



A STUDY OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE CHORAL CONDUCTOR'S REHEARSAL BEHAVIOURS IN FOUR UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA

Wong Kwan Yie¹

¹Department of Music, Cultural Centre, University of Malaya, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This study was to survey university choral students regarding their views towards the choral conductor's rehearsal behaviours utilized in the rehearsal setting by ranking the behaviours in the order of importance to them and to investigate the attitudes of university choral students towards their choral rehearsal. The author also surveyed conductors about the value they place upon conductor's rehearsal behaviours in the choral rehearsal. A sample of 111 choral students and four conductors from four local universities in Malaysia participated in this study. Two kinds of instrument from the Gleason (1992) were used as the primary measurement of data for this study: 1) Students' and Conductors' Survey of Conductor's Rehearsal Behaviours, and; 2) Music Class Attitude Index (MCAI). Overall, university choral students and conductors value "conducting and rehearsal procedures" more than "personality and personal qualities" of the conductor's rehearsal behaviours. Attitude scores did not differ significantly by gender, but were found to differ significantly by choir and students' years of experience in singing with the conductor.

© 2014 AESS Publications. All Rights Reserved.

Keywords: University students, Choral conductor, Attitudes, Rehearsal behaviours, Public universities, Malaysia.

Contribution/ Originality

This study documents the students' attitudes towards their choral rehearsals and their viewpoint of the conductor's rehearsal behaviours. By assessing this, the choral music education professions are able to discover areas that need improvement and further develop successful rehearsal behaviours.

1. INTRODUCTION

Choral singing has been more important and popular than ever in society in the 20th century, with increasing numbers in both size and quality of school and college choirs. In addition, choral music has also become an essential part of the school curriculum (Garretson, 1993). The effectiveness a choral program is greatly influenced by the conductor's leadership, communication, and vision for the singers as well as their right and appropriate style of teaching and rehearsal technique (Stanton, 1971; Cox, 1989a).

In Malaysia, even though there have been many researches into student attitudes regarding many types of musical phenomena, but there is only a handful of published data related to the relationship between choral conductors' rehearsal behaviours and student learning or attitudes specifically in the universities or university choral conductors or ensembles. Much extant research suggests effective ways to structure rehearsals regarding pacing (Cox, 1989b; Goolsby, 1996), instruction differentiation (Madsen and Geringer, 1983), repertoire choice (Funderburk-Galvan, 1988), and the organisation of rehearsal time (Copley *et al.*, 1990; Brendell, 1996). This study was designed to increase the experience knowledge amongst university students during choral rehearsals, and also to assist choral conductors to give a positive influence on the persistence of choral singers during their university life.

Conducting plays an important role in the music learning process, particularly in large ensemble rehearsal settings. The choral conductor, by nature of occupying the position of musical leadership in a choir, plays a very important role in identifying and fulfilling the needs of the choral students in a rehearsal. Ganschow (2014) states that the chosen structure of rehearsal priorities and approaches are important to the choral conductors in order to create a meaningful art and experiences with their singers. It is the responsibility of the choral conductor to ensure that each music student reaches a satisfactory level of ability in both individual and ensemble areas of study. Jordan (2008) described an ideal rehearsal as one that is a "fluid give and take of both musical and human issues". This can be achieved through methodical rehearsal techniques and rehearsal behaviours by the conductor to advance the musicality of his or her group. For maximum results, the conductor should strive for consistency and fluidity in all aspects of rehearsal and performance. The conductor should clearly let the student know what is expected and what is not in a rehearsal setting. Aamot (1974) states that the conductor is responsible for the musical and non-musical factors that are within his control, because he is the leader of the choir. In order to have an effective and communicative musical leadership, particularly in relation to choral conducting, one must possess three critical skills, i.e., (1) a philosophical under-pinning of the role; (2) musical and technical skills; and (3) inter-personal skill (Durrant, 2003). Conductors should equip themselves with competence, credibility, and charisma. These qualities can influence musicians' attitudes and performances (Parasuraman and Nachman, 1987).

Conductors often quote the age-old axiom "*The quality of the performance is a direct result of what has transpired in the rehearsal*" (Ulrich, 1993). In addition, besides the selection of music, according to Ulrich, the key responsibility of the conductor is to ensure rehearsal success because rehearsal plays an important part in the performance. To create an efficient choral rehearsal, the conductor needs to have the skills in the application of time, sequential activities, supportive

conductor behaviours and the creation of an appropriate rehearsal climate. In Kelly (2007) found that music instructors who were prepared for rehearsal activities, maintained high music standards and exhibited a high level of subject matter knowledge were deemed as effective. In addition, Steele (2010) identified nonverbal communication, strong positive self-efficacy, and strong leadership skills as the three common characteristics of effective music instructors. However, Silvey (2014) argues that the experienced conductors are sometimes unaware of unproductive rehearsal behaviours that may impede the productivity and efficiency of the daily rehearsal. With the expressivity of the music and the conductor's interpersonal skills, the way in which a rehearsal is structured can likely create an aesthetic experience for students which is life changing (Durrant, 2000). Many studies indicate that an effective rehearsal climate is essential to the growth of the musical ensemble. Varying levels of intensity that allow for different types of activities are important to the rehearsal environment. To provide an appropriate, supportive rehearsal climate, the directors should aware and fulfill the educational needs of their students and must create an atmosphere of positive attitudes and behaviours amongst students in order to present a suitable and encouraging rehearsal climate (Taebel and Coker, 1980; Brophy and Good, 1986).

To establish an appropriate and effective rehearsal atmosphere, the conductor's rehearsal behaviour certainly occupies an important role (Price and Byo, 2002). Faulker (1973) states that the conductor's behaviour plays a role in establishing authority and for those who are inspiring and persuasive can be said to be exercising a form of domination over the performers. Despite this domination, the collaboration between the conductor and ensemble should always present in a choral rehearsal. In addition, the rehearsal atmosphere must be such that the combination of conductor persuasiveness and collaboration results in an ensemble that is both responsive and receptive to the conductor's verbal and nonverbal behaviours. Indeed, performances appear to benefit when ensemble members feel a part of the learning process rather than functioning as passive recipients of information (Hamann *et al.*, 1990). Another attribute of a good conductor is being a good communicator. Good choral conductors use a variety of communication techniques in order to stimulate musical responses from singers (Harden, 2000). Generally, communication often being categorized as verbal or non-verbal behaviour and most often being viewed as "interacting streams of spontaneous and symbolic communication" respectively (Buck and Vanlear, 2002).

A successful conductor must be able to recognize singers' problems and apply effective teaching strategies at the most precise moment, and subsequently must be able to communicate "*a steady flow of musical ideas, cues, nuances, moods and interpretive concepts to his singers*" (Stanton, 1971). Students recognize idiosyncratic, high magnitude verbal and non-verbal behaviours of their directors, and rate them as very effective. These include catchphrases, analogies, whispering, emphasis through voice volume, and giving strong eye contact when something went awry in rehearsal. On the other hand, when identifying their own high magnitude, the directors' feedbacks were nearly identical to their students' perceptions (Whitaker, 2011).

By placing such responsibility on the conductor, it would seem important that a conductor would want to examine his or her rehearsal behaviour in relation to the choral students' experience and attitude. There have been researchers related to the reasons and motivations amongst high

school students' for participating in choral music. In this regard, [Mudrick \(1997\)](#) indicated that students are motivated by (1) learning challenging, assorted repertoire and by adhering to their director's clearly-articulated musical goals; (2) director's leadership with dedication, rigorousness, energetic, and charisma; (3) director's honest, appropriate assessment, with the integration of the director's rules and values; and (4) sense of humor and concern for students expressed by the conductors were: (1) creating a nurturing environment; (2) providing feedback; (3) assigning interesting repertoire; and (4) presenting achievable challenges ([Stamer, 1999](#)). [Bell \(2000\)](#) conducted a survey of adult amateur singers regarding their views toward the choral conductor's rehearsal behaviours. In general, the result indicated that singers view conductor personal behaviours more important than technical skills and musical skills. The five most important conducting behaviours were: (1) provides clear and easy-to-understand directions; (2) shows enthusiasm; (3) hears a problem area and corrects the error; (4) selects music to match the group's ability; and (5) and instills confidence in the singers. However, choral conductor's own acceptance of the role and duties of an instructor may not represent acceptance by the students of their roles as learners. [Cox \(1989a\)](#) suggests that conductor should present himself/herself a good manner during rehearsals so that a promising outcome in students' attitude, effort, determination, and achievement can be achieved. Cox also further explained that verbal behaviours, rehearsal structures and styles, personality variables, and attention to musical details and goals can influence singers' perceptions of the choral experience.

1.1. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to survey university choral students regarding their views towards the choral conductors' rehearsal behaviours utilized in the rehearsal setting. This is achieved by ranking the behaviours in order of importance to them and to investigate the attitudes of the students towards their choral rehearsals. Considering the purposes of this study, several research questions were served to guide this study:

1. What rehearsal behaviours do students view as most important for a choral conductor?
2. Do students and conductors view conductor's rehearsal behaviours differently?
3. Do student attitudes toward choral rehearsals differ significantly along the variable of choir, years of experience in singing with the conductor and gender?

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants and Procedures

111 undergraduate music majors who enrolled in their respective university choir ensembles at four different local public universities in Malaysia were participated in this study. The initial selection of participants for this study was made by location and based on the basis of similarity of size, level of musical maturity and the ability to respond adequately to the questionnaire that requires the respondents to reflect their views toward the choral conductor's rehearsal behaviours utilized in the rehearsal setting.

2.2. Instruments

Two kinds of instrument which derived from the Gleason (1992) were used as a primary measurement of data for this study: 1) Students' and Conductors' Survey of Conductor's Behaviours; and 2) Music Class Attitude Index (MCAI).

Both instruments were applied to evaluate the feedback from the respondents during their regular choral rehearsal sessions. Instructions for using each instrument and MCAI preparatory items had been given to the students to ensure they understood and answer properly to each question. The average length of time needed for both instruments for a respondent ranged from 20 to 30 minutes and survey forms were collected upon completion.

The Students' and Conductors' Survey of Conductor's Behaviours is an instrument to measure conductor's behaviours. Out of the 30 types of behaviours listed in the survey form, the respondents have to identify the probable behaviours that may have been demonstrated by conductors during rehearsal. The data collected from this survey showed the students' feedback towards specific conducting gestures, expressions, repertory, verbal and non-verbal behaviours, rehearsal procedures and personal traits. Each of the 30 conductor's behaviours listed on the survey form are linked with a 5-point Likert scale, which were given to the respondents, which comprise of the students and the conductors to generally give their feedback on conductor's behaviour during rehearsal. Under this scale, "1" represented the least important and "5" being the most important for a particular conductor's behaviour. For purpose of discussion and evaluation, classification into two categories of the Conductor's Behaviours have been made to provide a secondary level of data analysis, namely "conducting and rehearsal procedures" and "personality and personal qualities".

Music Class Attitude Index (MCAI) is a self-report task in which student marks one of three responses that reflects best how they feel towards the choral rehearsal and conductor. This instrument includes two practice examples and 42 statements. In order to maintain the consistency of the MCAI scores, each score is multiplied by 100 in order to eliminate the decimal and arrive at a quotient. The maximum possible score for MCAI was 300 and the minimum possible score was 100. MCAI responses modes and point values were: "3" - "Most of the time"; "2" - "Some of the time"; and "1" - "Hardly ever". The items for each instrument were totaled, multiplied by 100, and then divided by the number of items in order to compute quotient. Demographic information of students for the independent variables such as choir, years of experience in singing with the conductor and gender were also collected in this study.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data collected from Students' and Conductors' Survey of Conductor's Behaviours and the MCAI were compiled and analyzed using quantitative measures. To analyze the feedback, descriptive statistical procedures were used. The sorted data were evaluated using a computer software program called Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), utilizing frequency distribution, T-test, Bonferroni test and one-way analysis of variance.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Student's and Conductor's Feedback to the Survey on Conductor's Rehearsal Behaviours

Table 1 and Table 2 show the ranking by mean response values of each conductor's behaviour based on the student's and conductor's feedback respectively. Where mean response values are identical for multiple items, the rank numbers shall indicate ties. The higher the mean response value, the more important is the conductor's behaviour. Table 1 shows that "making the choir members feel good about music" was ranked the highest (with mean value $\bar{M} = 4.56$) among all behaviours while the popularity of the conductor (with mean value $\bar{M} = 3.14$) does not give much of a significant value to the choral students.

Table-1. Conductor's Rehearsal Behaviours (Items=30): Mean Ranking by University Students (N=111)

Rank	Item No.	Category	Item Description	Mean
1.	29	Personality	Making choir members feel good about music	4.56
2.	2	Conducting	Giving clear and easy-to-understand directions	4.50
3.	3	Conducting	Correcting mistakes and suggesting Improvements	4.43
4.	30	Personality	Making choir members feel good about Themselves	4.40
5.	13	Conducting	Paying attention to musical details	4.37
6.	10	Conducting	Showing energy and enthusiasm	4.33
7.	26	Personality	Being friendly	4.32
8.	11	Conducting	Giving instructions that serve a musical purpose	4.31
8.	12	Conducting	Singing to demonstrate music to choir	4.31
10.	17	Conducting	Choosing music that we like to sing	4.26
10.	28	Personality	Being approachable and easy to talk to	4.26
12.	1	Conducting	Having eye contact with singers	4.24
13.	21	Personality	Believing in the potential of students	4.23
13.	25	Personality	Setting goals	4.23
15.	14	Conducting	Achieving expressive responses from choir	4.22
16.	7	Conducting	Controlling discipline in rehearsal	4.17
17.	19	Personality	Being respected (Conductor being respected by students)	4.16
17.	24	Personality	Being patient and even-tempered	4.16
19.	4	Conducting	Using rehearsal time efficiently to get results	4.12
19.	15	Conducting	Choosing a variety of musical styles	4.12
21.	27	Personality	Being optimistic and upbeat	4.11
22.	20	Personality	Being trustworthy (doing what is said)	4.05
23.	9	Conducting	Dealing with individuals (avoiding favorites, respect for each other)	4.02
24.	22	Personality	Showing concern for choir members as Individuals	4.00
25.	16	Conducting	Choosing music that is expressive	3.90
25.	23	Personality	Talking to students on their level	3.90
27.	6	Personality	Showing sense of humor	3.78
28.	8	Conducting	Getting results quickly	3.68
29.	5	Conducting	Talking by conductor during rehearsal	3.62
30.	18	Personality	Being popular (Popularity of the conductor)	3.14

Note:

1) For ease of reference in the tables, the category for each of the conductor's behaviours will be classified into: (Personality)-Personality and personal qualities; and (Conducting)- Conducting and rehearsal procedures.

2) *N denotes number of students involved.

Table-2. Conductor's Rehearsal Behaviours (Items=30): Mean Ranking by Conductors (N=4)

Rank	Item No.	Category	Item Description	Mean
1.	2	Conducting	Giving clear and easy-to-understand directions	5.00
1.	3	Conducting	Correcting mistakes and suggesting improvements	5.00
1.	20	Personality	Being trustworthy (doing what is said)	5.00
4.	1	Conducting	Having eye contact with singers	4.75
4.	10	Conducting	Showing energy and enthusiasm	4.75
4.	13	Conducting	Paying attention to musical details	4.75
4.	14	Conducting	Achieving expressive responses from choir	4.75
4.	21	Personality	Believing in the potential of students	4.75
4.	24	Personality	Being patient and even-tempered	4.75
4.	25	Personality	Setting goals	4.75
4.	28	Personality	Being approachable and easy to talk to	4.75
12.	4	Conducting	Using rehearsal time efficiently to get results	4.50
12.	11	Conducting	Giving instructions that serve a musical purpose	4.50
12.	15	Conducting	Choosing a variety of musical styles	4.50
12.	23	Personality	Talking to students on their level	4.50
12.	27	Personality	Being optimistic and upbeat	4.50
12.	29	Personality	Making choir members feel good about music	4.50
12.	30	Personality	Making choir members feel good about themselves	4.50
19.	7	Conducting	Controlling discipline in rehearsal	4.25
19.	9	Conducting	Dealing with individuals (avoiding favorites, respect for each other)	4.25
19.	16	Conducting	Choosing music that is expressive	4.25
19.	19	Personality	Being respected	4.25
19.	26	Personality	Being friendly	4.25
24.	12	Conducting	Singing to demonstrate music to choir	4.00
24.	17	Conducting	Choosing music that we like to sing	4.00
24.	22	Personality	Showing concern for choir members as individuals	4.00
27.	6	Personality	Showing sense of humor	3.75
28.	5	Conducting	Talking by conductor during rehearsal	3.25
28.	8	Conducting	Getting results quickly	3.25
30.	18	Personality	Being popular	2.50

Note: 1) For ease of reference in the tables, the category for each of the conductor's behaviours will be classified into: (Personality)- Personality and personal qualities; and (Conducting)- Conducting and rehearsal procedures.

2) *N denotes number of conductors involved.

From Table 2, there are many conductor behaviours with same mean values which resulted in tie on the same ranking were ranked by the conductors. The top three behaviours, with the mean scores of $\bar{M} = 5.00$, were given the highest rating by all conductors. Meanwhile, there are eight behaviours which have a mean score of $\bar{M} = 4.75$, fall under the top three behaviours followed by seven behaviours (rated an average of $\bar{M} = 4.50$), and the remaining twelve rated a mean score of $\bar{M} = 4.25$ and below.

3.2. Student Attitudes

As shown in Table 3, in terms of variable of choir, it shows that Choir B achieved the highest mean scores in MCAI. Besides, students with 3 years and above of singing experience with the conductor have shown the highest mean scores when compared with the students who had sung

with the conductor for only two years or below. In terms of variable of gender, it shows that males achieved higher mean scores in MCAI compared to the female respondents.

Table-3. Music Class Attitude Index (MCAI) Mean Scores by Choir, Years of Experience in Singing with the Conductor and Gender

Variable	Number of Participants	MCAI Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Grand Mean	111	231.73	26.16
Choir			
Choir A	27	214.90	30.54
Choir B	27	239.15	21.51
Choir C	24	238.69	25.42
Choir D	33	234.34	20.63
Years of Experience in Singing with The Conductor			
Less than 1 year	59	237.21	22.67
1 to 2 years	36	219.31	30.01
3 years and above	16	239.44	19.44
Gender			
Female	85	230.34	27.59
Male	26	236.26	20.64

As indicated in Table 4, a one-way analysis of variance of MCAI value among choirs indicated an overall statistically significant difference among four choirs ($p < .001$). The Bonferroni test for making multiple comparisons was used to determine the significant differences between mean scores of MCAI among four choirs. The results of the tests for significant differences are presented in table 5.

Table-4. One-way Analysis of Variance for MCAI by Choir

Sources	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	10521.04	3	3507.01	5.79	.001*
Within Groups	64764.24	107	605.27		
Total	75285.29	110			

* $p < .05$

As indicated in Table 5, multiple comparison tests were performed to ascertain the differences in attitude among the choirs. Results showed that there are significant differences between Choir A

with B, C and D. However, there are no significant differences between Choir B, C and D. Bonferroni analysis indicated that Choir A achieved significantly lower MCAI scores than Choir B, C, and D (Choir A < B = C = D).

Table-5. Significant Differences in Attitude among Choirs

(I) Choir	(J) Choir	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Choir A	Choir B	-24.25*	6.70	.003
	Choir C	-23.79*	6.90	.005
	Choir D	-19.44*	6.38	.018
Choir B	Choir C	.46	6.90	1.000
	Choir D	4.81	6.38	1.000
Choir C	Choir D	4.35	6.60	1.000

* indicates statistically significant differences between choirs, $p < .05$ level.

A one-way analysis of variance was computed in order to compare the mean levels of years of experience in singing with the conductor in MCAI scores. Results of the ANOVA are presented in Table 6 and reveals that a significant difference exists in the attitude scores by years of experience in singing with the conductor ($p < .002$).

Table-6. One-way Analysis of Variance for MCAI by Years of Experience in Singing with the conductor

Sources	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	8271.17	2	4135.59	6.67	.002*
Within Groups	67014.11	108	620.50		
Total	75285.29	110			

* $p < .05$

Table-7. Significant Differences in Attitude by Years of Experience in Singing with the Conductor

(I) Years with the Conductor	(J) Years with the Conductor	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
less than 1 year	1 to 2 years	17.90*	5.27	.003
	3 yrs and above	-2.23	7.02	1.000
1 to 2 years	3 yrs and above	-20.12*	7.49	.025

* indicates statistically significant differences between years of experience in singing with the conductor, $p < .05$ level.

As shown in Table 7, the Bonferroni test reveals that students who had sung with the conductor for one to two years had attitudes significantly lower than students who had sung for less than one year or three years and above (1 to 2 years < Less than 1 year = 3 years and above).

By comparing the mean scores of the female students to the mean scores of the male students, it showed that male students achieve higher attitude scores than female students. But the p values

as shown in the T-test analysis (see Table 8) indicated that there was no significant difference between mean scores of both groups of students.

Table-8. Means and T-test Data for Comparison between Female and Male on MCAI Scores

Source of Variance	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Gender				
Female	96.74	11.59	-1.011	.314
Male	99.23	8.67		

* p < .05

4. DISCUSSION

From the conductor behaviour survey, it was found that university choral students and conductors valued “conducting and rehearsal procedures” more than “personality and personal qualities”. The findings suggest that the more musical and rehearsal experience a student and a conductor has had, the more the valued conductor behaviours which advanced the musicianship of the ensemble.

Even though the findings place “conducting and rehearsal procedures” as more important than “personality and personal qualities”, university choral students establish personal traits as the top-ranked behaviours for a conductor – “making choir members feel good about music”.

Based on this top-ranked conductor’s rehearsal behaviour selected by the students, a possible explanation to this can be the students’ concern with music highlights the importance of knowing and matching repertoire to the students’ needs or interest levels. The university’s choral students who have undergone formal training in the university have the ability to associate the choral pieces which seem beyond the capabilities of the ensemble with the repertoire that contain no musical challenge for the ensemble. This shows that it is important for a conductor to assess the choir’s ability and be able to identify appropriate choral literature. When it comes to school musical activities, it is generally perceived that repertoire can influence the participation and motivation of young people. For that, students would sing the songs which have qualities in terms of technical, expressive, stylistic and contextual (Durrant, 2000).

University choral students ranked “giving clear and easy-to-understand directions” and “correcting mistakes and suggesting improvements” after the most important conductor’s rehearsal behaviours. A logical assumption might be that university students believed in that clear, effective verbal and communication skills in rehearsal setting will benefit them in the learning process with a higher comprehension level. Furthermore, students would request conductor to be able to identify the weak areas with productive suggestions in order to perform well. In addition, they would also expect their conductor to lead them well enough in accordance to the performance expectation.

The fourth most important conductor’s rehearsal behaviour is “making choir members feel good about themselves”. A plausible explanation to this can be students would have a higher confidence

level towards their individual contribution to the choir if the conductor makes them feel good about themselves. In other words, conductors instill confidence in students and they will learn to believe that this will help provide longevity for the choral group and learning opportunity for the choral group and learning opportunity for them as a student. In 1994, Donovan investigated the interaction of personality traits in applied music teaching and found that students shown better progress with outgoing teachers.

“Paying attention to musical details” was the fifth important behaviour in the top ten behaviours. Students who major in music study in university are seeking musical satisfaction in a wider scale from the conductor in choral ensemble that could also advance the musicianship of the ensemble.

Comparison was made between the students’ and conductors’ feedback from the survey, as stated in both Table 1 and Table 2. For students, there were six behaviours out of the twelve most important behaviours which perceived mutually between the students and the conductors:

- 1) Giving clear and easy-to-understand directions
- 2) Correcting mistakes and suggesting improvements
- 3) Having eye contact with singers
- 4) Showing energy and enthusiasm
- 5) Paying attention to musical details
- 6) Being approachable and easy to talk to

However, the top four behaviours in the students’ feedback list, but somehow rated moderately by the conductors are:

- 1) Making choir members feel good about music
- 2) Making choir members feel good about themselves
- 3) Being friendly
- 4) Giving instructions that serve a musical purpose

On the other hand, the two behaviours stated below were somewhat seemed important to the students but rated otherwise by the conductors’ (among the bottom five behaviors) are:

- 1) Singing to demonstrate music to choir
- 2) Choosing music that we like to sing

The common behaviours listed in the bottom four behaviors rated by both students and conductors are:

- 1) Showing sense of humor
- 2) Getting results quickly
- 3) Talking by conductor during rehearsal
- 4) Being popular

In view of the data collected from the two classifications of conductor’s rehearsal behaviours, the university students (N=111) rated “conducting and rehearsal procedures” slightly ahead of “personality and personal qualities” which under the top ten behaviours (including items which were identical in mean scores), eight of which are from the “conducting and rehearsal procedures” and the remaining four come from the “personality and personal qualities”.

Meanwhile, the same phenomenon also appeared among the groups of conductors. The conductors (N=4) also rated “conducting and rehearsal procedures” slightly ahead of “personality and personal qualities”. Six out of eleven top behaviours are “conducting and rehearsal procedures” and five of which are from the “personality and personal qualities”. It could possibly due to the belief among the conductors that rehearsing the music is far more important than how the students are being treated.

In general, the list of behaviours, in the order of importance, evaluated by both the conductors and students were remarkably similar, given the difference in age, experience, and education. It can be concluded that even with the similarity of rating given to conductor’s rehearsal behaviours by the students and conductors, both groups have given different opinions in terms of the type of conductor’s rehearsal behaviours in which they value the most.

The Music Class Attitude Index (MCAI) scores indicated that attitude scores was shown significant difference in the variable of choir and the number of years singing with the conductor. Nonetheless, there was no significant difference of attitude scores found in the variable of gender.

Looking at the variable of choir, it showed that there was significant difference in terms of the students’ attitudes towards the choral rehearsal along the variable. This could be due to the fact that conductor varies along the variable of choir. And each conductor shows a different behaviour during choral rehearsal. Eventually, students have more positive attitudes toward the choral rehearsal if the conductor seems to exhibit behaviours valued highly by the students. Conversely, if the conductor’s rehearsal behaviours valued by the students were given less emphasis by the conductor in rehearsal, students’ attitudes would appear to be less positive.

From the variable of the number of years singing with the conductor, it appeared that university students with two years experience in singing with the conductor have shown the lowest in attitude scores. Possible explanation to that may be the students have a critical time in which they will have exert more energy in trying to dispel any stereotypical associations in university. It also suggests that an initial self-reflective stage of development in which those students are focused on expressing and sorting out their own thoughts instead of efficiently concentrating on actions and thoughts of the conductors.

Surprisingly, students with less than one year of singing experience with the conductor revealed a higher positive attitude than students with one to two years of singing experience. This can be explained that fresh new students would have more positive attitudes and eager to participate more actively and to achieve better results in performance.

Attitudes of the students with three years and above in terms of singing experience with the conductor might somehow increase with more positive experience. This will further imply an interdependent and broadening stage during which active behavioural learning is the focus.

In terms of differences in gender, there were no significant difference found between the males and the females in terms of their attitudes toward choral rehearsal. Anyway, the present data suggest that the males, whom had voluntarily enrolled into the choral class, could even perform better than the females in university choral classes. In Gleason (1992), he stated that males do better as they voluntarily enroll into the high school choral classes. O’ toole (2005) suggested that

young men in middle school choir want to be valued and want an opportunity for their voices to be heard. This would also suggest that the level of education in music among males would affect their perception in music. In other words, males with higher education levels will somehow show positive attitudes towards choirs or other musical activities, as they think that music participation especially singing is not an activity exclusive to the females.

Nonetheless, the present results contradict with the ones found in previous study (Castelli, 1986) that the attrition rates of boys in school choral programs were due to the students did not view singing as a masculine activity. Furthermore, when it comes to making choices by boys and girls relative to participation in the musical offerings at school, Green (1997) also noticed that students and their music teachers, regardless of gender, consider singing to be a feminine activity and playing in band to be more suited to boys. This is because most boys in middle school are at the onset of puberty with emerging manliness and dislike doing things that might appear to be feminine (Phillips, 2003). Generally, gender stereotypical bias does exist in music especially when it comes to participating in activities like singing that are usually the domain of females as it's considered as soft, gentle, small, and high-pitched (Harrison, 2006). This explains why singing is usually considered as a feminine activity that impacts negatively on school boys' music attitudes in particular.

5. CONCLUSION

University choral students in the present study with advanced formal musical training and accomplished musical skills, singing experience and education value conducting skills which enhance the musicianship of the choral ensemble. Based on the university choral students' feedback, it seemed that a choral conductor needs to be articulate in conveying musical instructions to the students. The conductor must show to the students that he/she is enthusiastic about the task on hand and able to demonstrate competency in the areas of rehearsal techniques and repertoire selection.

In addition, students unequivocally identified personality characteristics as essential for a conductor, namely a conductor making choir members feel good about music. Besides, students also identified several conducting skills which are important such as giving clear and easy to understand directions; correcting mistakes and suggesting improvements; having eye contact with singers; and paying attention to musical details. However, whether or not the conductor was popular in the musical industry was less concerned by the students.

This study enables choral students to extend their concept of a successful rehearsal. Students must regard choral rehearsals as music learning time not solely geared toward performance, but an educational setting encouraging lifelong musical learning and participant by the singers. On the other hand, the role of choral conductor in a rehearsal is critical to the success of a choir. As conductors, this concept is a necessary avenue toward effective communication skills, reflective thought processes and innovative yet efficient rehearsal procedures. Mastering these skills will allow conductors to provide singers with the continual challenge of new repertoire and increasing musical knowledge.

Furthermore, this study suggests that the choral conductors have a responsibility to carefully consider the opinions of students and to make every effort to create a rehearsal atmosphere that is not only conducive to the highest quality musical experiences, but also conducive to the highest possible attitudinal atmosphere. It would become a fruitful musical experience not only for singers, but for conductors as well, if a rehearsal is set in such an ambience of musical learning for all (Bell, 2002). Therefore, making great music is as important as the need for better understanding between the conductor and the singers. Furthermore, the overall attitude of the choir would be improved and performance would be better if both of their voices, their thoughts, their ideas, and their perceptions could be shared in an open manner.

REFERENCES

- Aamot, M.C., 1974. A study of contributing factors to the aesthetic experience within the choral performance area conductors (Doctoral Dissertation, Arizona State University). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 34(07A): 3946.
- Bell, C.L., 2000. An examination of adult amateur community chorus and choral conductor rehearsal behavior, with implications for music education (Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61/02A, 539.
- Bell, C.L., 2002. Enhanced rehearsal strategies for the undergraduate choral conductor. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 11(2): 22-27.
- Brendell, J.K., 1996. Time use, rehearsal activity, and student off-task behavior during the initial minutes of high school choral rehearsals. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 44(1): 6-14.
- Brophy, J.E. and T.L. Good, 1986. Teaching behavior and student achievement. In M. Wittrock (Ed.). *Handbook of research on teaching*. 3rd Edn., New York: Macmillan. pp: 328-375.
- Buck, R. and C.A. Vanlear, 2002. Verbal and nonverbal communication: Distinguishing symbolic, spontaneous, and pseudo - spontaneous nonverbal behavior. *Journal of Communication*, 52(3): 522-541.
- Castelli, P.A., 1986. Attitudes of vocal music educators and public school secondary students on selected factors which influence decline in male enrolment occurring between elementary and secondary public school vocal music programs (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Maryland). *Dissertation Abstracts International AAC 8620754*.
- Copley, E., D. Heaney, D. Hoffecker, M. McCall-Naughton, C. Opreissnig and L. Wing, 1990. Choral music teacher rehearsal behaviors: An essay on knowing what we do. *Update. Applications of Research in Music Education*, 9(1): 23-30.
- Cox, J.W., 1989a. More than just the hand. *Music Educators Journal*, 75: 27-30.
- Cox, J.W., 1989b. Rehearsal organizational structures used by successful high school choral directors. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 37(3): 201-218.
- Durrant, C., 2000. Making choral rehearsing seductive: Implications for practice and choral education. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 15(1): 40-49.
- Durrant, C., 2003. *Choral conducting: Philosophy and practice*. New York: Routledge.

- Faulker, R.A., 1973. Orchestra interactions: Some features of communication and authority in an artistic organization. *Sociology Quarterly*, 14(2): 147-157.
- Funderburk-Galvan, J., 1988. Junior high school choral music teachers' philosophies of vocal mutation, choices of music, and teaching situations (Doctoral Dissertation, University of North Carolina).
- Ganschow, C.M., 2014. Secondary school choral conductors' self-reported beliefs and behaviors related to fundamental choral elements and rehearsal approached. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 23(2): 52-63.
- Garretson, R.L., 1993. *Conducting choral music*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Gleason, W.A., 1992. The relationship of choral conductor behavior to high school student attitude and performance (Doctoral Dissertation, Arizona State University). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 53(12A): 4244.
- Goolsby, T.W., 1996. Time use in instrumental rehearsals: A comparison of experienced, novice, and student teachers. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 44: 286-303.
- Green, L., 1997. *Music, gender, education*. London: Routledge.
- Hamann, D.L., C. Mills, J. Bell, E. Daugherty and R. Koozer, 1990. Classroom environment as related to contest ratings among high school performing ensembles. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 38: 215-224.
- Harden, M.C., 2000. The effect of differentiated levels of conductor eye contact on high school choral students' ratings of overall conductor effectiveness. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61(05): 1777A.
- Harrison, S.D., 2006. Why boys limit musical choices. *Gender Research in Music Education*, 10(1). Available from <http://post.queensu.ca/~grime/v10n1.html> [Accessed August 13, 2011].
- Jordan, J., 2008. *Evoking sound: The choral rehearsal: Inward bound, philosophy, and score preparation*. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2.
- Kelly, S.N., 2007. High school band students' perceptions of effective teaching. *Journal of Band Research*, 42(2): 52-64.
- Madsen, C.K. and J.M. Geringer, 1983. Attending behavior as a function of in-class activity in university music classes. *Journal of Music Therapy*, 20: 30-38.
- Mudrick, A.W., 1997. Student motivation in four successful high school choral programs in south central Pennsylvania: A qualitative study (Doctoral Dissertation, Temple University, 1997). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 5 (10), 3869A.
- O' toole, P., 2005. I sing in a choir but i have no voice! *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 6. Available from http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/v6n1/vision/otoole_2005.htm [Accessed August 13, 2011].
- Parasuraman, S. and S.A. Nachman, 1987. Correlates of organizational and professional commitment: The case of musicians in a symphony orchestra. *Group and Organization Studies*, 12: 287-303.
- Phillips, S.L., 2003. Contributing factors to music attitude in sixth-, seventh-, and eight-grade students. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Iowa.
- Price, H.E. and J.L. Byo, 2002. Rehearsing and conducting. In Richard Parncutt & Gary McPherson (eds.), *The science and psychology of music performance*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp: 335-351.

- Silvey, B.A., 2014. Strategies for improving rehearsal technique: Using research findings to promote better rehearsals. *UPDATE: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 32(2): 11-17.
- Stamer, R.A., 1999. Motivation in the choral rehearsal. *Music Educators Journal*, 85(5): 26-29.
- Stanton, R., 1971. *The dynamic choral conductor*. Delaware water gap. PA: Shawnee Press, Inc.
- Steele, N.A., 2010. Three characteristics of effective teachers. *Update. Applications of Research in Music Education*, 28(2): 71–78.
- Taebel, D.K. and J.G. Coker, 1980. Teaching effectiveness in elementary classroom music: Relationships among competency measures, pupil product measures, and certain attitude variables. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 28(4): 250-264.
- Ulrich, J., 1993. Conductor's guide to successful rehearsals. *Music Educators Journal*, 79(7): 34-35.
- Whitaker, J.A., 2011. High school band students' and directors' perceptions of verbal and nonverbal teaching behaviors. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 59(3): 290-309.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boswell, J., 1991. Comparison of attitudinal assessments in the middle and junior high school general music. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 108: 49-57.
- Pogonowski, L.M., 1985. Attitudinal assessment of upper elementary students in a process-oriented music curriculum. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 33: 247- 257.
- Price, H.E., 1983. The effect of conductor academic task presentation, conductor reinforcement, and ensemble practice on performers' musical achievement, attentiveness, and attitude. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 31: 245-257.
- Taebel, D.K. and J.G. Coker, 1980. Teaching effectiveness in elementary classroom music: Relationships among competency measures, pupil product measures, and certain attitude variables. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 28: 250-264.
- Yarbrough, C. and K. Madsen, 1998. The evaluation of teaching in choral rehearsal. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 46(4): 469-481.

Views and opinions expressed in this article are the views and opinions of the authors, International Journal of Asian Social Science shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content.