609516>



In addition, using imagery or metaphor to explain what the music should sound like can also greatly enhance a singer's understanding and execution of phrasing. For example, comparing a certain musical phrase to the graceful flight of a bird or the gentle flow of a river can help students visualize and embody the desired expressive qualities in their singing<sup>14</sup>. Precise articulation of speech sounds is crucial for conveying the intended message and emotional impact of musical phrases. Without clear and accurate articulation, the listener may struggle to understand the lyrics being sung, leading to a disconnect between the performer and the audience. Good vocal projection is also important for efficient vocal adjustment, especially in large performance environments. By projecting their voice effectively, singers can ensure that their message is heard clearly even in larger spaces. Addressing these aspects of singing technique and phrasing early on in students' singing lessons is crucial for developing a better singing voice performance.

Some exercises to improve better phrasing include practicing breath control by consciously controlling the breathing rate according to the length of the musical phrase<sup>15</sup>. This helps prevent the vocal organs from becoming rigid and allows for a smoother and more fluid delivery of the phrases.

In addition, incorporating vocal practice that utilizes memory is also essential for improving phrasing. By remembering prior tones as reference points for future tones, students can develop a sense of continuity and coherence in their singing. They can also focus on memorizing tones within phrases and larger segments, which helps in maintaining the structure and shape of the music. Overall, teaching expressive performance and improving phrasing in singing involves a combination of techniques such as singing through a piece, using imagery or metaphor, focusing on developing accurate articulation and vocal projection, and incorporating exercises that improve breath control and utilize memory.

Other exercises to have longer phrasing include practicing sustained notes, where students hold a pitch for an extended period of time. This helps develop breath control and allows singers to explore the nuances and variations within a single note. Improving the level of singing work also requires training in the breathing method<sup>16</sup>. Conscious control of the breathing rate

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<sup>14</sup> Merrill, J., Sammler, D., Bangert, M., Goldhahn, D., Lohmann, G., Turner, R., & Friederici, A. D. (2012). Perception of words and pitch patterns in song and speech. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00076>

<sup>15</sup> Martinez, J. (2008). Effects of singing classes on pulmonary function and quality of life of COPD patients. *International Journal of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.2147/copd.s4077>

<sup>16</sup> Su, L. (2022, August 29). The Use of Thinking Visualization Techniques in College Teaching Based on Improved Genetic Algorithms. <https://scite.ai/reports/10.1155/2022/8508787>

based on the length of the phrase is necessary to prevent rigidity in the vocal organs. Additionally, singing therapy has shown promise in improving speech difficulties related to neurological disorders. In summary, accurate articulation of speech sounds is crucial for the listeners to understand the message of musical phrases.

Vocal warmup to improve phrasing in singing can include exercises such as lip trills, sirens, and tongue twisters. These exercises help in developing flexibility and control over the vocal muscles, allowing singers to navigate through phrases with ease.

### Expressive Dynamics: Conveying Emotion Through Singing

This song witnesses a quite significant change in dynamics and is among the challenges when singing this song. The use of dynamics such as *pp*, *p*, crescendo, and decrescendo is present in section A and only switches to *forte* in section B. Singing with dynamics in section A is quite demanding. Firstly, after getting the melody of the song, I practiced by listening to my tone when singing *pp* dynamics. I recorded the singing during practice sessions and listened back to analyzing my voice tone and controlling it during performances.

Fig. 2

Section A, Enigma Hati by Marzelan Salleh

Fig. 3

### Section B, Enigma Hati by Marzelan Salleh

To sing dynamic *ppp*, I must maintain a soft and delicate vocal quality while still projecting enough sound to be heard. To achieve this, I must carefully control my breath support and vocal technique to produce a subtle and controlled sound. For good singing, it is important that a singer should maintain the basic tonal concept and core of his/her vocal production, even when expressing different moods, or altering phrasing and dynamics. This ensures consistency and stability in the singer's vocal performance, allowing them to effectively convey the intended emotions and musical expression. Additionally, the singer must also pay attention to their articulation and vocal projection.

To improve the ability to sing soft dynamics and maintain control, it is crucial for singers to incorporate vocal warm-up exercises into their practice routines. These warm-up exercises can include *messa di voce* exercises, which involve gradually increasing and decreasing the volume of a sustained note. These exercises are comparable to turning the radio volume knob up and down, as described by Titze<sup>17</sup>. By regularly practicing *messa di voce* exercises, singers can develop the necessary control and coordination of their vocal muscles to achieve soft dynamics with ease. In addition to vocal warm-up exercises, singers can also benefit from mastering diaphragmatic breathing techniques. This involves engaging the diaphragm muscle to support the breath and provide a strong foundation for vocal production.

<sup>17</sup> Aggett, C. (2014). *Australian art song: Pedagogical learning and teaching strategies framed for singers and singing teachers* (thesis). University of Western Sydney, Sydney.

Fig. 4

2

13

S. Solo

*mp* *mf*

Ge-tar-nya me-nu-suk di - sa-nu-ba - ri - ku Oh -i -ni -kah\_ rah

Pno.

*pp* *p* *pp* *p* *mp* *mp*

### Enigma Hati by Marzelan Salleh

To ensure that the dynamics are conveyed correctly, I use words within the lyrics to evoke more emotion. What I always do is use mental images. For example, for the word “Debarannya” (nervousness) in bar 9 and “getarnya” (trembling) in bar 13, I think of things that are related to me that are nerve-wracking, like when my child fell ill. I try to imagine the feelings I had at that moment and bring them out when I sing. This can help me become more expressive, which can be seen through facial expressions and vocal tones. Practicing dynamic changes using mental images can be a valuable technique for singers looking to infuse their performances with more emotion and expressiveness. It begins with a deep understanding of the song’s lyrics, identifying key phrases that demand dynamic variation. These phrases serve as focal points for creating vivid mental images that connect with the intended emotions. As singers, I close my eyes and immerse myself in these scenarios, I can feel how these emotions naturally affect their body and voice. This practice not only helps in adjusting vocal dynamics but also facial expressions and overall performance demeanor. Regularly recording these practice sessions allows singers to assess their progress and refine their technique. Over time, this method helps singers deliver more authentic and moving performances that resonate deeply with their audience.

### Spoken Dialogue in Art Song: Adding Depth to Vocal Performance

One of the interesting parts in this song is from bar 51 to 53, where the composer included a spoken dialogue. Initially, it was a bit challenging for me to articulate these lines while singing. I sought guidance from the composer regarding the appropriate tone for delivering the text and the emotions, aiming

to gain a clear understanding of the composer's intentions. During rehearsals, I experimented with different vocal tones and had discussions with the composer to determine the most suitable approach. What was particularly intriguing was that, when singing this part, the vocal tone for the spoken dialogue was distinct, possibly due to my warmed-up voice and a somewhat higher voice placement. Nevertheless, I still attempted to convey the dialogue with a whispered and emotional delivery.

**Fig. 5**

51 Whispering voice with quasi pitch 5

S. Solo *ppp*

A ku men-ca-ri se-sua-tu yang be lum la gi

Pno. *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

### Spoken Dialogue, Enigma Hati by Marzelan Salleh

Spoken dialogue in art songs, while less common than in opera or musical theatre, is still occasionally used as a stylistic choice to convey specific dramatic or narrative elements within a song. This technique can be found in certain pieces of classical and contemporary art song repertoire. For example, composers like Benjamin Britten, in his song cycle "Les Illuminations," incorporate spoken sections between the sung portions to emphasize certain text passages. These spoken segments can provide contrast, highlight important phrases, or create a unique expressive effect. Additionally, some modern composers and songwriters may experiment with spoken word sections in art songs to explore new ways of combining text and music, adding a contemporary twist to the genre. While spoken dialogue is not a standard feature of art songs, its occasional use can be a creative means of enhancing the expressive and narrative qualities of the music.

Mastering spoken dialogue in art songs is pivotal for me to deliver a compelling and emotionally resonant performance. For me, it begins with my thorough understanding of the song's lyrics and the narrative they convey. I find that when I analyze a story, characters, and emotional context within

a song, it is equally crucial. I think it's important to speak pronounce words accurately and deliver my lines in a way to connect with the audience. Creating a bond, with the text and using vocal variety to match emotions are key parts of how I bring my dialogue to life. I also use gestures and body language appropriately to make my performance more expressive. Practicing regularly with music playing in the background helps me get the timing right when speaking. Working with coaches and recording my practice sessions for feedback are ways for me to improve my dialogue skills. Ultimately, I strive to make my characters. Their stories come alive adding richness and authenticity to my art song performance that will touch your heart with every word spoken.

### **Passaggio in Art Songs: The Vocal Bridge to Expressive Performance**

I utilize this journal as a platform for documenting my observations and reflections pertaining to the vocal technique of producing high notes. The highest pitch in this musical composition is B5, which necessitates a delicate vocal execution due to the lyrical substance associated with this note, namely, "I am content." To sing high notes in an aria for soprano with a light and airy quality, I need to focus on my vocal technique and breath control. I should begin my practice sessions with a thorough vocal warm-up, gradually working my way up the scale to prepare my vocal cords for the higher notes. Proper breath support is crucial for sustaining high notes, so I should practice diaphragmatic breathing and engage my abdominal muscles. I keep tension at bay by ensuring my jaw, neck, and shoulders remain relaxed while singing. On a daily basis, I engage in the process of documenting my practice sessions, wherein I reflect upon my personal encounters and articulate my experiences as I strive to achieve a mellifluous and serene vocal quality devoid of any semblance of vocal strain or excessive vocal projection.

To achieve a lighter tone in my high notes, I imagine my voice resonating in my head or mask area instead of my throat or chest. I will dedicate time to practicing scales and arpeggios that cover the range of high notes in the aria. These exercises build muscle memory and control in my vocal cords. Additionally, I incorporate vocal exercises like lip trills, sirens, and vowel sirens to improve my agility in the upper register. When I sing high notes, I consider modifying my vowels slightly to achieve the desired lightness. I will experiment with slightly narrower vowel shapes, but I need to be cautious not to create excessive tension. I will analyze the aria's score to understand its context and emotion, allowing me to deliver a more expressive performance. It is really helpful to record my practice sessions, for self-evaluation. When I listen back, I focus on pinpointing areas where I can improve. Currently I am looking for advice from a soprano repertoire coach who can offer personalized

feedback and help me perfect my technique. It is important to keep in mind that mastering the light and effortless quality of notes takes time and consistent practice. I need to be patient with myself and committed to my training journey. With dedication I will progress in singing notes in arias with the desired grace and ease, over time.

## Conclusion

After reflecting on my experience, with keeping a journal while exploring the Malay art song “Enigma Hati” by Marzelan Salleh I have gained insights and faced various challenges as a singer/researcher. Throughout this process I have dived into understanding the emotional essence of the poem honing my skills in phrasing, dynamics, dialogues within the song and reaching high notes. This journey has not enhanced my abilities but also allowed me to appreciate the intricate layers of artistic expression that define art songs as a distinctive and captivating musical genre.

Keeping a journal has proven to be a tool for tracking my development, emotions and obstacles along the way. It has provided me with a platform to gain insights into how text and music intertwine in art songs. Grasping the subtleties of the poem has been essential for conveying my message and establishing a profound connection with listeners. Mastering phrasing and dynamics have posed both expressive challenges during my performances. I've discovered that dedicated practice sessions and visualization techniques have been instrumental in mastering these elements ensuring an emotionally engaging rendition of the song.

The use of dialogue woven into the music adds a captivating element, to how I present my art. I need to change my style and approach. It's crucial to think about what the composer intended and the emotions of the character. Understanding the story and using language to make it relatable to the audience is key. In short, my experience with writing in a journal has shown me how complex performing art songs can be. It highlights the importance of connecting mastering techniques and interpreting creatively when bringing these pieces to life. Through practicing self-reflection and deepening my understanding of this art form I can keep improving my performance of “Enigma Hati” and broaden my appreciation for the genre of art songs. Journaling is a tool for growth that boosts understanding and skill in this unique musical style.

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