EXPLORING MELISMA AND THE EFFECTS OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

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Abstract

The technique and use of melisma is an under researched area in contemporary vocal studies. Melisma refers to the singing of several notes on one syllable and is a popular vocal technique or device used in a variety of genres. This thesis explores the way melisma may be communicated in Contemporary Popular Music (CPM). This includes the types and contexts of melisma.

The thesis is divided into two stages of data collection and analysis. The first stage analyses stylistically different songs from two popular artists, Jessica Mauboy and Justin Timberlake. The purpose of this analysis was to explore the way melisma may be used by CPM artists and to determine whether the use of melisma is influenced by stylistic changes, vocal ability and/or song context. The analyses included a comparison of studio recordings and live recordings from various media platforms.

The second stage comprised of semi-structured interviews that were conducted in order to identify the attitudes, views, and understandings of professional singers who engage with melisma in their performance practice. The thesis concludes with a discussion of emergent themes derived from the findings.

Statement of Candidature

Statement of Candidate:

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled **"Exploring Melisma and the Effects of Emotional Expression in Contemporary Music"** has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I certify that the thesis is my original research. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are acknowledged in the thesis.

Mirrae Candice Nora Youssef

October 9, 2017

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Glossary

Ad-lib – Spontaneous improvisation of melodies[1], which can include melisma, and other forms of vocal improvisation and techniques.

Lick – A short melodic idea[2] that can be used to describe other instruments including the voice.

Melisma – The singing of several notes on one syllable either sung on a vowel sound of the syllable or as or non-verbal sound (e.g., "mm" or a hum). Melisma differs from the term 'lick' as it is specific to the voice. The overarching term for the following words: 'melismatic riff' and 'melismatic run'.

Melismatic Riff – A repeated sequence of notes in the melismatic phrase.

Melismatic Run – Melisma that uses many notes, is not repeated, and can be used for improvisational purposes.

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[1] See Chandler, K. (2014). Teaching popular music styles. In *Teaching singing in the 21st century* (Ed.) (pp. 35-52). (Landscapes: the arts, aesthetics, and education, 14).

[2] See Weir, M. (2001). Glossary. In *Vocal improvisation* (pp. 229-231). Advanced Music.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The voice as a musical instrument is complex. Firstly, unlike other musical instruments, singing is unique as it emanates from within the body and "draws our attention to something happening to the body itself" (Frith, 1996, p. 191). Secondly, singers are able to engage in a range of expressive and vocal techniques in order to articulate meaning and emotion in song. One such technique or device is the use of melisma. Melisma is vocally expressive and requires the singer to sing several notes on one sound or syllable. For example, melisma utilising the vowel can be heard in the word "hey" in the first 15 seconds of the song "Ain't No Other Man" (Aguilera, Roane, DioGuardi, Beatty, 2006) performed by Christina Aguilera.

Melisma is used across a wide range of musical genres. For the purpose of this research, the focus is on the use of melisma in Contemporary Popular Music (CPM) where it is often referred to as a vocal run (e.g., Robinson-Martin, 2014, p. 342), ad-libbing (e.g., Everitt, 2012, para. 19), riff (e.g., Everitt, 2012, para. 19), and/or lick (e.g., Chandler,2014, p. 43). However, the use of melisma did not emerge in Contemporary Popular Music (CPM). Its historical context includes its religious use in Gregorian chants (Everitt, 2012, para. 17) and liturgy as "expressive essence" (Crocker, 2017). It also featured in classical singing such as during "emotional points" of arias in European operas (Tagg, 2003, para. 3). In contemporary contexts, melisma is often heard in gospel singing in ways that characterise "each song in a unique way" (Fluker, 2017, para. 2) and allow gospel singers "such as Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles and Sam Cooke [to be] credited with bringing melisma from the choirs of churches to mainstream audiences" (Everitt, 2012, para. 18).

The concept that melisma may be intrapersonal provided the initial motivation for this research. As a singer, I have used melisma during performances to express my relation to the lyrics, melody, and overall story through song. As I began songwriting, I found that creating melisma was interdependent with my style of singing as it expressed and supported the emotion of the song. I subsequently found that the use of melisma in my performances heightened emotion and I wondered whether this was true for all singers or whether melisma was simply a mimicked vocal technique. My interest in melisma became intensified and my research began.

Whitney Houston is often cited (e.g., Everitt, 2012) in relation to melismatic artistry in CPM. Houston's use of melisma in her performance of "I Will Always Love You" (Parton, 1973) serves to heighten the "emotionally charged concept" (Tagg, 2003, p. 565) of 'love'. This is particularly evident when Houston adds melisma in words such as "I", "love", and "you". It is Houston's masterful delivery that, according to Everitt (2012), "pushed the technique [of melisma] into the mainstream in the 90s" (para. 4). Everitt (2012) describes Houston as being a "master" (para. 1) of melisma. Such attribution inherently implies successful melismatic delivery including associated vocal agility, technical ability and musicality. This is in addition to the emotional sense needed to convey particular concepts in a song.

For all the accolades that mainstream CPM singers such as Houston may receive in relation to their use of melisma, there are also those who are critical of the technique or the use of the technique. This is particularly evident in relation to the use of melisma in televised talent shows. According to Everitt (2012, para. 7) *Pop Idol* judges, Pete Waterman and Simon Cowell, banned "I Will Always Love You" from the audition process so as to not hear amateur singers imitate Houston's melisma. Similarly, Katzif (2007) commented on melisma being used for "dramatic or bluesy effect, sometimes with disastrous overkill" (para. 1) on

American Idol rather than it being used as "musical art" (para. 3), and stated that singers are "mimicking the devices of the style's most famous practitioners – singers like Mariah Carey, who indulge in runs" (para. 13). Although mimicking is one possible way to learn melisma, it appears to limit a singer if it is the only way melisma is used. Katzif also includes a "Melisma Master Class" where listeners are instructed to listen to various sound sources and judge to themselves whether or not the artist is a "master" or a "misuser". However, Katzif gives no criteria as to what determines a "master" or a "misuser" therefore making it difficult to understand these concepts. Veltman (2010) also comments on the growing obsession of singers to use melisma especially during vocal performances that are scheduled as mid-game baseball entertainment and associated sports performances of "God Bless America" (Berlin, 1938). However, it is interesting to note that such performances are by professional singers and therefore the criticism extends beyond amateur auditionees for reality television to professional singers and their use of melisma.

Such criticisms are important to consider when exploring melisma in CPM. Criticisms surrounding melisma suggest that it should be used effectively in a song. For example, Veltman (2010) explains that while it has the capabilities to make a performance "sound fuller" (para. 4), melisma can also sound "horrible when they're not done properly" (para. 4). Veltman therefore suggests that effective melismatic use in CPM adds to the overall texture of vocal performance. However, it is difficult to determine melismatic effectiveness based purely on ineffective notions of its use.

The literature, as discussed above, makes a distinction between effective and ineffective use of melisma, however the study pertains more to its communicative and expressive capabilities. These considerations, along with my own experience as previously outlined, led to this research on the use of melisma in contemporary singing. In order to undertake the study, the research was conducted in two stages. The first stage included a

musicological analysis of songs performed by Jessica Mauboy and Justin Timberlake. These two artists were chosen in order to explore melisma as both are mainstream CPM artists who have released various styles of music and utilised melisma in those styles. The analyses included a comparison of studio recordings and live recordings to analyse the way these singers use melisma in different settings (live versus recorded). The second stage comprised of semi-structured interviews of three professional singers who use melisma in their singing of CPM genres. For the purpose of this research, the term 'professional singers' refers to those singers who are currently performing in the music industry. The second stage of analyses aimed to explore expressive and emotional elements of melisma in song. Participant insights on the relation of melisma and emotion provided qualitative data that were analysed to determine emergent themes.

Research Significance and Limitations

This is a new area of study within contemporary voice practice, which is both beneficial and limiting. It is beneficial in the sense that it is a new area of research. It therefore adds new insight into the way melisma is used in a contemporary setting for researchers in vocal studies, singing teachers, and singers. However, the main limitation is that it is a small research project. The timeframe to conduct the research (February 2017-October 2017) and the word restrictions of the thesis are additional limitations. Although the research project was limited due to time constraints, the findings identify that further research should be conducted in the area of vocal techniques including melisma. It is important to remember that unlike classical voice pedagogy, contemporary voice pedagogy is still developing and expanding. Furthermore, there are a number of areas that are yet to be researched in a contemporary context.

Thesis Outline

The thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter Two reviews the current literature, or lack thereof, on the use of melisma in CPM, as well as clearly defining melisma and its related terms such as 'riff' and 'run'. Chapter Three outlines the methodologies that were used for the research. Chapter Four outlines Stage 1 and consists of a musicological analysis. It explores the use of melisma by CPM artists Mauboy and Timberlake. Chapter Five discusses the second stage of analysis (Stage 2) and includes the data from interviews on the use of melisma by professional CPM singers. Chapter Six concludes the discussion and provides a summary of the research, research findings and emergent themes, limitations, recommendations from the research findings and final thoughts on the research project.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The literature outlines the changes in vocal pedagogy that includes classical traditions to contemporary approaches (see Harrison & O'Bryan, 2014; LoVetri & Weekly, 2009). In a contemporary singing context, the literature has explored such things as the use of vibrato (e.g., Dromey, Holmes, Hopkin, & Tanner, 2015; Peckham, 2004) and belting techniques (Roll, 2016; Peckham, 2004; White, 2011). Whilst these techniques are important features in the singing of popular music, melisma is usually only briefly defined and has been overlooked as a vocal technique. Perhaps the reasoning behind the omission of melisma is that a technique such as 'belting', if used incorrectly, may lead to vocal damage (Spivey, 2008). Therefore, closely researching how to correctly achieve belt is essential for vocal health (Jahn, 2013). However, it is important to research other techniques such as melisma.

Historical Context

Singing with melisma is used in both Western and World music traditions. Although melisma is a "universal" term (Crocker, 2017), the use of melisma was a prominent feature of medieval European vocal music, more specifically of Gregorian chanting (see Crocker, 1995, 1996; Parr, 2009; Kelly, 2011). Melisma is also evident in opera of the nineteenth century (such as – Rosand, 1989; Parr, 2009). Indeed, the use of melisma is widespread across a range of musical genres including Indian Raga (Lavezzoli, 2006; Kuiper, 2011) and Arabic music (Cohen & Katz, 2006; Günther & Lawson, 2016). The definition of melisma as the singing of several notes on one syllable (Crocker, 2017) or achieved when "more than one note is sung on the vowel of a syllable" (Quiller, 2003, p. 499) is relevant to all traditions.

While melisma is still used in a contemporary sense, there are variations and associations of the word used in contemporary voice practice. When defining the term melisma, Galettis (2009) recognises the different terminology used. According to Galettis (2009), the word "lick, as in 'guitar lick'" (p. 61) is more commonly used in popular music than melisma. According to Kayes (2015), the use of the term 'lick' is "idiomatic to rock, pop and soul genres" (p. 71). Chandler (2014) also refers to melisma as a "'lick' or a 'riff'"(p. 43) and a 'run' as being an improvisational tool (p. 43). According to Chandler (2014), licks are sung over 3-4 notes and can be extended over an octave (p. 44). Witmer (2017) defines a lick as being a "short recognisable melodic motif, formula or phrase" (para. 1). A riff is also described as a short, repeated pattern (Robinson, 2017) and as such, is used for ornamentation rather than improvisational purposes. Robinson-Martin (2014) associates the length of a run with melisma explaining that a run uses "many notes" (p. 345) and similar to melisma in that it is only associated to the voice. When used in relation to singing, all these terms come under the main theme of vocal agility due to the vocal flexibility required for their implementation (see Chandler, 2014; Robinson-Martin, 2014). According to Miller (1986), agility is achieved as a result of a dynamic muscle balance, and once that flexibility and power are combined it will result in "good" (p. 41) singing.

Melisma, run, riff and lick are often used interchangeably, which is evident in the literature (as outlined above). This interchangeability is also evident in YouTube examples, which showcase contemporary voice teachers instructing viewers the methods of achieving runs/riffs/licks (e.g., EricArceneaux, 2008; Tyshan Knight, 2012; PaulMckayONEVoice, 2014; Felicia Ricci, 2015; Saher Galt, 2015). However, the issue then becomes whether a contemporary singer is able to differentiate between these techniques when the literature does not clearly define them. Melisma, however, is unique because it relates only to singing whereas a riff or lick has associations with other instruments. Clarification of the term 'vocal

melisma' is therefore important and forms part of this research project and is also relevant to contemporary vocal pedagogy.

The purpose of the literature review is to closely analyse texts relevant to the research. Unfortunately, there is little research-based literature concerning the potential connection between melisma and emotion. Therefore, in order to provide a comprehensive literature review, this chapter includes literature that discusses melisma in singing, including the voice and/or music and emotion more broadly. The first part of this literature review covers the meaning and use of the term Contemporary Popular Music (CPM). It will then include research into the use of melisma across a range of contemporary popular music genres. Lastly, it will identify a possible connection between emotion and melisma.

Contemporary Popular Music

The research project has already made mention of the term 'Contemporary Popular Music' (CPM). It is necessary to explain the use of CPM and how it is the most appropriate term for this study. Due to the fact that popular music is such a broad category, it has the capabilities of confusing the study. Including the word 'contemporary' narrows the study to the genres and styles of music relevant to the research. Other terms are not as well suited. For example, 'Contemporary Commercial Music' (CCM) (LoVetri, 2008) has the connotation of the commerciality of music. Therefore, CCM does not suit the parameters of the project as the focus is not on the commercial aspects of melisma and is more focused on how singers communicate melisma.

'Popular Culture Musics' (PCM) (Hughes, 2010) is a term that describes and embraces all musical styles in popular music:

> It eliminates potential confusion stemming from the use of the
> "contemporary", broadens the narrowness of the term "pop" and lessens the

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connotation of music as "commodity", as not all musical styles or

performances are "commercial" in their primary intent. (Hughes, 2010, p. 245)

For the purposes of this study, using both 'contemporary' and 'popular' to categorise the

research scope eliminates the "confusion" and "narrowness" that Hughes (2010) describes.

Although the research embraces a range of musical genres within the CPM category, its focus

is more on the styles within a genre. It is therefore important to consider the difference

between genre and style.

Shuker (2001) defines genre as a "category or type" (p. 149). Shuker (2001) also

makes mention of the scholarly interchange of the two terms 'style' and 'genre' while some

scholars have a preference for one or the other (p. 149). Frith (1996) refers to the use of genre

as a tool to "define music in its market or, alternatively, the market in its music" (p. 76).

Genres are therefore constructed and used for commercial purposes (Frith, 1996, pp. 88-89).

However, some scholars have delineated style and genre. For example, style refers to a "mode

of expression; more particularly the manner in which a work of art is executed" (Pascall,

2017). Drawing on these definitions, the study will discuss the use of melisma in specific

genres and refer to the elements of style that assist in categorising a genre.

Towards defining contemporary vocal melisma

In order to acquire the 'riffs' and 'runs' of gospel singers, Fluker (2017) recommends

that the singer be inspired by "gospel greats" (para. 1). The article uses terms like 'melisma',

'ad-lib', 'riff', and 'run' interchangeably when describing its use by gospel singers. This

highlights the importance of defining each term. As previously stated, melisma can be traced

as far back as medieval European music (and possibly even further) (Crocker, 2017).

Therefore, this research study uses 'melisma' as the overarching term. The study will not take

into consideration the term 'ad-lib' although the article (Fluker, 2017) and Chandler (2014)

have referred to melisma as being an 'ad-lib'. The main reason for this is because ad-lib refers

to vocal improvisation; whether or not melisma is improvised will be explored. However, it could be argued that, in addition to its multiple descriptions, melisma may have several characteristics. This is similar to the vocal technique, vibrato. For example, Vendera (2007) describes four different types of vibrato: pitch, stomach, jaw and larynx vibrato (pp. 277-280). Vibrato can also be described as a "wobble" (Felicia Ricci, 2014, 2:37). In addition, Brown (1996) notes that vibrato can change based on cultural differences and influences (p. 96).

Therefore, based on the explanations discussed above, 'melisma' can be defined as the singing of several notes on a syllable either sung on a vowel sound of the syllable or as a non-verbal sound (e.g., "mm" or a hum). However, a further distinction can be made between 'melismatic run' and 'melismatic riff'. Therefore the definition of a 'melismatic run' is based on Robinson-Martin's (2014) use of the term 'run' and Chandler's (2014) association of 'run' to 'ad-lib'. For the purpose of this research, a 'melismatic run' can be an improvised vocal melisma that may use many notes (more than several); a 'melismatic riff' differs from a 'melismatic run' in that it is a short and repeated phrase.

Musical Genres, Emotion and Melisma

While there are several genres that may feature vocal melisma, discussing all such genres in relation to melisma is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, the review focuses on blues and gospel. Rhythm and blues is not reviewed due to its description as an "umbrella term" (Bowman, 2012, p. 392). According to Bowman (2012), it is a term that refers to all popular music created by African-Americans after World War II (p. 392). Jazz will also not be included as it is more common for jazz singers to improvise and scat. Scat singing refers to "wordless jazz singing in which meaningless syllables are sung as part of an improvised melodic line" (Shipton, 2003, p. 159). Melismatic singing may occur in jazz (e.g., melisma on the vowel sound in the first 20 seconds of Ella Fitzgerald's performance of "Cry Me a River"

(Hamilton, 1953) in 1961). However, examples that are used in the literature (e.g., Weir, 2015; Anderson, 1980) suggest that scat singing may be more closely associated with syllabic singing and melodic variations than with melismatic singing.

The notion of spontaneity/vocal improvisation is relevant to the concept of 'melismatic runs'. However, Frith (1996) suggests that spontaneity is created when the singer is "driven by the physical logic of the sound of the words rather than by the semantic meaning of the verse" (p. 193). The inference here is that such vocal spontaneity may not be emotionally driven. By examining blues and gospel music, I aim to understand if melisma is used as an improvisational tool that can be related to an emotional aspect of the song.

Blues

There is extensive literature on the origin of the blues (e.g., Evans, 2002; Komara & Lee, 2004; Oliver, 2017). However, considering the origins of a genre is an "elaborate and unresolvable debate" (Frith, 1996, p. 88) and as Oliver (2017) indicates, there is no actual supporting evidence of the beginning of the blues sound (para. 6), the aim of this section is to examine the motivations behind the sound of the blues singing voice. According to Komara and Lee (2004), the blues singer is the "central figure of any performing group or ensemble" (p. 883) although some instrumentalists may take on the "second voice" (Komara & Lee, p. 883). However, instrumentalists are not as powerful as the voice due to the voice's ability to expressively illustrate through lyrics. Similarly, the singer in CPM genres is usually the central figure and is highly idolised by fans (e.g., see Ehrenreich, Hess, & Jacobs, 1992 for details on Beatlemania).

The blues genre is known for its ability to "express the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the singer as well as the spontaneous inventions and variations of musicians at the moment of the performance" (Evans, 2002, p. 20). Spontaneous vocals are often accompanied by experimental vocal sounds such as growls, wailing, screaming, sliding, and

bending of notes (Evans, 2002, p. 21; Jungr, 2002, p. 104; Oliver, 2017, para. 2). In addition, melisma is one of the vocal ornamentations used by blues (and gospel) singers (Jungr, 2002, p. 104).

There are stylistic elements that differentiate blues from other genres of CPM. One of which is the 12-bar blues chord structure which uses three chords (I, IV and V) over a 12-bar pattern (Winterson, Bricheno, & Nickol, 2003, p. 140; Oliver, 2017, para. 3). The lyrical structure that accompanies the chord structure consists of three lines, two of which are repeated whilst the third is often improvised (Winterson, Bricheno, & Nickol, 2003, p. 141; Oliver, 2017). The simple chordal structure allowed the blues singer to depict various themes that were relevant to the singer such as the working life, love ballads, sexuality, and spiritual connections (Evans, 2002, p. 22; Alper, 2005, p. 2; Oliver, 2017, para. 17). In addition, blues vocalists often created characters for their songs in order to deal with specific issues (Bowers, 1993; Evans, 2002; Smith, 2005). According to Bowers (1993), this sparked questions pertaining to truth in the lyrics and performance (p. 29).

Another popular element of blues music is "riffs" (Winterson et al., 2003, p. 142). According to Evans (2002), the "riff idea" was commonly used in older forms of African instrumental dance music before it was adopted into blues music (p. 23). The definition according to Winterson et al. (2013) is nonspecific in its use:

> Riff… A short, repeated melodic pattern, often forming the background to a solo or a vocal line, or to a whole song. It is usually 1-4 bars long. It may be heard at different pitches to fit in with the harmony and may also change its shape slightly. (p. 164)

Evans (2002) describes the way in which instruments, excluding the voice, use riffs, which alludes to the idea that 'riff' is not the correct terminology when describing the repeated pattern of the voice. However, Smith (2005) concludes that "no one performance is repeated

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twice, certain textual, melodic and harmonic patterns emerge to form the basis for newly improvised material" (p. 183).

Gospel

Gospel music has significantly impacted CPM genres (Legg, 2010; Jennings, 2014). Blues, rock'n'roll, and Motown artists like Jerry Lee Lewis, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Sam Cooke, Elvis Presley, and Marvin Gaye share a similar trait; their musical influence began from the Pentecostal church (Jennings, 2014, p. 212). According to Soto-Morettini (2014), gospel and blues music are closely related (p. 106). Robinson-Martin (2014) details some of the features of gospel music which may be also evident in blues:

> Gospel music tends to reflect the emotional, spiritual, physical, and historical journey of those who participate, and testifies to the contribution religion has made towards that journey. (p. 336)

However, in comparison with blues music, gospel places more emphasis on the spiritual connection and journey the individual has with God.

Gospel singers usually express their journey and spirituality through the use of vocal techniques like "'gravel', 'slides', 'wails', 'screams' and 'shouts'" (Legg, 2010, p. 104). Likewise, these techniques are also evident in blues music. In addition, Soto-Morettini (2014) identifies the importance of a "'chesty' belt" (p. 106) in regards to gospel vocal techniques. Robinson-Martin (2014) identifies spiritual belt voice in relation to the gospel sound and normal speech, as well as a "kinesthetic and aural awareness" (p. 337-338). Singers must acquire a level of kinesthetic and aural awareness in order to "produce these sounds in a manner that will strengthen and preserve the voice" (Robinson-Martin, 2010, as cited by Robinson-Martin, 2014, p. 337).

In regards to the actual use of 'melisma' in the gospel genre, gospel singers did not normally use the term as a way of describing what the voice was doing. Heilbut (1985) refers

to colourful terms such as "curlicues and flowers and frills." (p. xvi). The way gospel singers describe melisma is not technical as they describe what they see and feel. These descriptions provide insight into melisma as an expressive technique. Spicer (2013) describes how liturgical composer Herbert Howells used melisma as a musical tool to "express ecstasy" (p. 100). Legg (2010) refers to the "gospel gruppetto" (p. 120) as sharing similarities to melisma:

> The gospel gruppetto occurs over a number of successive tones, usually more than three, and can be placed over single harmonic centre or chord, or lead from one chord to another, often employing predictive elements of the new chords within the melodic structure of the gruppetto. (p. 120)

It is interesting to note that Grove Music Online (2017) defines a gruppetto as a trill that was commonly used in 16th Century music (para. 1) which attests to the evolutionary nature of vocal techniques.

According to Robinson-Martin (2014), gospel music differs from other genres of music such as musical theatre. Although both genres emphasise the importance of the singer's ability to learn and interpret lyrics and emotional intent, which is commonly written by a composer, gospel allows a singer to personally express emotions and experiences (p. 340); Cusic (2002) describes gospel music as being timeless and having an emotional appeal (p. 49).

The influence of blues and gospel on CPM

According to Jungr (2002), blues and gospel vocalists created the "'performance'…arena in which that 'voice' could be 'embodied' to produce vocal expression" (p. 114). This emphasises the idea that vocal techniques may lead to vocal expression; melisma may therefore be considered a form of vocal expression. In terms of vocal techniques, Chandler (2014) describes a number of gospel and blues techniques used in popular music overlapping with different genres such as the use of belting found in CPM genres such as gospel, rock,

soul and dance (p. 39). In addition, the growls that are so often described in blues music (Evans, 2002, p. 21; Jungr, 2002, p. 104; Oliver, 2017) are also evident in other popular genres such as in the works of artists such as Beyoncé and Christina Aguilera. It is also a common vocal technique in heavy metal music. Soto-Morettini (2014) illustrates the characteristics of rock as having the raw quality similar to the blues (p. 136). In addition, pop music is a combination of all types of genres except presented in a "lightweight" form (Soto-Morettini, 2014, p. 146).

Melisma and Emotion

While there is little literature on contemporary melisma, there is even less on the connection between melisma and emotion. However, Frith (1996) alludes to a connection when he writes:

> Certain physical experiences, particularly extreme feelings, are given vocal sounds beyond our conscious control-the sounds of pain, lust, ecstasy, fear, what one might call inarticulate articulacy: the sounds made by soul singers around and between their notes, vocal noises that seem expressive of their deepest feelings because we hear them is if they've escaped from a body that the mind – language – can no longer control. (p. 192).

The "inarticulate articulacy" and "vocal noises" that Frith refers to may encompass melisma. In addition, it may also encompass other non-verbal sounds such as sighs and "oos". Non-verbal communication consists of two components - paralanguage and body language (Băiaş & Constantine, 2015). It is the "intonation, rhythm, tone, volume" (Băiaş & Constantine, 2015, p. 1855) of paralanguage that is of interest to the research project. Although the research project is focused on the singing voice, it is important to understand these linguistic terms as they may offer insight into the connection between melisma and emotion, and offer

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considerations as to why genres such as gospel use the technique as an expressive device.

Truax (1984) defines paralanguage as:

> "…the 'musical' aspect of speech because it involves inflection (pitch contours), rhythm, phrasing, emphasis (or accent), punctuation, timbre (sound quality), silence (rests), and even cadences – exactly those variables which are used to describe a single voice melody" (p. 33)

Truax's definition of paralanguage may also be applied to melismatic singing in CPM, especially as it refers to concepts such as inflection and cadences. The rhythmic flow and pitch contours of some melismatic phrases in CPM can be heard on sounds like "mm" or on a hum and also on the syllable of a word. For example, in Jennifer Hudson's rendition of "And I am Telling You" (Eyen & Krieger, 1981) from the Broadway musical *Dreamgirls*, Hudson can be heard singing melisma on non-verbal sounds and syllables of words such as "I'm" and "free". It is through paralanguage that listeners are able to recognise the emotional information from the speaker (Johar, 2014, p. 209).

Sparshott (1997) identifies singing as "mostly" (p. 200) being similar to the speaking voice, with the primary difference being that melody and music are involved in the act of singing. Sparshott (1997) also indicates that singing, similarly to speaking, uses non-verbal sounds, which adds a unique element to the singers voice and performance (p. 4). Scherer, Sundberg, Fantini, Trznadel, and Eyben (2017) conducted a study with eight professional opera singers, in which the singers were required to sing the musical scale on meaningless non-verbal sounds rather than singing short sections from a song (for example, Hakanpää, Waaramaa, & Laukkanen, 2018). The motive for this was to eliminate the link between the lyrical text and the emotion which was often prewritten by the composers of operatic arias. By doing so, the study focused on the authenticity of the perceived emotion. The study conducted by Scherer et al. (2017) revealed that even without the lyrical meaning, participants were still

capable of conveying emotion as they modified the voice quality. In addition to this, the study also revealed purpose driven singing as eight singers were asked to portray various emotions without the emotional information written for them. Often melisma too is used on a non-verbal sound and as a stand-alone technique (as mentioned in the Jennifer Hudson example).

While the article offers insight into the singing voice's portrayal of emotion without text, this research is focused more on the entirety of a text and on revealing potential emotional links to melisma as a result of that text. Austin and Hesser (2004) refer to songs as the "vehicles and containers for emotion" (p. 197). Mazzola (2011) highlights the importance in understanding the "concept of emotion" (p. 97), which can be categorised by self-report, expressive behaviour, and physiological measures. The category called 'self-report' is where Mazzola makes the distinction between emotion and feeling. Mazzola describes 'emotion', which is the result of the human experience, as "an entire narrative" (p. 98); a 'feeling' is a sensory experience and is known as "qualia" (p. 98). Mazzola's theorising of emotion and feeling is also applicable to the singing of songs. The song itself is the narrative or the emotional experience and the sensory experience is portrayed through the voice as the voice is embodied. Thus, by using melisma as an expressive device, specifically using non-verbal sounds as qualia potentially illustrates the sensation of the emotional experience.

Criticisms about Melisma

As mentioned in the introduction, there are a number of online critiques that debate the use of melisma. The notion of a 'master' of melisma as someone who is vocally comparable to Whitney Houston (Everitt, 2012) was discussed in Chapter One. The inference with the 'master' distinction is that there are those 'master' singers that competently use melisma and other singers who are 'amateurish' in their use of melisma. For example, Osborn (2011) writes:

The vocal acrobatics [of Beyoncé and Christina Aguilera] are so impressive that I see a lot of younger singers attempting to sing this way… I suppose because they want to sound accomplished. Some can do these vocal acrobatics well, but most cannot. (para. 2)

Again, Osborn makes a distinction between singers that can use melisma (comparable to Beyoncé or Aguilera) and those that cannot. Osborn (2011) goes on to discuss the ways in which a "clean" (para. 3) melisma can be accomplished and also believes that singers can excessively use melisma. According to Osborn, clean melismatic singing requires the singer to be "on pitch…. notes must be cleanly delineated from each other" (para. 4). This is achieved through practice, simplifying trickier runs, and knowing when and where to use melisma. Osborn uses the word "excessive" (para. 16) possibly in relation to melisma that is used on each syllable of every word. Osborn then addresses the question – "How much is too much melisma?" – by stating that the focus should be on "communicating emotion" (para. 18) rather than on executing the melisma. However, this statement does not include the importance of vocal agility to melisma.

It is not only amateur singers on reality TV shows like *American Idol* that are criticised for using the technique. For example, Veltman (2010) discusses singers' obsession with melisma and noted this especially in relation to artists' cover versions of "God Bless America" (Berline, 1938). Similarly, Eskow (2011) coined the term "oversouling" (para. 5) from producer Jerry Wexler to describe the way in which singers, specifically Aguilera, "drain" (para. 5) the song of its desired meaning by using melisma. Eskow (2011) also believes that there is a growing trend of singers in the music industry to turn "each song into an Olympic sport" (para. 2). While Eskow (2011) and Osborn (2011) discuss how CPM artists and amateur singers have shown interest in using this technique, Browne (2010) offers the opinion that the technique is losing favour with artists such as Lady Gaga, Katy Perry and

Kesha. According to Browne (2010), these artists have chosen to focus more on combining "vocal personality, arrangement, hook and song craft" (para. 12). It is important to note that Eskow, Osborn and Browne recognise the importance of melisma in song. It is not the technique itself that is criticised but rather it is the issue of its being too "soulful" (Eskow, 2011) in a way that distracts from the overall meaning of a song. They each recognise the technique as a vocal embellishment. Therefore, melisma can be considered as an expressive technique in CPM.

A recent article, "Oversinging" (Bicknell, 2018), published in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, describes the act of oversinging as "singing that is excessive in one or more dimensions: too loud, too ornamented, too melismatic, too expressive or employing too much vibrato" (p. 83). Again, the word "excessive" is used to describe the overuse of melisma and Bicknell cites Aguilera's performance of the American National Anthem in 2011 and Michael Bolton's cover of "Yesterday" (McCartney, 1965) as examples. The article also discusses the idea of an insincere performance and a "heightened expressivity" (Bicknell, 2018, p. 86) that is a result of oversinging. The importance of this article is that it critically analyses the idea of excessive use of melisma, whereas the literature above does not.

Conclusion

The challenge of this literature review has been finding appropriate and relevant resources for this research. As previously mentioned, there is little to no research in the area of melismatic singing. In relation to how melisma is described or categorised in the literature – including vocal agility, run, riff, lick – forms part of the research to be addressed in the study.

The next chapter discusses the research design and methods used for the study. In addition, Chapter Three outlines the main research question and the research methods used to undertake the research.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methods

Introduction

The literature review provided an account of melisma and its use in CPM genres, as well as positing potential connections between emotion, singing and melisma. The intention of the study is to be analytical as well as exploratory. This chapter outlines the research design and methods, together with the procedures utilised to both enable the study and for data analysis.

Research Question and Aims

Qualitative research was conducted in order to answer the primary research question, 'How is melisma communicated in contemporary singing?'. This includes the potential types and contexts (including emotional). In order to answer the primary research question, and to identify melisma types and contexts, the methods of research included two stages of data analysis. Stage 1 comprised of a musicological analysis of particular songs in CPM genres. The purpose of this stage was to explore the way melisma is used by particular artists in CPM. Stage 2 comprised of semi-structured interviews with experienced singers.

The aim of this research was to explore the use of melisma in a contemporary popular singing context. My research project aims to add new insights in the field of contemporary popular vocal studies and singing.

Research Design

Musicological analysis (Stage 1)

Musicology, as defined by Beard and Gloag (2016) is "a process of study, inquiry and reflection, while it forms its own context and employs distinct concepts" (p. 14). In addition,

musicology is no longer confined to traditional music studies but includes areas such as ethnomusicology, jazz, and popular music studies (Beard and Gloag, 2016, p. 15). Shuker (2001) discusses that popular musicology does not take the same approach as traditional musicology, in that its focus is not solely on musical elements but rather "emphasises interpretation through performance, and is received primarily in terms of the body and emotions rather than as pure text." (p. 140).

With this understanding of musicology, Stage 1 includes an analysis of songs performed by CPM artists, Jessica Mauboy and Justin Timberlake. Initially, Mauboy and Timberlake were chosen to showcase the use of melisma by two renowned artists from different countries (Mauboy being Australian and Timberlake being American). They are both professional artists who continue to have a presence in the music industry. The choice of singers for analysis also functioned to highlight the use of melisma by both male and female artists.

Three aesthetically different songs from each artist – songs including slow, mid, and more upbeat tempo – were analysed in the case studies. This was to show diversity in the use of melisma in different songs. The analysis included discourse schema due to its ability to determine what happens in the song text "at the most basic level" (Machin, 2015, p.74). This is because when what "underlies the text is determined" (Machin, 2015, p.74) it allows the social and personal aspects of song to be revealed (Machin, 2015, p.74). This is relevant to this research as identifying social content in a song may lead to its emotive positioning. Additional components such as dynamics and texture, lyrical content, and vocal ability were taken into consideration. The potential diversity of melisma in CPM was drawn from the literature review. I therefore hypothesise that a combination of several elements may contribute to the use of melisma in song. For example, the use of melisma may vary depending on the use of different melismatic phrases that add texture to a particular section of

a song. Similarly, the lyrical content of a song may drive the artist to use melisma on particular words to make emotional sense of a song.

Both studio produced and live versions of songs are analysed. The studio recording refers to the standard recording that is heard on the radio, Spotify, and iTunes; live versions are analysed and compared so as to see how melisma is used in a live setting and whether there are significant changes in the vocal delivery. Therefore, objectives of conducting this comparison are to see if melisma changes in a live setting (television or concert), whether the different setting assists in the creation of different melismatic runs or if it hinders it.

Lyrics and musical excerpts

The use of lyrics and musical excerpts contained in this thesis is for the purpose of research only, and falls under "fair dealing" (Australian Copyright Council, 2017, p.2). The Appendices include examples of the analyses.

Interviews and participant sample (Stage 2)

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the desired location of each participant; each interview lasted for approximately an hour. For the purposes of the research, 'professional singers' refers to those participants who are currently performing in the music industry in CPM. Participants were interviewed to further understand the role of melismatic singing in CPM. This stage of the research focused on the use of melisma in performance and during the rehearsal period, and included the research participants' vocal background and performance practice. Stage 2 analysis also considered the participant findings in relation to media criticism of melisma. Audio-recordings were used during interviews for transcription purposes. The transcriptions were coded using NVivo. Potential participants were determined through social media (Facebook) and/or through networking. This stage of the research therefore required ethics approval and was obtained from Macquarie University Human

Research Ethics. Participants were required to read and sign an Information and Consent form that detailed the research purpose of discovering whether or not the vocal technique, melisma, is closely tied with emotional expression and also exploring its use by contemporary popular singers. Participants were also informed that they would be de-identified. In this way, informed consent to participate in the research was obtained (see Appendix A).

The sample size is small (N=3) and was comprised of three female participants between the ages of 20 and 30. Given the time and word limitations, I was unable to include more interviews. Potential male participants were also invited to participate but declined to participate. Although a small sample resulted, the participant interviews provide the collection of an in-depth data. Smaller sample sizes are a common feature of "postpositivistic research" (Wisker, 2008, p. 68) as it potentially provides rich data; qualitative data is appropriate for "understanding meanings, beliefs and experience" (Wisker, p. 74) and understanding the "*how* and *why* people perceive, reflect, role-take, interpret and interact" (Baker & Edwards, 2012, p. 4). A small sample size also offers insight and allows time to analyse.

Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978) is associated with "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It refers to the "attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42). There are three ways theoretical sensitivity can be attained. The first is through the literature and analysis of the literature as it gives a "rich background of information that 'sensitizes' you to what is going on with the phenomenon you are studying" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42). Professional experience within the field in which you are studying is the second way sensitivity is achieved. Implicit knowledge derived from theoretical sensitivity leads to an easier understanding of the topic. The last source of

sensitivity is the experience one feels on a personal level. Professional experience differs from personal experience because of the level of emotional attachment in personal experience. This is highlighted by Frith (1996) when he states that musicologists have a better understanding of analysing aspects of popular music due to the fact that some are musicians. Much like popular musicologists, I am able to bring a depth of understanding to my research due to my singing experiences and associated theoretical sensitivity.

Conclusion

While the limitations of the study were discussed in Chapter One, the research question is comprehensively addressed using the particular research methods and analysis outlined in this chapter. The next chapter focuses on the Stage 1 musicological analysis by critically examining the use of melisma in the CPM songs of Jessica Mauboy and Justin Timberlake.

CHAPTER FOUR

Stage 1: Musicological Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter, songs of two artists, Jessica Mauboy and Justin Timberlake, are analysed. The analysis was used to determine the types and contexts of melisma used by these artists. The analysis included three songs for each artist, a comparison between recorded and live recordings (sung either on television shows and/or other live performances), and also cover versions sung by amateur singers. The purpose of the analysis was to explore the use of melisma in CPM. In this chapter, the terms 'melisma', 'melismatic run' and 'melismatic riff' are used to distinguish the different types of melisma. As discussed in the literature review, for the purposes of this research melisma is the overarching term. It may also be used to refer to melisma as one or two notes used in a syllable or non-verbal sound. If these notes are repeated, it is referred to as a melismatic riff. In contrast, a melismatic run is not repeated and may use two or more notes (see p. 9 of this thesis).

Case Study 1: Jessica Mauboy

Jessica Mauboy is a well-recognised Australian female artist. In 2016, she became the first indigenous Australian to debut at number one on the Aria Album Charts (Brandle, 2016). Mauboy's career began in 2006 when she auditioned for the fourth season of *Australian Idol* singing "I Have Nothing" (Foster & Thompson, 1993) (Billboard, 2017). Since appearing on *Australian Idol*, Mauboy has released five studio albums, two of which contain covers as well as originals (*The Journey* [2007, Sony BMG Australia] and *The Secret Daughter* [2016, Sony Music Australia]). Mauboy had a number of musical influences growing up which are now identifiable in her vocal artistry and her musical career. Genres such as country, hip-hop, R&B, and "that ballad, kind of, soft stuff" (Mauboy cited in TheBPMTV, 2011, 3:12) have

formed her musical interests. As a result, Mauboy has produced sentimental ballads that can be traced to her R&B influences; Mariah Carey being a major influence musically and lyrically for Mauboy (TheBPMTV, 2013). Mauboy has also released songs outside of the ballad style that have a dance/club sound (e.g., "To the End of the Earth" [Mauboy, Michaels, Berger, & McMahon, 2013]). The analysis included songs that contain stylistic elements of pop, R&B and EDM in order to observe how Mauboy uses melisma in different musical contexts. The analysis will also take into consideration lyrics and dynamics whilst analysing the following songs: "Never be the Same" (Mauboy, Egizii, & Musumeci, 2014), "This Ain't Love" (Mauboy, Sneddon & Ryden, 2015), and "Galaxy" (Vission, Alqaisi, McLaughlin, Calvillo, Bennett, & Ackley, 2011).

"Never be the Same"

The first song is titled "Never be the Same" from the album *Beautiful*. For Mauboy, "Never be the Same" is a "back to… basics" (Mauboy cited in VMusic, 2014, 1:46) song as it reminds her of her first single "Running Back" (Mauboy, Mtawarira, & Mullins, 2008). The lyrics inform the listener of a pivotal point in Mauboy's life. While it seems to be non-specific, the lyrics allude to the idea of a lack of belonging. Some key words include: "alone", "lost", "past", "forget", "running", "race", "losing", "wish", "world", "sink". Using a lyrical analysis of the song (Machin, 2015), "Never be the Same" can be described in the following discourse schema (see Figure 1).

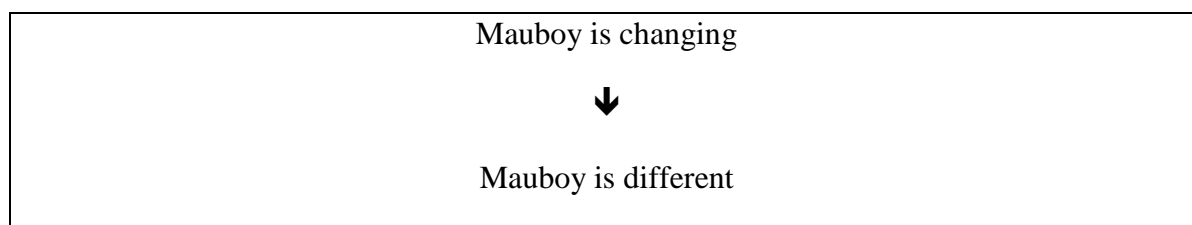| Mauboy is changing |
| :---: |
| ↓ |
| Mauboy is different |

Figure 1 - "Never be the Same" Discourse Schema.

When the discourse schema is formulated it allows "the social values, behaviours and identities" (Machin, 2015, p. 74) of the song to be revealed. As discussed in Chapter Three (see p. 31 of this thesis), it is these social aspects that can lead the analysis to emotive positioning in a song. The concept of personal transformation is reinforced by Mauboy who revealed in an interview that the song is concerned with her family relationships, other loved ones, her lifestyle, and choices she has made that have caused her to question her abilities and the idea of "being true to who I am" (Mauboy cited in Take 40 Australia, 2014, 0:37). Therefore, the change that is described in the discourse schema appears to be the result of social agents and circumstances in her life. Contemporaneously, the dynamic structure of "Never be the Same" builds. As it builds, it gradually introduces instruments and additional vocal tracks creating a thick texture. Several songs by Mauboy include electronic and computerised instruments as well as acoustic instruments[3]. The creative use of MIDI instruments modernises the ballad style.

Mauboy's melismatic implementation mirrors the dynamic expression of the instrumentation. In the introduction (0:03-0:11), Mauboy uses a "simultaneous onset" (Soto-Morettini, 2014, p. 68) or a neutral vocal onset on the first melisma that leads to a breathy offset. Using a breathy sound creates the illusion of being soft (Soto-Morettini, 2014, p. 69) which is appropriate for the introduction as the musical texture is thin. It is important to note that the use of melisma in the beginning of the song is not as vocally acrobatic as what is heard towards the end of the song. The simplicity of the melisma better suits the tone of the song's beginning and the subsequent dynamic build.

---

[3] "Acoustic" refers to instruments that have not been digitally programmed on a computer.

Most of the onsets that Mauboy uses whilst singing a melismatic riff or run are identified as a neutral onset (see Appendix C for further analysis). This could be the result of the mixing and mastering process by the sound engineers. Mauboy uses shorter melismas consistently throughout the song which adds variation. However, it is often difficult to identify as the second note of the two-note melisma is sung towards the very end of the syllable which implies that melisma is being used to finish off the word (see Figure 2). Mauboy also includes variation to previous words that have used a simple melisma (see Figure 3).

*Chorus 1: Never thinking 'bout the hearts we **br<u>ea</u>k***

Figure 2 - This line is taken from the chorus of "Never be the Same". The melisma is sung on the word in bold. The second note is sung towards the end of the syllable and is underlined.

*Pre-chorus 2: And we all get lost sometimes/ And we forget who we **<u>are</u>***

Figure 3 – Mauboy sings a melismatic run in the word "are" which differs from the movement from pre-chorus 1.

Mauboy can be heard singing a number of melismatic runs on various vowel sounds particularly as she transitions from the bridge to the last chorus (2:41-3:32). These runs have been placed at the back of the mix. The mix is the "overall sound" of the track (Hughes & Keith, 2013, p. 106) which includes all instruments, volume, and other effects. In this case, the vocal track that features Mauboy's melismatic runs have been placed at the back of the overall mix so as to not dominate or detract from the end chorus. However, their placement still allows them to be an identifiable component that adds texture to the song.

When comparing song versions, Mauboy remains true to the studio-recorded melismatic riffs and runs with only the slightest addition of melodic notes in live performances. Two versions are compared to the original track – the iTunes session album that Mauboy recorded in 2014 (see Appendix D), her live performance on Nova's Red Room (see Appendix D), which can be found on YouTube (Joe j, 2014). The time stamp in Appendix D feature the last chorus until the outro. In both the acoustic (iTunes) and live set (Nova), Mauboy's high intensity melismatic runs feature prominently in the mix. The analysis reveals that the differences between the three versions are minimal with most of the high intensity melismatic runs being identical to one another. In addition, the melismatic runs of some words and non-verbal sounds are usually sung at the end of the syllable of the word and the non-verbal sound, such as in the word "away" (original studio recording=2:50-2:51; iTunes session=02:55-2:56; Red Room=2:55-2:56; Appendix D). What is noticeable between the three tracks is the way in which Mauboy ends the second syllable "a**_way_**". Mauboy sings the same melismatic run in the iTunes and YouTube audio sample with additional notes. Evident in the three tracks is Mauboy's ability to include subtle melisma as melismatic riffs that only use two or three notes. Taking into consideration the basic meaning and social content of the song, it is possible that Mauboy remains true to the studio recording so as to draw out the meaning of the song for her listeners.

"This Ain't Love"

"This Ain't Love" (2015) is Mauboy's first single that moves away from her usual pop/R&B sound. McCabe (2015) describes the song as having a "rudimental and disclosure sound". In contrast to "Never be the Same", "This Ain't Love" is upbeat and has stylistic elements that are found in electronic dance music. Therefore, and reminiscent of the structure of EDM, the use and placement of melisma would possibly differ to that in "Never be the Same". According to Winterson, Bricheno, and Nickol (2003), the structure of EDM is as

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follows: mix in, main section, breakdown, reprise of main section, and mix out (p. 159).

While "This Ain't Love" follows a similar structure to that described by Winterson et al. (2003), it also includes the typical verse-chorus format evident in most CPM songs. The reason why *"This Ain't Love"* was included in the analysis is due to the fact that it showcases the way Mauboy uses melisma in a pop/EDM setting.

The use and placement of melisma is at the discretion of the individual singer (and possibly also at the discretion of the producer in recording) and, as this song illustrates, Mauboy does not heavily use the technique. Additionally, "This Ain't Love" is not lyrically demanding which may be the result of the fast paced tempo. In comparison to "Never be the Same", "This Ain't Love" includes a lower syllable count and fewer phrases. There are more vocal staccatos in "This Ain't Love", which adds rhythmic interest to the faster tempo. The chorus is one of the only times that Mauboy has the opportunity in the song's arrangement to sing legato (see Figure 4).

> *This ain't **lo**ve/*
>
> *I don't feel and nothing hurts*
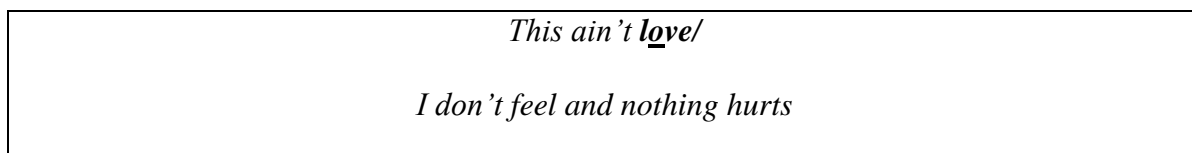
Figure 4 - Chorus from "This Ain't Love". The word "love" is in bold as this is where Mauboy elongates the word.

Mauboy uses the original recorded arrangement for live performance. Similar to "Never be the Same", she does not alter the vocal melody too much during her live performances (see *X-Factor Australia* performance [BrainyAlien1, 2015, 1:35-1:37] and on *KIIS 106.5* [KIIS 1065, 2015, 0:37-0:39]). There are additional melismatic runs, which she uses between both live performances such as the same melismatic run heard at 1:10 in the *X-Factor Australia* clip and at 1:05 of the *KIIS 106.5* clip. The only difference between the two

is the non-verbal sound she uses to express the melismatic run. Melisma may therefore be used to fill in musical space in a live performance. The analysis of "This Ain't Love" has explored the use of melisma in a fast paced song with elements of EDM and pop music. It appears that the tempo of the song may impact the available melodic space to include melismatic phrases. This is particularly evident when compared to the inclusion of melismatic phrases in "Never be the Same". This, however, does not dismiss the idea of including melisma which is evident in her live performances of the song.

"Galaxy"

"Galaxy" featured in Mauboy's second studio album *Get Em Girls*. The song features another Australian-New Zealand mainstream singer named Stan Walker, who was also a contestant and winner of *Australian Idol*. The reason as to why this song was chosen for analysis was to explore the way in which Mauboy uses melisma with the accompaniment of another singer. Primarily, "Galaxy" is a love ballad although it uses metaphors or a direct connection to all themes space and the universe. The basic discourse schema is shown below and follows a similar outline to many duet, ballad love songs (see Figure 5).

<div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center; padding:1em;">

Boy is in love with girl

⬇

Girl is in love with boy

</div>
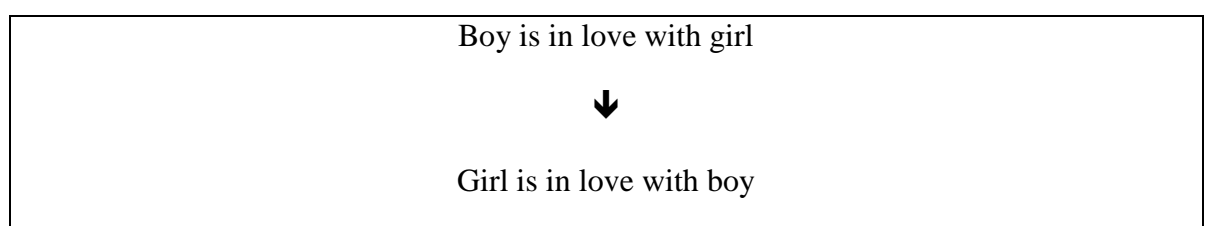
Figure 5 - "Galaxy" Discourse Schema.

Walker's ability to use melisma is evident in the introduction of the song and throughout his verse (0:02-0:31). Below is a short lyrical excerpt, which highlights the use of melisma in bold (Figures 6 and 7). The choice of melismatic syllables in "Galaxy" and "Never be the Same" differ. In the first line of "Never be the Same" (0:13-0:16, Mauboy uses

twelve syllables whereas "Galaxy" only uses six syllables (0:11-0:14). There is also a
rhythmic pattern where melisma occurs which is also evident in Figure 6 and Figure 7. The
melisma occurs in the second line and in the last word of the second line in both examples.
Although there is a slight variation in the second verse, Mauboy follows a similar pattern to
Walker.

Not sure how I survived
*Before I left this **ni̲g̲ht̲***
Before I came alive
*I was **l̲o̲st̲***

Figure 6 - The first verse of "Galaxy" as sung by Walker.

Like a comet to my heart
*You illuminate the **d̲a̲rk̲***
Show me all the
*Parts • of • me • I've • never **s̲e̲en̲*** (•=quick detached notes)*

Figure 7 – The first verse of "Galaxy" as sung by Mauboy.

In comparison to "Never Be the Same", and in particular "This Ain't Love", it is
evident that Mauboy's use of melisma has increased in "Galaxy". It is possible that Mauboy
and Walker have influenced one another's use of melisma. Hughes (2014) discusses the
artistry of singers, and the influences and challenges they may face in the contemporary
context. The participants in her study viewed the action of listening as a way of "acquiring
and developing skills" as a singer and an artist (p. 291). It is therefore possible that being
around Walker during rehearsals (as the two performed on *X-factor Australia*) may have

influenced Mauboy's use of melisma and vice versa; it is also possible that the producer may have instructed one or both of the singers to listen to vocal takes and respond.

Summary

The analysis has identified Mauboy's use of melisma in CPM. This is evident in the ballad, pop/EDM and duet examples detailed above. The importance of repetition is evident in Mauboy's use of melisma such as in "Never be the Same" and "This Ain't Love". The analysis also shows that Mauboy at times varies her use of melisma in live performance. This is particularly clear in the iTunes and YouTube recordings of "Never Be the Same", and the live recordings of "This Ain't Love". Mauboy's use of musical elements such as dynamics and texture also assist with the conveying of song themes. In addition to dynamics and texture, tempo and lyrical content appear to play a role in the choice and placement of melisma. Mauboy also demonstrates vocal agility in a performance (referring to "This Ain't Love") and appears to use melismatic riffs rather than runs in both the studio and live recordings. This perhaps serves to focus more attention on the strong themes of her songs rather than on her ability to be vocally acrobatic.

Case Study 2: Justin Timberlake

Justin Timberlake is an influential mainstream artist in CPM. (Timberlake has released four successful studio albums, *Justified* (2002), *FutureSex/Lovesound* (2006), *The 20/20 Experience – The Complete Experience* (2013), and *Man of the Woods* (2018). Timberlake grew up in Memphis, TE, which he refers to as the "global capital of soul" (Katie Maliani, 2015, 13:50). The influence of 'soul' is evident in his musical style and vocal artistry.

Timberlake not only uses his voice to sing, but has also discovered its ability to mimic other musical instruments. He beat-boxes on many songs such as, "My Love" (Timberlake,

Mosley, Hills, & Harris, 2006), "TKO" (Timberlake, Mosley, Harmon, & Fauntleroy, 2013), "LoveStoned/I Think She Knows Interlude" (Timberlake, Mosley, & Hills, 2006), and "Rock Your Body" (Timberlake, Hugo, & Williams, 2003). Other vocal features are Timberlake's range and his ability to flip from chest voice to falsetto. Timberlake showcases this vocal flip in many songs like "Cry Me a River" (Timberlake & Storch, 2002) and "My Love" (Timberlake, Mosley, Hills, & Harris, 2006). Aside from his vocal features, Timberlake is also well-known for "two-part complimentary forms" (Graham, 2014, p. 435), which includes the standard pop verse-chorus format but also includes a section two that can be (but is not always) a variation of the first section. Two-part complementary forms have most commonly been used in Timberlake's albums, *FutureSex/LoveSounds* and *The 20/20 Experience – The Complete Experience*. Graham (2014) discusses that the variation in sections one and two are the result of, not only "traditional extensional music" (p. 454), but also African-American influenced grooves.

Notably, listeners remember Justin Timberlake's pop and upbeat songs. However, this analysis closely examines the ballad, "(Another Song) All Over Again" (Timberlake & Morrison, 2006). "(Another Song) All Over Again" is not as popular as other songs on the *FutureSex…* album like "SexyBack" (Timberlake, Mosley, & Hills, 2006) and "What Goes Around…/…Comes Around Interlude" (Timberlake, Mosley, & Hills, 2006). This song was selected for analysis for its apparent melismatic phrases of both riffs and runs. This analysis will compare the recorded (from the album *FutureSex…)* and the live (from the *FutureSex/LoveShow*) version to examine the way Timberlake uses variations when the song is performed live. It will also draw on the vocal scorebook (Hal Leonard Corporation, 2007). Following a similar pattern as the Mauboy analysis, the analysis also includes an upbeat song called "Can't Stop the Feeling" (Timberlake, Martin, & Shellback, 2016). This song does not follow the structure and style of "This Ain't Love", however it does contain a similar element

of 'quickness' and the use of shorter note values. The analysis also includes YouTube covers in order to investigate if melismatic phrases can be used in an upbeat song. The final song used in the analysis is from Timberlake's third solo album *The 20/20 Experience* and is called "Suit & Tie" (Timberlake, Mosley, Carter, Harmon, Fauntleroy, Subbs, Wilson & Still, 2013). Timberlake very rarely includes artist features and, when he does, they are typically rap artists. What is interesting to note, and the reason why this song is included in the analysis, is the way in which Timberlake uses melisma to fill in 'gaps' during the rap portion of the song.

"(Another Song) All Over Again"

"(Another Song) All Over Again" is the last song on the album and there is a noticeable difference in the musicality of the song in comparison to "SexyBack". "Until the End of Time" (Timberlake, Mosley, & Hills, 2006) is also labeled as a ballad, however the difference between it and "(Another Song) All Over Again" is the lyrical content as well as the use of instruments. Timberlake uses computerised instruments more so in "Until the End of Time" in comparison to "(Another Song)…'"which uses more of the standardised instruments like a piano, drum kit, electric guitar, bass, and string section. However, the purpose is not to discuss a "real" versus "artificial" (Oakes, 2004, p. 76) sound, but to merely point out the ways in which Timberlake creatively demonstrates different ways a ballad can be produced.

There is a perceived level of intimacy in this song as only one vocal track is evident (Timberlake's main melodic track) rather than several tracks such as evident in Mauboy's "Never be the Same". The intimate quality is also reflected in Timberlake's aspirate, gentle tone voice quality. This timbral vocal quality complements the heartfelt and apologetic lyrical content of the song. Timberlake is asking for the "little girl" (the subject) to give him another chance. In addition, the song plays on the concept of dynamics to showcase the struggle that

Timberlake is feeling, thus making the song highly emotive. The emotional intensity increases simultaneously with dynamics and lyrics.

The vocal score indicates that "(Another Song) All Over Again" is in the key of E Major (see Figure 8). Due to the melodic structure of the song, it will not be categorised using the standard verse-chorus format found in CPM music, but rather be referred to as sections A, B, C, etc. which is due to the melodic overlap (see Appendix F).
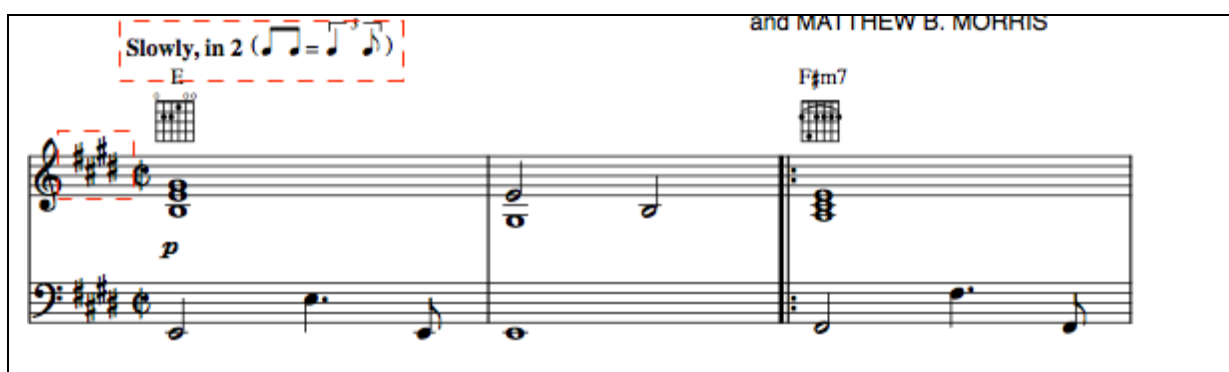
Figure 8 - Vocal score (Hal Leonard, 2007) indicating the key and tempo.

The song begins with a count in by both the voice and drums (0:00-0:02), then soon after the third count a drum fill is played to lead the instruments into Section A (0:03-0:43) Timberlake's voice follows with a sustained sounding "oh" (0:13-0:18). Melisma is used on the second "oh" (0:28-0:30) where Timberlake starts on the C# and jumps down to the B. The "yeah" (0:30-0:32) that follows after starts on the G#, moves down to the E, and up to the F#. Timberlake sings all the notes in the E Major scale (E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#), however specific notes are used according to each melismatic phrase (see Appendix E for further detail).

When comparing the recording to the written score, it is evident that the entire vocal introduction is not transcribed. It may be omitted so as to allow space for the individual singer to create his or her own melisma. It may also be indicative of the uniqueness of melismatic

delivery. In the live-recorded version of the *FutureSex/LoveShow* (2007), Timberlake does not begin with the same melisma as heard on the studio album. There are also several other moments where Timberlake does not quite follow the vocal score. For example, another note may be added to a melismatic phrase (see Figure 9), or the score will indicate a sustained note whereas the recording contains a short melisma (see Figure 10). Timberlake sings a melismatic run in the word "a**gain**" in Section E (3:46-3:50), however this is not noted on the vocal score (see Figure 11). The vocal score only notates the starting note that Timberlake uses but does not include other notes that can be heard in the track. Timberlake uses a melismatic run to express his longing to be with the subject in the song. If he had sung the word the way it is written in the vocal score, the interpretation may have been different.

It is worth taking note of the dynamic build up in this section. The dynamics in the end of the previous section starts to soften. As Section E is introduced, the drums are mixed in at a higher level which assists in differentiating this section from the previous one. It is possible that due to this dynamic build up, melisma is used as a means of expressing emotional intensity. Without the build-up, it is possible that Timberlake's conviction may be misinterpreted. This example reveals the way in which melisma can relate to dynamics. Adding to a sense of cohesion, melismatic syllables are repeated. For example, specific words in Section C are notated similarly each time they are sung (see Figure 12 & Figure 13).
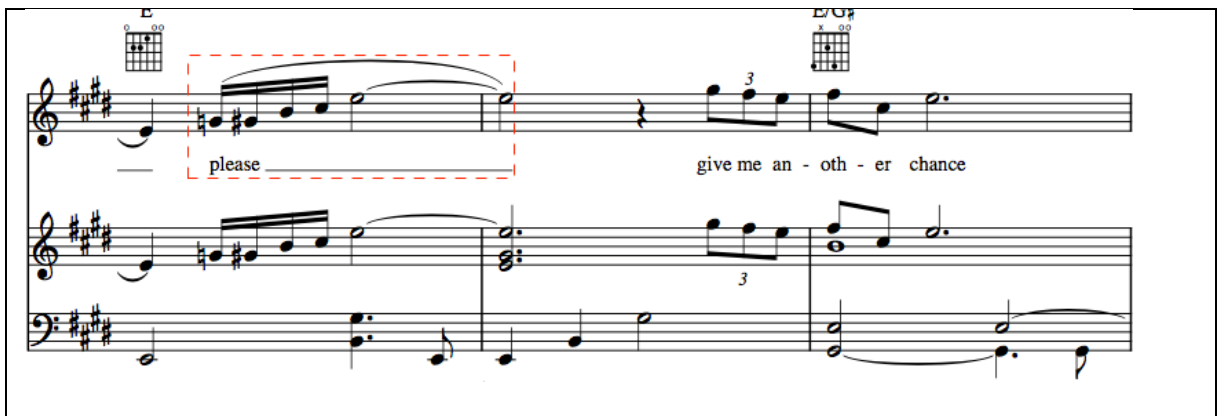
Figure 9 - Vocal score (Hal Leonard, 2007) indicates there is a C#. In the recording there is another note that is not clearly identifiable but is not the C#.
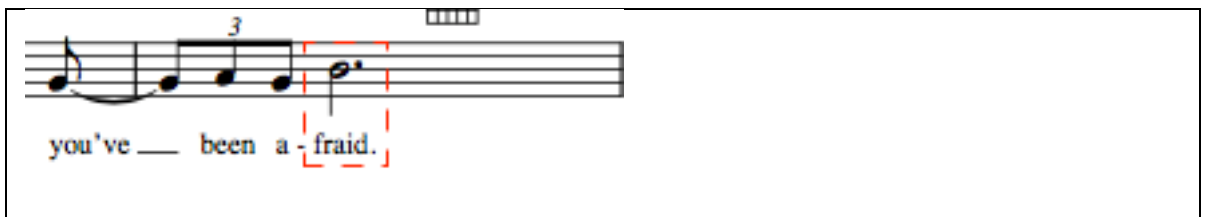
Figure 10 - Vocal score (Hal Leonard, 2007) indicates no melisma, whilst the recording includes another note.
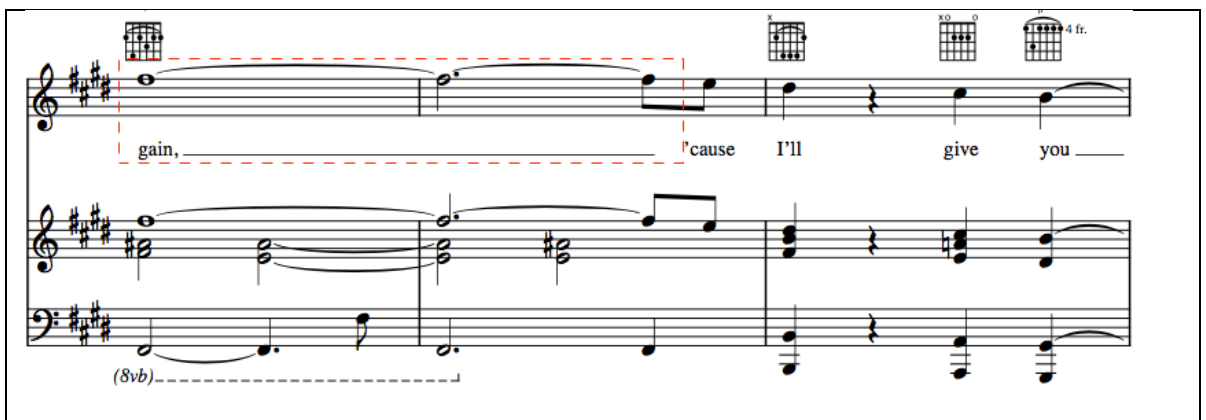
Figure 11 - Vocal score (Hal Leonard, 2007) for Section E.

Figure 12 - Excerpt from Section C of "(Another Song) All Over Again". The words in bold indicate where the same melisma is used.

Figure 13 - Vocal score (Hal Leonard, 2007) repeats the same melismatic riff on the words 'my' and 'might'.

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As with Mauboy's songs, melismatic riffs are more often used in the earlier sections of a song and melismatic runs are commonly used in the last chorus or at the end of the song. Timberlake does much in the same in this song. Towards the end of the song, Timberlake sings melismatic runs over the top of the instruments. It seems as though Timberlake also takes into consideration the placement of melisma within the song's structure. However, the song structure also allows space to use melisma before, during and after each section. The simplicity of the album recording allows Timberlake to expand on ideas further in the live recording of the *Justin Timberlake: FutureSex/LoveShow Live from Madison Square Garden* (2007). This is evident in both the instrumental arrangement and vocal arrangement. It is common for artists to change their album recordings to cater for a live context. Timberlake uses more variations of his recorded melismatic riffs in the live version and adds new runs. It is almost as if he appears to be showcasing his melismatic agility. Timberlake "colours" (Dayme, 2005, p. 113) or embellishes outside of the melismatic parameters that were created in the original track.

Timberlake plays on this audience interaction in his concert, especially towards the end of the song (2:03:43 – 2:04:53). During the course of this minute, Timberlake pauses three times allowing for fan interaction and accolades. Also, Timberlake does not perform difficult melismatic runs here and continues the remainder of the song performing different melismatic runs. However, as the vocal score clearly indicates, the end is supposed to be improvised (see Figure 14). Timberlake adds variations of his melismatic runs and creates entirely new ones proving that there is enough space in the song to create. It is towards the end of the song that Timberlake experiments with different melismatic runs, sustains notes, and uses belt and vibrato on those sustained notes. This is further evidence that artists may build the melismatic runs towards the end. Therefore, one of the purposes of melisma is to

create variety (as well as repetition), complexity, and texture to a song. This was also evident in the arrangements of Mauboy's "Galaxy" and "Never be the Same".

Figure 14 - Vocal score (Hal Leonard, 2007) indicating that the lead vocals improvise from this point until the end of the song.

"Can't Stop the Feeling"

"Can't Stop the Feeling" is the second song chosen for the analysis. The song was released as a single in 2016 from the album *Trolls: Original Picture Soundtrack* (2016). "Can't Stop the Feeling" is Timberlake's first movie soundtrack (KISS FM UK, 2016, 2:05). Timberlake reveals in an interview that during the writing process he was given a "specific list of criteria… of objectives to accomplish in the movie" (Timberlake cited in moviemaniacsDE, 2016, 2:34). There is a noticeable lyrical difference between this song and any of Timberlake's singles such as "SexyBack". In terms of musicality, the song has a funk/pop sound that is still in the boundaries of what Timberlake would normally produce. The song has a similar upbeat, dance feel as "Take Back the Night" (Timberlake, Mosley, Harmon, & Fauntleroy, 2013) from *The 20/20 Experience*.

Similar to Mauboy's "This Ain't Love", the use of melisma is used sparingly in comparison to "(Another Song) All Over Again". This may be due to the song's narrative

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focus. The melody incorporates use of staccato and legato, however the use of shorter notes creates the dance-like vibe. Some words are delivered through broken down syllables such as the word "phenomenally" is instead sung "phe-nom-men-al-ly" (0:37-0:38). Short use of melisma can be heard on the following words: "h**o**me" (0:19), "g**oe**s" (0:44-0:45), "cl**o**se" (0:49-0:50), "kn**o**w" (0:54-0:55), "feel**ing**" (1:21-1:22) (second time in the chorus and on the second syllable), "rea**son**" (1:33-1:34) (on the second syllable), "con**trolled**" (1:35) (on the second syllable). When sung live at the EuroVision Song Contest (justintimberlakeVEVO, 2016), Timberlake mostly stays true to the original studio recording. During that performance, Timberlake includes only a couple of melismatic runs (justintimberlakeVEVO, 2016, 3:59 & 5:11).

To highlight that melisma is usually a creative and expressive choice, the analysis includes two YouTube covers. The purpose is to showcase how melisma is implemented by others. Covering a song does not always entail an exact replica of the original. More often than not, singers will rearrange, mash-up, re-write, and create unique elements to make the song different from the original. The first cover is by a group called Downbeat LA (2016) and features six singers (2x female; 4 x male). The song is accompanied by a band and is sung live. The sections of the song are evenly distributed amongst the singers. The respective vocal tones are different from one another but they share the common ability of using melisma. Within the first verse (0:12-0:27), alterations to the melody in Timberlake's "Can't Stop…" are evident. As the song continues and each singer performs their section, they also demonstrate the variations of the melody. This is not solely through melisma. For example, one of the male singers switches from chest to falsetto on the words "my feet" in the verse (1:46) (see Figure 15).

Notes: C E (original recording)
Lyric: My feet
Notes: G E (Downbeat LA version)

Figure 15 - Note comparison of the original and Downbeat LA version.

Another noticeable difference in this version is the use of the breakdown as a vocal run off (2:50-3:08). The breakdown replaces the middle 8 or bridge. When Timberlake performed the song live at EuroVision, he danced; Downbeat LA used this section of the song to showcase some of the voices in the group. The second cover by Brielle Von Hugel features two other YouTubers, Matt Blyd and Mia Pfirrman (Brielle Von Hugel, 2016). The song is sung to a backing track and not sung live. Similar to the Downbeat LA cover, the singers showcase different variations to the melody. It is apparent in both cover versions that minimal changes have been made to the chorus. Similar to Downbeat LA, the structure of the song has been distributed amongst the singers giving them the chance to make the song their own. Another feature about this cover is the performers' ability to harmonise melismatic runs, which can be heard at 3:50 of the YouTube track. This is a striking part of the YouTube cover but is only heard towards the end of the song. It would seem that achieving a harmonised melismatic run would consist of breaking down each note that the singer intends on positioning in the run. In fact, this process of isolating each note from the melismatic run is recommended by Chandler (2014, p. 44). According to Chandler, once the singer learns the notes in the run at a tempo of their choice, he or she then can begin to gradually speed up the run which will help the singer's vocal control and flexibility (p. 44).

It is clear that this song does not play as much with the idea of melismatic runs as "(Another Song)…". In fact, it mostly relies on vocal repetition, which may be due to the fact that this song was the theme song for a motion picture. Repetition is also heard in cover

versions. However, being that it is a cover it provides the singer vocal freedom to express different melismatic ideas.

"Suit & Tie"

The last song of the analysis explores the way melisma is used to fill in space in the song "Suit & Tie" featuring Jay-Z from Timberlake's third studio album *The 20/20 Experience – The Complete Experience*. The single was released in 2013. The song incorporates styles from genres such as funk and jazz. Timberlake's inclusion of rapper Jay-Z also indicates that the song can be categorised as a hip-hop/R&B track. The section in which Jay Z can be heard rapping is the focus of this analysis. This is to explore the way in which Timberlake vocally collaborates with Jay Z's lyrical content. The rap section replaces the usual middle 8 or bridge format of the standardised verse-chorus pop structure. While Jay-Z raps, Timberlake offers melismatic variety to complement Jay-Z's rap voice. Whenever rappers are featured on Timberlake's tracks, he usually does not sing during the rap. This is evident in songs such as "My Love" ft. T.I. (Timberlake, Mosley, Hills, Harris, 2006), "Pose" ft. Snoop Dogg (Timberlake, Adams, Broadus, & Speir, 2007), "Right For Me" ft. Bubba Sparxxx, "Like I Love You" ft. Clipse (Timberlake, Hugo, & Williams, 2002), and "Cabaret" ft. Drake (Timberlake, Mosley, & Harmon, 2013). "Suit & Tie" is therefore an exception as Timberlake and Jay Z actively share or respond to each other's musical ideas.

In "Suit & Tie", Timberlake only uses non-verbal melismatic sounds. Interestingly, when Jay-Z raps the line "Try to hide your face with some makeup sex", Timberlake proceeds to sing a melisma in his falsetto which almost mimics the sound of a female moan. Before continuing his rap, Jay-Z waits for the melismatic run to finish. The short melisma that follows imitates the gospel and blues technique known as 'call and response' (see Figure 16) (3:43-3:50). Although Timberlake is not responding with words, he is responding back to Jay-Z's call with a level of affirmation through the use of non-verbal melisma. The gospel

tradition, call and response, entailed a singer to sing a line and the crowd to sing the responding line. Following this process, Jay-Z raps the main line and Timberlake responds with a melismatic line. The purpose of using call and response is to exchange ideas from one instrument to the other, or in the case of Jay-Z and Timberlake, to exchange ideas and interact with one another.

Jay-Z: *Tom Ford tuxedos for no reason*	JT: ***melisma***
Jay-Z: *All Saints for my angel*	JT: ***melisma***
Jay-Z: *Alexander Wang Too*	JT: ***melisma***

Figure 16 – Timberlake using call and response.

In addition to this, melisma is used to colour the rap section of the song (3:37-4:11). Timberlake is not using detailed melismatic runs, but rather uses short melismas. The aim is possibly to not draw the attention away from Jay-Z's rap, therefore if Timberlake were to include the same melismatic runs that are heard in "(Another Song)…" then Jay-Z's message may be overshadowed. Timberlake does not drastically alter the melisma when sung live (justintimberlakeVEVO, 2013). Rather, his role is to assist Jay-Z in sharing his message. It seems as though Timberlake's use of melisma acts as a response and adds colour to the remainder of Jay-Z's rap.

Conclusion

The case studies identify that melisma can be used in a variety of contexts and for different purposes. For example, melisma was found to be used to display vocal agility during a live performance, to increase the emotional impact of the song, as a means to fill-in space, to play with the idea of repetition, to help build the climaxes and outro sections of the song through increasing complexity and variety, and to add some colour to the song.

The analyses have also examined the role of melisma in both ballads and in up-tempo songs. The examples have highlighted the importance of melismatic delivery based on the stylistic features of that song. Melisma needs to be stylistically appropriate. For example, including the same melismatic runs that Mauboy uses in "Galaxy" may not suit the style of "This Ain't Love" due to the fact that that song is more focused on creating a dance/club vibe. Similarly, including the same type of melismatic runs that are heard in "(Another Song)…" in Jay Z's verse of "Suit & Tie" may distract from the lyrical content. Having an awareness of the stylistic features is therefore important for all CPM singers.

The next chapter discusses the use of melisma by professional singers in CPM. It provides insight into the ways in which each singer has explored melisma in their singing and professional careers.

CHAPTER FIVE

Stage 2: Interview Analysis

Introduction

The previous chapter highlights the ways melisma is communicated in CPM. The analysis shows that the use of melisma may change depending on stylistic features and/or context of the song – whether that is a studio or live recording, musical elements (tempo, dynamics, and texture), and/or vocal ability. Themes such as stylistic awareness and purpose were recurring themes that emerged during the song analysis. These themes appear to be crucial in order to communicate melisma. For the purposes of this research, the female participants will be identified as Participant 1, 2, and 3. As some of the interview questions address the use of melisma in performance, it was vital to include singers that are experienced performers. The importance of including interviews in the research project was to explore the use of melisma from a singer's perspective.

As well as exploring melisma in performance, Stage 2 also includes the vocal training of participants, a comparison of participant's definitions of melisma, run, and riff, as well as the potential differences between these terms. The interviews also discuss the excessive use of melisma that was identified from Chapter Two media reports. Lastly, Stage 2 data is comprised of participants' thoughts on melisma and emotion, and whether melisma is used as an expressive device to convey emotion in performance.

Vocal Background and Training

Family motivation was a primary factor for two of the three participants when embarking on vocal training. Participant 1 discussed how she always had a "musical background". Participant 1 also recollected memories of singing at family events:

I've had a musical background cause my grandpa plays… plays keys, and so

singing at like family events fairly early.

Similar to Participant 1, Participant 3 referred to family members:

My dad's in a choir, my brother's been doing music for about 15 years, and

I've always been singing.

It is implied in these answers that family significance is present in their primary stages of musical learning . In contrast, Participant 2 stated the age she started singing rather than discussing the factors that motivated her to start:

I started singing when I was about, ah, 10?

As the interview with Participant 2 continued, she revealed how much of an influence her family had on her singing career. Each participant reflected that their singing was enabled as a result of the musical influence from family members.

Vocal training

All participants attended vocal lessons to utilise and further enhance the musical tools learned in their early stages of musical learning. Participant 1 gained experience from a range of vocal teachers from various musical backgrounds. These included classical, jazz, and pop/soul. She made an interesting comment about one of the earlier teachers in her vocal life:

So I had one main teacher in high school who was classically trained, but who

did switch over to the sort of pop/Motown sort of style.

This is interesting because contemporary vocal pedagogy, in comparison to classical pedagogy, is still emerging, with new methods and research being developed (Chandler,2014, p. 36). There is also discussion that the pop voice was originally never to be trained like an operatic voice because the former was a reflection of "the agonies or ecstasies of ordinary working folk" (Soto-Morettini, 2014, p. 18). Formal training occurs in a range of contexts. For example, Participant 1 learned jazz techniques after attending a jazz camp. Her vocal

background is quite extensive on account of her exposure to a range of styles. Additionally, the concept of training may relate to the desire to sing "correctly" and "well", as Participant 1 often described the idea of singing safely and in a way that will cause no vocal damage. Participant 1 values a healthy voice, therefore training the voice to sing healthily is important and is not determined by the genre that she chooses to sing in.

Participant 2 recalled being exposed to only two voice teachers, in comparison to the many teachers that Participant 1 had. The second teacher for Participant 2 is described as a "mentor". She makes it clear that belting is a technique that she was drawn to and was able to achieve at a young age. In order to do it well, Participant 2 was taught the importance of control:

I remember the saying "rein it in, rein it in". Like… yeah it was full on.

As well as belting, Participant 2 learned how to blend both her chest and head voice. She called this technique, "smoothing out my thin fold". This was in reference to register transitions. Participant 2 was eager to learn how to seamlessly transition her chest to head voice after admiring the voice of one of her influences, Vanessa Amorosi, and developing a mixed register. It should be mentioned that Participant 1 and Participant 2 no longer take vocal lessons. Participant 2 also now teaches and, as such, is a direct social agent through which other individuals are able to acquire knowledge.

Unlike Participants 1 and 2, Participant 3 continues to take vocal lessons. She admitted to not having consistent lessons throughout her life. As she is now gigging frequently, she has felt it necessary to resume lessons. It was mentioned several times by Participant 3 that she values proper technique. She too was classically trained at a young age but labeled the experience as "weird" and "confronting" because she is not a classical singer; instead she classifies herself as a "contemporary artist". At the time of the interview, she explained how she is currently being taught the importance vocal placement has on the voice.

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Vocal terminology is not an area that she is completely comfortable with and is something she is intending on learning:

> …I'm still, like, teaching myself how to understand all of these things because these things are important, and I need to be able to know what everything is, which is why I think it's so important to use your voice correctly.

Melismatic training

It was interesting to note the ways in which melisma was learned by participants, whether it was through formal training (face-to-face teaching) or by mimicking other artists. Participant 1 revealed that melisma was not a technique she was taught during lessons:

> …it was really delved into on my own. I… I think I was just kind of; I was with the wrong teachers in that sense for that vocal style.

She admitted to learning from vocal score sheets although the issue was that these scores never formally noted the melismatic run. Instead, the use of squiggly lines replaced the notation of a melismatic run. For example, the vocal score of "(Another Song) All Over Again" (Timberlake & Morris, 2006), as discussed in the previous chapter, did not include the full melismatic notation or any squiggly lines. Instead the vocal score simplified the riff and run or did not include it. In order to learn melisma, Participant 1 began transcribing the melismatic runs of Beyoncé, Boyz II Men, Tori Kelly, Brandy, and Jazmine Sullivan. Participant 1 listened to the melismatic run, broke it down, and repeated until she achieved the desired effect. This is an example of an informal learning context (Green, 2002).

Unlike Participant 1, Participant 2 was taught how to achieve melisma. The way in which she was taught was much in the same way as Participant 1 – to break down the notes and "gradually speed it up", which is a similar way she teaches her current vocal students. Participant 2 did not admit to mimicking other artist's use of melisma, but instead listened and was influenced by the following artists: Vanessa Amorosi, Aretha Franklin, and Tina Arena.

Through her vocal training and by listening to artists, Participant 2 acquired a better understanding of the technique. According to McMahon (2014), it is the development of listening skills that "underpins musical expression" (p. 276).

Similar to Participant 1, Participant 3 was not taught how to achieve melisma. It is a technique that she has mimicked from other artists. The most influential artist to Participant 3 is H.E.R. (a female singer) because she has a vocal style that Participant 3 is most drawn to. She then listed artists like Beyoncé, Aretha Franklin, Celine Dion, and Whitney Houston because they are singers that best use the technique. Participant 3 acknowledged the difference between sounding like an artist and having that artist influence your own, unique voice.

> There's not specific artists [sic] that I would ask someone to make me sound like. There's specific artists that have a sound that is more appealing to what I think is suited to my, not just my sound, but more so my whole style of music and what I like… it's not like you mimic them but their sound is ideal to what I want my sound to be like…

Participant 3 admires the way H.E.R. sustains her melismatic runs, which is something that she is learning to achieve.

Defining Melisma

As the research has established, the definition of melisma is the singing of several notes on a syllable either sung on a vowel sound of the syllable or as a non-verbal sound. It is a term that is also highly associated with "running" or "riffing", as both are commonly used in contemporary voice practice. The study hypothesised that the term melisma would not have been as familiar as "run" and "riff". Interestingly, Participant 3 had to Google the definition of melisma to confirm its meaning after she had been invited to participate in the research. All

three participants were aware of the term, as well as the associated terms. However, all participants acknowledged that there is a difference between melisma, run, and riff. Table 1 lists their definitions, as well as what differentiates each term from the other.

Participants	Melisma	Run	Riff
Participant 1	"…the notes in between the real melody, or the, the standard melody of the song… used to… colour and… add to what's there already."	Goes on longer and hits specific notes whereas melisma is only one or two notes.	Something that is repeated and easily identifiable.
Participant 2	"….a quick succession of notes in one small phrase."	Associates runs with the word "descend". Longer and has more to do with ad-libbing.	Identified a riff as being similar to a run in that it is longer.
Participant 3	"…to move between the registers within one key".	Could not identify, however knew that there was a difference.	Could not identify, however knew that there was a difference.

Table 1 - Definitions of 'melisma', 'riff', and 'run' according to all participants.

Participant 1 mentioned how a melisma is similar to a "grace note". According to Seletsky (2017), grace notes are "ornamental notes written or printed smaller than the 'main text' and accorded an unmeasured duration which is not counted as part of the written bar length" (para. 1). It was not until interviewing Participant 1 that the term "grace notes" was brought to my attention as having relevance to melisma. Based on Seletsky's (2017) definition, grace notes are commonly used by all instruments whereas melisma is a technique that is only common to the voice. A vocal instructor in a YouTube video demonstrated how to

sing grace notes in CPM, as it is a technique that is used "everywhere in popular music" (IVOREEZ, 2015, 0:02). She defined a grace note as being "two movements in one sound" (0:04). Whilst she is explaining the term, a caption on the video comes up further defining the term to be "adding a small scoop to the arrival note" (0:11). Based on her demonstration, it seems more like a scoop or a slide from one note to the next rather than a melisma. Therefore, grace notes are related more to glissandos. It is possible for a scoop/slide to lead into a melismatic run, however based on the definitions of each, they are not the same.

Interestingly, Participant 2 associates "running" and "riffing" with the term "ad-lib". According to Chandler (2014), ad-libbing is the "spontaneous improvisation of melodies" (p. 49). Chandler (2014) also associates ad-libbing with riffing. The idea that a riff is similar to a run differs from the views of Participant 1. Participant 1 explained how runs are longer and intricate, whereas a riff is a repeated sequence of notes. Similar to grace notes, a riff is not directly linked to the voice.

Unfortunately, Participant 3 did not seem as confident as Participants 1 and 2 when asked to define each term, and delayed responding when asked if there was a difference. Participant 3 acknowledged that there was a difference but was unable to explain the difference. She was hesitant defining melisma even though she had heard of the technique and its associated words:

> Obviously I hear all these things all the time when I'm in the studio and
> working on music, but I was like "mmm is that quite what I'm thinking what it
> is?"

Chandler (2013) argues that while the use of different vocal terminology results in the confusion of singers, trying to establish a "one-world-language" (para. 8) is problematic. I do agree with Chandler's statement, however, Participant 3 demonstrates the importance in

clearly outlining and having a standardised vocal language in order to comprehend the differences.

Melisma and Performance

As already discussed, there is a belief that melisma can be an overused technique in CPM (e.g., Katzif, 2007; Veltman, 2010; Everitt, 2012). Participants were asked questions in relation to their use of melisma. The purpose was to understand if the technique is outdated, overused, or avoided. In addition, participants were asked to explain where and how they use melisma in a rehearsal or performance setting.

In terms of where participants may use melisma, either in specific words, sentences, or the entirety of the song, each participant expressed that use of melisma should have a purpose/reason:

> …choosing where to use it and using it really, really scarcely is, is the most
> important part. (Participant 1)
> I think that message to me was "don't let it not have a reason cause then it's
> not relevant and you shouldn't do it". (Participant 2)
> It kind of pulls away… if I use it all the time, if you sing like that all the time.
> (Participant 3)

Participant 1 believed that "you should build to runs" and use shorter melismas throughout the song. In terms of where melisma is used in a word, Participant 1 revealed that she uses it mostly in the middle of words to connect one note to the next. Participant 2 uses the example of "Sixteen Years" (Arena, Tyson, & Ward, 1997) to further explain the point of purpose and placement of melisma. She describes the song as being a "huge ballad" due to the amount of belting Arena uses in the song. She also makes an interesting point that melisma occurs mostly on the ends of words, but not a great deal of melismatic runs occur, due to the

emphasis on the belting aspect. For Participant 3, appropriate melismatic technique is important. She comments on how singers have a tendency to sing melisma but not "correctly". According to Participant 3, using melisma requires finding the appropriate time in a song to use it, and an understanding of vocal abilities. For example, Participant 3 considers her own vocal ability/strength and understands that the use of melisma sits comfortably in her middle to high register.

Participant 1 and Participant 2 use melisma less frequently when first learning or rehearsing a song, whereas Participant 3 explores melisma the same way she would during performance. Participant 1 commented on the importance of being comfortable with the original song before using melisma. Participant 2 believed that rehearsals are the opportune moment to "let loose" and "try something different". This is another example of an informal learning context (Green, 2002). Dayme (2005) has a similar belief, stating that rehearsal is "the place to experiment and be daring, and not hold back" (p. 113). The opportunity of trying different melismatic runs in the rehearsal period gives the individual the time to not only experiment, but to also have a better understanding and an awareness of vocal capabilities.

When asked if they chose songs based on the amount of vocal embellishments used in a song, Participant 1 discussed her current fascination with achieving difficult melismatic runs. She therefore focuses on those she considers to be difficult, records them, and tries to imitate them. Participant 2 is more concerned with songs that include high dynamic vocal intensity. While Participant 3 selects songs based on the presence of melisma in the song. Therefore, participants match melisma to their respective vocal capabilities and will select repertoire suited to their vocal strengths.

Avoiding melisma

In terms of being able to sing without using melisma, all participants admitted to being able to do so. For Participant 1, avoiding melisma came back to its purpose and whether you

are including the technique or not using a lot of it, as "there has to be a reason". She also

addressed the idea of stylistic correctness when using melisma:

> …if you're singing indie/folk songs then you're not necessarily going to want
>
> those influences from soul music and blues and that sort of thing. If you are
>
> trying to cover, you know a Beyoncé song or whatever, I feel like if you're
>
> going to do that correctly you're going to have to use their influences and it's
>
> obviously a big part of their music.

Participant 2 felt as though singing a song without belting was more unlikely than not

using melisma. At first, Participant 2 had reason to believe that she could avoid using

melisma in song. However, after singing through an example ("Dreams" by Fleetwood Mac

[Nicks, 1977]), Participant 2 questioned her previous answer, which opposes the use of

melisma in song. This could be due to a lack of knowledge and confusion with the different

terms. Although Participant 2 was using subtle, two-note melisma, it was still a melisma.

Participant 3 felt it was necessary to include melisma when covering songs because the

original version included melisma.

Overly used melisma

All participants confirmed that the technique is often overly used in CPM. Participant

2 reminisced on a time, "post "Genie in a Bottle"", where contemporary artists did not use

melisma and a time where a "cleaner" sound was more appropriate. Participant 3 stated that

"new age artists" have a tendency of overly using melisma. Participants 1 and 2 touch on

Katzif (2007), Veltman (2010), and Everitt's (2012) position of the overuse of melisma and

its relation to singing talent shows. According to Participant 1, the Australian music culture is

led to believe that the inclusion of vocal techniques such as melisma and even vibrato are

factors that determine a 'good' singer. Although she does not agree with this, she believes that

adding the "showier stuff" will catch audience attention. In this context, melisma becomes

more of a crowd pleaser than a deep-rooted emotional technique. Pleasing a crowd with melisma still carries purpose, similar to if someone were to use melisma sparingly during a performance.

Although Australia "has more of a rock upbringing", Participant 1 stated that the general public is still looking overseas to find what is "cool":

> …would associate the vocal runs… to the R&B… and it's all linked to America.

As a result of this, Participant 1 believes that audience members of shows like *Australia's Got Talent*, *X-Factor Australia*, and *Australian Idol* will respond to melismatic runs that sound similar to Beyoncé or Jessie J because that is what they classify as "good" singing. If this is true, then it is plausible that some singers only use melisma to gain credibility as a good singer or to gain success by using it. This may be especially evident when amateur singers cover songs. Although Timberlake did not include many melismatic riffs and runs in "Can't Stop the Feeling" (Timberlake, Martin, & Shellback, 2016), those that covered the song did use melisma. The possible reason for this is to stand out from other covers or to grow their YouTube careers.

According to Participant 3, overusing melisma creates confusion for the listener and devalues its creative credibility especially when it is constantly used throughout the song:

> You get confused about what the verse is, what the chorus is, like, all the elements of the music… of the sound. It's like, it creates too much of a, you don't know where it's going.

Use of melisma therefore relates to its use in relation to song structure and its occurrence within that structure. This was a theme that was covered in the previous chapter. Participant 1 also values the proper use and placement of melisma saying:

> …melisma loses its power the more that you use it…

Furthermore, Participant 1 explained the use of "small melismas" in the beginning of the verse as a way of adding "colour". She then explained that in order to add variety, the singer should "build to runs" as the song nears the end for textural purposes. Participant 2 also mentions keeping the song simple and then working your way into the song is more effective than "running all over the place". The previous chapter noted that quite often the melismatic runs were used towards the end of the song in order to add variety and texture. Participant 2 admits to overusing melisma but says that she is also aware of it, and although she does indulge in melismatic runs, there is a level of satisfaction that it brings when she sings melisma well. Participant 2 also states that there needs to be a level of consideration for the audience when performing using melisma:

> And the general consensus is that, it's impressive but people don't want to hear it all the time – same with belting, you know. You don't want to blast their heads off, you don't want to riff their heads… you gotta [sic] respect the process.

Having a level of awareness can sometimes be clouded by the fact that melisma may be used to bring out the colours of the song. All participants felt as though they use the technique without being aware of how and why they are using it in the song. Participant 1 stated that this is the result of how frequently she gigs; therefore she is singing the same songs with the inclusion of melisma because "that's how you started singing it". However, she has had to be more aware of the use because EDM music does not always need melisma:

> But recently, having to do top-lines and vocal demos, I have to be really acutely aware of what I'm singing because, for example, the vocal producer might ask for a note to have vibrato on it and another note to not have any vibrato… if they want melisma and they want it to be a bit more soulful, then yes but in the EDM world, you don't want those licks and that sort of thing… I

think I actually became aware recently of how second nature it was because

I've had to come back the other way and notice what I'm doing.

This was also evident in "This Ain't Love" (Mauboy, Sneddon, & Ryden, 2015). Although Mauboy uses a combination of melismatic runs and riffs, there is a significant difference in the way they are used in comparison to "Never be the Same" (Mauboy, Egizii, & Musumeci, 2014) and "Galaxy" (Vission, Alqaisi, McLaughlin, Calvillo, Bennett, & Ackley, 2011). The differences are based on the genre specificities that Participant 1 describes above.

Emotion and Melisma

All participants use the term "colour" to describe the sound of melisma. Each colour used may be unique to the individual's palette of musical expression. According to Juslin and Laukka (2003), expression "is what makes a performance worthwhile" (p. 274). If that is the case, then colour – in this case, melisma – is necessary in order to make a performance worthwhile as it is part of the expressive toolbox used by CPM vocalists. Participant 3 states that an artist can present many colours in their music. According to Participant 2, a song is not one block of colour and it is up to the artist to paint the desired picture for the audience. The analogy that Participant 2 presents in her statement of the singer being like a painter is a common expression used in contemporary voice practice (see Hughes, 2014; Soto-Morettini, 2014). While singers might use the analogy to describe the sound of the voice, researchers have found an interesting link between music and colour (Palmer, Schloss, Zu, & Prado-Leon, 2013). Palmer et al. (2013) conducted an experiment focusing on the idea that listeners can attribute colour to musical sounds. Although the study used classical orchestral music for its musical selections, the findings showed a strong association between listeners' perceptions of music to colour. In addition, the study also associated emotions (e.g. happy/sad, strong/weak) to the music that were linked to their associated colours. The study, as conducted by Palmer et

al. (2013), reinforces the 'painter/colour' analogy. Musical elements such as tempo and mode caused listeners to associate an emotion and colour to music. Singers use vocal techniques such as melisma (a type of colour) and tone colour, with the addition of tempo, mode, and other musical elements to create a sense of emotion for the listener.

Being emotionally driven is something that Participant 1values more than singing the correct pitch:

> I think if you've gone for it and you've put your everything into it in terms of emotion and performance, and that sort of thing, then you can miss a note and people won't care.

She refers to a cover of "Sex & Candy" (Wozniak, 1997) by Allen Stone (OurVinyl, 2013) to further clarify the importance of emotion over pitch. Stone's voice flips into his falsetto, and at 2:22 (OurVinyl, 2013) of the performance, his voice breaks causing the supposed note to sound off pitch. According to Participant 1, this is an example of a performer being "in the moment". Although melisma was not used in this example, Participant 1 argued that emotional melisma emerges from being in the moment. The idea of in the moment/spontaneous creativity is also referred to as vocal improvisation (Chandler, 2014, p. 47). This practice requires the singer to have an understanding of the harmonic structure of a song (Soto-Morettini, 2014). In addition, the vocalist should have an understanding of their own capabilities in terms of vocal range. However, Participant 1 states that melisma is driven by emotion and does not necessarily have to be on pitch. I do not believe that when Participant 1 was explaining being emotionally driven over singing on pitch, she was referring to having no sense of pitch. I believe she was referring more to the idea that when an artist becomes engulfed in the song, whether it be through lyrics or musical elements, that the artist is focused more on the emotional deliverance than being melodically correct.

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Nonetheless, Participant 1 brings up the idea of spontaneous creativity and its link to emotional melisma. It is worth discussing whether pre-planned improvisation can still create a sense of emotion through the use of melisma. As mentioned above, all participants use the rehearsal practices to explore melisma. While in rehearsal it might be spontaneous, when it is performed on the stage it may be pre-planned. "Pure improvisation" (Green, 2002, p. 48), which refers to musicians improvising without any pre-planned structure or chordal arrangement, may not be the usual form of improvisation found in CPM. Therefore, it becomes difficult to determine whether the spontaneous melismatic runs are driven by emotion or memorised during the rehearsal period. Green (2002) points out that the listener is less likely to differentiate one form of improvisation from the other, and the distinction may only become clear if the artist is able to replicate a previous performance (p. 49).

Participant 1 also makes a connection to a physical bodily effort that is involved in the production of sound:

> If someone's crying they're almost never going to be on pitch because they've lost all control of their vocal cords and like, there's like a build up in your throat that's like a balloon is pushing your throat up and… and so if you're crying, that's where people are going to go 'this is the rawest performance ever', and if a melisma comes out of the fact that you're crying? That's going to be way more powerful than a melisma just because Beyoncé sang that melisma in the song, you know?

Participant 1 provided an example of a singer who allows the meaning of the written language (lyrics) of the song to affect the body of the voice, thus resulting in melisma driven by emotion. Participant 3 also acknowledged the importance of lyrical understanding in regards to conveying emotion in the song:

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> I think there is emotional connection [to melisma] because… It sort of like, leads someone through a story… But I also think it's, for me, really dependent on, like, the lyrics…

Participant 3 is alluding to the idea that singers should be lyrically aware of what they are singing. Having an understanding of the song's textual material in order to express emotion is an aspect of gospel improvisation (Robinson-Martin, 2014). Although this form of improvisation is based around manipulating the texts by adding words to the original lyrics, the fundamentals of textual improvisation is relevant to the idea addressed by Participant 3. According to Robinson-Martin (2014), singers should have a "clear perspective" (p. 348) of the lyrical content, which is a quality that Participant 3 values in terms of conveying emotionally driven performances.

According to Participant 2, music plays an important role in the creation of emotional melisma:

> …you hear a song that you know it's heartbreaking. As soon as it starts, it starts its process and it's your job to allow it to affect you…There's a lot of satisfaction in feeling that emotion in a song. I love it. I love that feeling. I love surrendering to it.

Participant 2 described how melisma could be used as a musical sigh "when words fail". Participant 2 is describing non-verbal melisma. When melisma is added to the music, it is used as an expressive tool and as a way of communicating with the listener. Participant 2 refers to Beyoncé's "Why Don't You Love Me?" (Knowles, Beyonce, Knowles, & Bama Boyz, 2010), specifically the line "You don't seem to be in tune" (2:13-2:22):

> I think that the melisma just delivers – it's like the exclamation point at the end of her statement… like I can hear the relevance of it.

Participant 2 discussed how the song loses meaning without the use of melisma, especially if it is not used in specific lines, e.g. "I've got heart" (1:55). Participant 2 stated that while melisma can be emotional, it also has the ability to be emotionally irrelevant when it is only used to be "fancy". However, it is difficult to determine whether or not "fancy" melisma, as the result of being spontaneous, is not emotional.

Melismatic problems

Participants subjectively discussed ways in which melisma can lose a sense of emotion in song. Participant 3 used the word "fancy" to discuss melisma that loses emotional intent, as well as acknowledging her own efforts to sound vocally "fancy" during a performance:

> I feel like I've done it myself, where like, you try and match what other people are doing or other artists… you sort of force it out yourself…I feel like I do it unconsciously trying to match what other artists… whoever I'm singing.

It seems as though Participant 3 is mimicking other artists "unconsciously", as a result of her unstable vocal training throughout her career. Participant 2 gave an example of an artist in CPM, who has also been criticised in the media for overly using melisma:

> Sometimes Christina [Aguilera]. I love her, I really do but sometimes, you know, it can be taken too far. Or I've noticed it's like always the one note. It's like, you could copy and paste this belt/melisma from multiple songs and I swear to God it's the same note.

For Participant 2, repetitive use of melisma appears to hinder the emotional qualities that may be evident in a song. This is potentially problematic as melisma may then become ineffective. It could also be possible that Aguilera's notable melismatic run (e.g. the first 15 seconds of the song "Ain't No Other Man" (Aguilera, Roane, DioGuardi, Beatty, 2006)) could be her signature vocal quality. Aguilera's melismatic run could be a significant feature of her vocal signature. Similarly, Mariah Carey's vocal signature may include her 'whistling' or Justin

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Timberlake's may include his regular use of falsetto. These examples are vocal characteristics that help audiences to recognise the artist and bring a sense of uniqueness to CPM artistry.

In contrast with the views of Participant 2 and 3, Participant 1 discussed how the melisma used in "What Do You Mean?" (Bieber, Boyd, & Levy, 2015) was not emotional because it was not naturally produced:

> I mean I know he can do them but in terms of the song and the way that they're trying to use melisma in this, it's like they're trying to make it an instrument rather than an emotional thing… people try to replicate the auto-tuned melisma in real life, and it's like, well you can't… it's not an emotional run. He didn't do it for that he did it as a melodic thing.

Participant 1 therefore observed how technology may impact melisma causing it to no longer be emotional. Hughes, Baker, Bartlett, Robinson and Monro (2015) and Soto-Morettini (2014) discuss how songs with auto-tune or other pitch correction software have impacted the way singers learn. It is difficult for a singer to learn something that is not "humanly possible" (Hughes et al., 2015, p. 50). This is due to the fact that pitch correction software's present the idea of perfection. Therefore, amateur singers learning informally through mimicking songs may be missing out on the vocal aesthetics that create a CPM artist. Furthermore, they may be missing the emotional quality that is essential in song as discussed by the participants.

Conclusion

Although the sample size of the study was small, participants were able to provide a review on the use of melisma in CPM. It was interesting to see the similarities of their responses, as well as the identified differences. In terms of defining melisma, the consensus was that melisma differs from a melismatic riff or a melismatic run. Participant 1 further clarified the difference between riffs and runs, whereas Participant 2 viewed runs and riffs to

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be the same. It is important to clearly define the terms because without proper clarification, singers may become confused in all contexts of learning melisma, formally or informally. This is particularly relevant to artists who use melisma as part of their vocal signature.

All participants believed there to be a relationship between emotion and melisma, and how it is possible to discern melisma that may lack emotion. Participants believed that if melisma is primarily used to showcase ability than it lacks emotion. In addition, participants believed that purpose is driven by emotion as emotion is able to create meaning. In other words, if the singer's purpose in a song is to make sense of its emotional qualities, and if melisma is communicated through the emotional qualities, then the song has purpose. However, I would also argue that a singer wanting to be "fancy" and show off their vocal capabilities through performance is still purpose driven. While this type of performance may lack emotion, it is still a motivational factor for the singer to express melisma. Participants also referred to previous findings that emerged in the Stage 1 analysis. Participant 1 stressed the importance of stylistic correctness, and how it is possible to not use the technique in some genres. The findings of Stage 1 and Stage 2 are used to determine the emergent themes discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Introduction

The aim of the research was to investigate the ways in which melisma was communicated and expressed. This included the types and contexts of melismatic singing in CPM as melisma may indeed have several purposes for its use. In order to comprehensively explore melisma, the research consisted of two stages of analysis. Stage 1 included a musicological analysis of songs performed by two artists, Jessica Mauboy and Justin Timberlake. Three stylistically different songs were chosen from each artist. The analysis examined the use of melisma in the relevant musical style, as well as a comparison to the use of melisma in a live setting. Stage 2 consisted of semi-structured interviews with professional female singers. The aim of this stage was to explore the use of melisma by CPM singers.

Findings and Emergent Themes

Theme 1: Vocal agility, technical ability and musicality are important concepts when using melisma.

As mentioned in Stage 1 analysis, Jessica Mauboy and Justin Timberlake quite often display vocally acrobatic melismas during a song. For those singers trying to mimic these melismatic runs and others like them, they must understand that melisma requires a level of vocal agility. As the participants noted, this is best taught by breaking down the notes in a melismatic run, singing them slowly, and then slowly increasing the tempo. By learning how to achieve melisma this way, the singer has the potential to increase their technical abilities when creating melisma.

The findings also reveal that similarly to jazz singers and improvisation, a singer should be aware and have an understanding of the melodic and chordal arrangement of a song when using melisma. This awareness, along with agility and technical ability, is also useful when singers begin to use melisma for improvisational purposes during a song. In saying this, singers should have an awareness of their technical abilities, e.g., their vocal range when attempting melisma.

Theme 2: Stylistic elements are worth considering when using melisma.

Stage 1 analysis recognised that the use of melisma is not as common in some styles of music as it is in others. For example, "This Ain't Love" incorporated the structure, tempo and musical sounds that are heard in EDM and mixed it with Mauboy's pop sound. As a result, there was less use of melisma in comparison to "Never be the Same" and "Galaxy". Participant 1 revealed that some EDM producers have a preference when it comes to using vocal techniques in their songs, and it is not as common to use the same amount of melisma or vibrato that may be heard in CPM.

Both stages of analysis observed the importance of musical elements such as dynamics and texture in the use of melisma. "Never be the Same", "Galaxy", and "(Another Song) All Over Again" evidently followed the dynamic structure that Participant 1 discussed in the interview in that melisma should "build to runs". As such, melismatic runs were more commonly used towards the end of a song adding a thicker texture. In addition, melisma (both runs and riffs) may be used to add variety and/or repetition based on the stylistic elements in a song.

Theme 3: A connection to emotion

Participants in Stage 2 shared a similar view in that melisma may stem from emotion. Participants described emotionally driven melisma as a singer being present, or 'in the

moment' of the song. This is the result of allowing the song to emotionally influence the singer. Interestingly, the idea of being emotionally influenced was observed in the Scherer et al. (2017) study as mentioned in the literature review (see p. 25 of this thesis). Scherer et al. revealed that even without textual material, participants were still capable of revealing emotional qualities through the voice. Whereas, participants in Stage 2 of this research expressed the importance in understanding and interpreting the textual material in order to make sense of a song's emotional qualities. Participant 3 describes that the purpose of a singer is to tell a story and that melisma may assist in the transitioning from one part of the musical narrative to the next. This is also relevant to the "emotionally charged concept" (Tagg, 2003) previously discussed, and expressing the overall emotional intensity of melisma.

Frith (1996) would argue that songs should not be concerned with ideas but should focus on expression in song (p. 164). Frith explains this by discussing that love songs do not actually cause people to fall in love and that songs about love serve to articulate the feelings of love to another person (p. 164). However, the findings identify that it is possible to have an established understanding of language and an understanding of expression that emerges from that language to allow for emotionally driven melisma.

Theme 4: Melismatic singing continues to be critiqued in CPM.

Stage 2 briefly explores this theme as participants recognised the growing obsession of melisma overtime. Interestingly, their views on melisma are similar to those of Katzif (2007), Veltman (2010), Osborn (2011), Eskow (2011), and Everitt (2012). Participants believed that while melisma can be expressive and be emotionally driven, melisma can also have a negative impact in which singers are constantly using the technique to be "fancy". However, singers who use melisma to be "fancy" are still using a type of melisma, therefore giving their use of melisma purpose.

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Theme 5: Understanding the difference between melisma, melismatic riff and melismatic run.

It is common in contemporary voice practice to use a combination of the following terms: 'run', 'riff' and 'lick'. While the participants confirmed that the overarching term 'melisma' is not as common in contemporary voice practice, it is interesting to note that the term has been used longer than the newer associated terms. It was also interesting to examine how the literature perceived and defined these words, and how non-academic and academic definitions were compared. One of the aims of this study has been to outline the differences between melisma, melismatic riff and melismatic run. The purpose in doing so is to establish a clear vocal language for future voice students, researchers and singers.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of the sample size was due to the timeframe of the research project. Initially, the research was to conduct interviews with up to 10 participants. However, it took time to secure ethics approval, to source participants and analyse the data. For these reasons, only three interviews were conducted. The invitation to participate was open to male and female singers as it would have been beneficial to include male participants. The timeframe of the study and the word constraints proved to also be limiting.

The lack of literature in this area was another limitation to the study. It resulted in reviewing literature with a generalised understanding of melisma in a contemporary context or literature with no reference to melisma. More often than not, the literature discussed common techniques in contemporary voice practice such as vibrato and belt. Therefore, the study relied upon online sources to describe the melismatic phenomena. It is important to address the imbalance in literature in this area.

Recommendations from the Research Findings and Further Research

As the findings addressed the research question through the limitation of a small sample, it is recommended that further research be undertaken. However, as the research identified, there are distinctions that can be made between melisma and the types and contexts. The research also identified the distinction between melisma, a melismatic riff, and a melismatic run. The findings suggest that accurate terminology in relation to expressive techniques would reduce potential confusion and misuse. Therefore, recommendations for further research include testing the efficacy of such terminology, and determining whether there are any gender biases in relation to expressive techniques and terminology. Using the International Phonetic Alphabet (International Phonetic Alphabet, 2016) in relation to identifying particular sounds used for melisma and/or collaborating with linguistic researchers would also be useful for further research.

Final Thoughts

Contrary to what some may suggest (e.g., Browne, 2010), melisma continues to be communicated in Contemporary Popular Music. This may be the result of the expressive element that melisma adds to a song. As this study has suggested, melisma is both a technique that requires a level of vocal agility/flexibility and is a tool for musical expression. The findings of this study identified that melisma may be used to make emotional sense of a song. The study also identified that while melisma may be used to express emotional meaning, it may also be used to showcase vocal agility and technical ability - although some may identify these qualities as a means to be "fancy". Irrespective of this criticism, using melisma outside of its emotional context still remains purposeful when in accordance with the intention of the singer.

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Appendix A

Department of Media, Music, Communications and
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Investigator's Name: Mirrae Youssef
Supervisor's Name & Title: Associate Professor Diane Hughes

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: Exploring melismatic singing.

You are invited to participate in a study of the voice and emotion. The purpose of the study is to discover whether a vocal technique called melisma is tied with emotional expression. The study also aims to explore the use of melisma in popular musics. Melisma is an expressive technique that requires the singer to sing several notes on the one sound/syllable.

The study is being conducted by Mirrae Youssef so as to meet the requirements of the Master of Research program under the supervision of Associate Professor Diane Hughes of the Department of Media, Music, Communications and Cultural Studies.

If you decide to participate you will be asked a series of open-ended questions based on your vocal background, vocal artistry, and use of melisma on and off the stage. Interviews will be held on Macquarie University Campus or at the desired location of the participant. The duration of the interview will be an hour. Audio-recordings will be used during the interview as a means of collecting data from participants and for transcription purposes.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results, as participants and any participant quotes will be de-identified. Access to the data will only be made available to the Chief Investigator/Supervisor, Diane Hughes, and the co-investigator/research student, Mirrae Youssef. A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request via email to mirrae.youssef@students.mq.edu.au.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, _____(participant's name)_____ have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____
   (Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Name: _____
   (Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ ____Date: _____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Appendix B

Background of the singer:

1. When did you first start singing?

2. Did you start vocal lessons as soon as you knew you could sing? Or did you begin vocal lessons and then you learned that you had this talent after?

3. Talk a little bit about your vocal training. Were there any specific lessons that have stuck with you till now?

4. Do you still continue taking vocal lessons?

5. Were there specific artists that you tried to sing like, or maybe even ask your teacher to help you sound similar to them?

6. What was it about those artists that drew your attention to them?

7. Name some artists that people have compared you to. What were the reasons for comparing you to those specific artists?

8. Have you ever compared yourself to a particular artist to explain your vocal artistry? Which artist and why?

9. Describe your vocal artistry.

   'Melisma': Melisma is the singing of several notes on one vowel sound

1. Are you aware of the term melisma? If yes, then please describe what it is?

2. Would you say there is a difference between a run, a riff and melisma? If yes, explain the difference between each.

3. During your vocal lessons, were you ever taught how to achieve melisma?

4. If not then was it something you mimicked from artists? If you did mimic, which artists were you listening to?

5. Who are your musical influences? And what is it about their vocality that draws you to them?

6. Do you purposefully place melisma on certain words to emphasise the meaning of a song? If yes, then please provide an example of that. And where is that emphasis placed? The beginning, middle or end of a sentence?

7. Has it become more of a second nature type of vocal technique that you find yourself doing without even noticing it? If yes, then why do you think that has happened?

8. During the rehearsal period, do you find yourself using melisma less than when you are on stage?

9. Do you think people overly use melisma?

Performance questions:

1. Tell me what you think an effective performance would consist of.

2. Do appropriate use of vocal techniques like melisma make for a great performance?

3. How do you choose songs to sing for a performance? What is taken into consideration? The venue, the type of gig, your vocal abilities etc.

4. Have you ever found yourself picking a song based on the vocal embellishments found in the song?

5. Why do you use melisma during a performance?

6. What is the benefit in using melisma?

7. Do you find that it affects your performance if you do not use it?

8. Have you been able to sing a song without using melisma? If yes, which song and explain the reasons why you didn't use it.

9. Do you expect a reaction from the audience after using melisma?

10. How do you connect with a cover song? Or how do you make it your own?

11. Do you put the same amount of emotion into a cover song as you would an original song?

12. Do you find that your vocal techniques change when you're singing a cover than when you are singing your own? If yes, why do you think that is?

13. Describe how you feel when you sing a melismatic phrase correct. And by correct, I mean you sing it the way you wanted to in your head.

14. Do you generally use melisma in your head or chest voice? Why do you use it in your head/chest voice more than your chest/head voice?

15. Do you think there is a connection between melisma and emotion? Explain why you said yes or no.

16. Can you tell the difference between melisma that is used as a form of expression and emotion, and melisma that is forced? Can you give an example?

17. When you choose songs for auditions, what do you look for? What do you think they look for?

Appendix C

Jessica Mauboy – "Never be the Same" melismatic analysis.

Time Stamp/Structure	Non-verbal Sound or Vowel	Length/Shape	Onset/Offset	Melisma/Riff/Run
Intro: 0:02-0:05	Non-verbal – "**oo**"	Short – Descending	Hard to breathy	Melisma
0:06-0:08	Vowel – "y**ea**"	Short – Combination of ascending and descending movement	Neutral to breathy	Melisma
0:10-0:11	Non-verbal sound	Short – Combination of ascending and descending movement	Hard	Melisma
Verse: 0:24-0:25	Vowel – "sink**ing**"	Short – Descending	Hard to breathy	Melisma
0:36-0:037	Vowel – "era**sing**"	Short – Descending	Hard to breathy	Melismatic Riff – Same as the word "sinking" (at 0:24-0:25)
Pre-chorus: 0:43-0:44	Vowel – "**are**"	Short – Descending	Neutral	Melisma
0:46-0:47	Vowel – "**are**"	Short – Ascending/descending	Neutral to breathy	Melismatic
Chorus: 0:55-0:56	Vowel – "br**ea**k"	Short – Descending	Neutral	Melisma
1:01-1:02	Vowel – "s**a**me"	Short – Descending	Hard to neutral	Melisma
1:13-1:14	Vowel – "s**a**me"	Short – Descending	Hard to neutral	Melismatic riff – same as "same" at 1:01-1:02
Verse: 1:28-1:29	Vowel – "sink**ing**"	Short – Descending	Hard to breathy	Melismatic riff – Same as the

				word "sinking" (at 0:24-0:25)
1:35-1:36	Vowel– "any**mo**re"	Short – Descending	Neutral to breathy	Melisma
1:37-1:38	Vowel– "any**mo**re"	Short – Ascending	Neutral to neutral	Melisma
1:39-1:41	Vowel – "N**o**"	Short – Ascends then descends for the remainder of the melismatic run	Breathy to breathy	Melismatic run
Pre-chorus: 1:43	Vowel – "g**e**t"	Short – Ascending	Neutral	Melisma
1:47-1:48	Vowel – "**a**re"	Short – Combination of descending and ascending movement	Neutral to breathy	Melismatic run
1:50-1:51	Vowel – "**a**re"	Short – Ascending/descending	Neutral to breathy	Melismatic riff – same as "are" at 0:46-0:47
1:53	Vowel – "w**ay**"	Short – Descending	Neutral to breathy	Melisma
Chorus: 1:56-1:57	Vowel – "r**a**ce" (the second vocal track NOT the main vocal track)	Short – Descending	Difficult to determine as it is low in the mix	Melisma
1:59-2:00	Vowel – "br**ea**k" (the second vocal track NOT the main vocal track)	Short – Ascending/Descending/ Ascending/Descending	Difficult to determine as it is low in the mix	Melisma
2:05-2:06	Vowel – "s**a**me"	Short – Descending	Hard to neutral	Melismatic riff – same as "same" at 1:01-1:02
2:05-2:06	Vowel – "s**a**me" (the second vocal track NOT the main vocal track)	Short – Descending	Difficult to determine as it is low in the mix	Melisma – It follows the same pattern as "same" at 1:01-1:02 but sung a third above

2:12-2:13	Vowel – "kn**o**wn" (the second vocal track NOT the main vocal track)	Short – Ascending/descending/ Ascending/descending	Difficult to determine as it is low in the mix	Melisma – not the same as "break" at 1:59-2:00'
2:17-2:18	Vowel – "s**a**me"	Short – Descending	Hard to neutral	Melismatic riff – same as "same" at 1:01-1:02
Bridge: 2:23	Vowel – "**ne**ver"	Short – Ascending	Breathy	Melisma
2:24	Vowel – "st**o**ps"	Short – Descending	Neutral	Melisma
2:26-2:27	Vowel – "e**nough**"	Short – Descending	Neutral to breathy	Melisma
2:28-2:30	Non-verbal sound	Combination of ascending and descending movements	Neutral to breathy	Melismatic run
2:35	Vowel – "**ne**ver"	Short – Ascending	Breathy	Melismatic riff – It follows the same pattern as "never" at 2:23 but sung a third above
2:40-2:44	Non-verbal sound	Long – Ascending/descending to starting note	Breathy/Hard onset – difficult to hear what the offset is	Melisma – only uses two notes
Chorus – Main vocal line follows the same pattern as first chorus: 2:45-2:46	Non-verbal sound – the second vocal track NOT the main vocal track	Short – Descending	Neutral	Melismatic run
2:54-2:57	Non-verbal sound – the second vocal	Long – Descending	Difficult to determine as it	Melismatic run – the run is long and fast

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	track NOT the main vocal track		is low in the mix	
3:04-3:05	Non-verbal sound – the second vocal track NOT the main vocal track	Short – Descending/ascending	Difficult to determine as it is low in the mix	Melismatic run – the run is short and fast
3:06-3:10	Vowel – "s**a**me" (the second vocal track NOT the main vocal track)	Long – Combination of ascending and descending movement	Neutral to breathy	Melismatic run – combination of slow and fast notes
3:11-3:14	Non-verbal sound – the second vocal track NOT the main vocal track	Long – Combination of ascending and descending movement	Breathy	Melismatic run – combination of slow and fast notes
3:14-3:17	Vowel – "y**ea**h"	Long – Combination of ascending and descending movement	Breathy	Melismatic run – movement is not as fast as previous runs
3:18-3:20	Non-verbal sound – the second vocal track NOT the main vocal track	Short – Ascending/descending	Difficult to determine as it is low in the mix	Melisma
3:28-3:29	Vowel – "h**ey**"	Short – Descending	Neutral	Melisma
3:32-3:38	Non-verbal – "**oo**"	Long – Descending	Mix of Neutral/ Breathy	Melismatic run – Not a fast run
3:39-3:40	Non-verbal	Ascending/Descending	Breathy to neutral	Melisma – uses two notes

Appendix D

Jessica Mauboy – "Never be the Same" sound sources.

Time codes for the following versions of "Never be the Same":

- The end chorus from the studio album *Beautiful* (found at 2:41-3:53).

- The end chorus from the iTunes Session (found at 2:44-3:51).

- The end chorus from Nova's Red Room (found at 2:44-3:42).

Appendix E

Justin Timberlake – "(Another Song) All Over Again" melismatic analysis.

The melismatic analysis does not include the "Onset to Offset" column that the previous melismatic analysis included. The analysis in 'Chapter Four' refers to the vocal score, therefore the movement, or "shape" of the song will be notated replacing the onset/offset column.

Time Stamp/ Structure	Non-verbal Sound - Vowel	Length/Shape	Notation	Melisma/ Riff/ Run
Section A: 0:27-0:29	Vowel – "**o**h"	Short – Descending	C# down to B	Melisma
0:30-0:32	Vowel – "y**ea**h"	Short – Descending/ ascending	G# down to E and up to F#	Melisma
Section B: 0:50-0:51	Vowel – "a**frai**d"	Short – Descending	B down to G#	Melisma
0:58-0:59	Vowel – "w**a**y"	Short – Descending	F# down to the E	Melisma
Section C: 1:00-1:01	Vowel – "b**u**t"	Short – Ascending	E up to G# then up to B	Melisma
1:05-1:06	Consonant – "m**y**"	Short – Descending/ascending	C# down to B, G# then up to A	Melisma
1:10-1:11	Vowel – "**i**f"	Short – Ascending	E up to G# then to B	Melismatic riff – similar to "but" at 1:00-1:01
1:15-1:16	Vowel – "m**igh**t"	Short - Descending/ascending	C# down to B, G# then up to A	Melismatic riff – similar to "my" at 1:05-1:06
Section D: 1:21-1:23	Vowel – "pl**ea**se"	Short - Ascending	G natural, G#, A, B, and E	Melismatic run
1:25-1:27	Vowel – "ch**a**nce"	Short – Descending		Melisma

1:35-1:37	Vowel – "d**o**ne"	Short – Descending	E down to C# F# down to E	Melisma
Section C: 1:43-1:44	Consonant – "m**y**"	Short – Descending	C# down to B, G# then up to A	Melismatic riff – similar to "my" at 1:05-1:06
1:48-1:49	Vowel – "**i**f"	Short – Ascending	E up to G# then to B	Melismatic riff – similar to "but" at 1:00-1:01
Section B: 2:15-2:17	Vowel – "m**a**n"	Short – Ascending/ descending	B up to C#, back down to B and down to G#	Melisma
2:20-2:21	Vowel – "**ea**rth"	Short – Descending	F# down to E, C#, then back up to E	Melisma
2:24-2:25	Vowel – "h**a**nd"	Short – Ascending/ descending	Starts on F# but the movement is unclear as the melisma is rapid. Goes back to the starting note of F#	Melisma
Section C: 2:25-2:26	Vowel – "b**u**t"	Short – Ascending	E up to G# then to B	Melismatic riff – similar to "but" at 1:00-1:01
2:35-2:36	Vowel – "n**o**w"	Short – Ascending	F#, G#, A, F# (octave)	Melismatic run
Section D: 2:51-2:52	Vowel/ – "ch**a**nce"	Short – Ascending/ descending	E up to F# down to E and down to C#	Melisma

2:55-2:56	Vowel – "s**o**ng"	Short – Ascending/ descending	E up to F# down to E and down to C#	Melismatic riff – similar to "chance" at 2:51-2:52
3:00-3:03	Vowel – "d**o**ne"	Short – Descending	F# down to E	Melismatic riff – similar to "done" at 1:35-1:37
Section C: 3:04	Vowel – "**I**'ll"	Short – Descending	D# down to C# and down to G#	Melisma
3:08-3:09	Consonant – "m**y**"	Short – Descending	C# down to B, G# then up to A	Melismatic riff – similar to "my" at 1:05-1:06
3:11-3:12	Vowel – "**i**f"	Short – Ascending	E up to G# then to B	Melismatic riff – similar to "but" at 1:00-1:01
3:17	Vowel – "m**e**"	Short - Descending/ ascending	C# down to B, G# then up to A	Melismatic riff – similar to "my" at 1:05-1:06
3:29-3:30	Non-verbal sound	Short – Descending/ ascending	E down to C# up to F# down to E and down to C#	Melisma
Section E: 3:36	Vowel – "g**o**t"	Short – Descending	F# down to C#	Melisma
3:41-3:44	Vowel/Consonant – "h**ere**"	Long – Combination of ascending and descending movement	Difficult to determine	Melismatic run – the run is fast
3:46-3:50	Vowel – "ag**ai**n"	Long- Combination of ascending and descending movement	Difficult to determine	Melismatic run – the F# is held for some time then notes are added towards the end of the melisma
Section C: 3:51	Vowel – "**I**'ll"	Short – Descending	D# down to C# and down to G#	Melismatic riff – similar to "I'll" at 3:04

3:59-4:01	Vowel – "**i**f"	Short – Ascending	F# up to G up to F# (octave)	Melisma
4:04-4:05	Vowel – "m**e**"	Short – Descending	C# down to B, G# then up to A	Melismatic riff – similar to "my" at 1:05-1:06
4:07	Vowel – "l**o**ve"	Short – Ascending	C# up to E	Melisma
Section D: 4:16-4:17	Vowel – "ch**a**nce"	Short – Ascending/ descending	E up to F# down to E and down to C#	Melismatic riff – similar to "chance" at 2:51-2:52
4:26-2:27	Vowel – "d**o**ne"	Short – Descending	F# down to E	Melismatic riff – similar to "done" at 1:35-1:37
Section C: 4:29	Vowel – "**I**'ll"	Short – Descending	D# down to C# and down to G#	Melismatic riff – similar to "I'll" at 3:04
3:38	Vowel – "**i**f"	Short – Ascending	E up to G# then to B	Melismatic riff – similar to "but" at 1:00-1:01
Section F: 4:48-5:39	Timberlake uses a variety of non-verbal and verbal sounds	A combination of ascending and descending movements	The vocal score indicates that ad-libs are to be sung in section f	Melismatic runs – Timberlake sings melismatic runs in his falsetto

Appendix F

Justin Timberlake – "(Another Song) All Over Again".

As the analysis stated in 'Chapter Four', "(Another Song)…" does not follow the verse-chorus structure as typically used in popular music. As such, the song was structured into various sections to structure. Below are section examples:

Section A   Oh, Oh, Yeah

Section B   You've been alone
You've been afraid
I've been a fool
In so many ways

Section C   But I would change my life
If you thought you might try to love me

Section D   So please, give me another chance
To write you another song
And take back those things I've done

Section E   Ooh, little girl you're all I've got
Don't you leave me standing here, once again

Section F   Again (vocal improvisations till the end of the song, including melisma)