

Choral Leader Empowerment in Vocal Management and Basic Vocal Techniques for Church Choir Leaders

Maully Purba, Frida Deliana

Lecturer of Ethnomusicology Program, Faculty of Culture Science, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Jln. Universitas No. 19, Kampus USU Medan 20155.

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Abstract: Singing in choir format is an inseparable part of the ecclesiastical worship service in the Christian community in Medan, including among members of the Protestant Christian Church of Indonesia, Gereja Kristen Protestan Indonesia (GKPI) Padang Bulan and GKPI Sidorame. For members of the church, singing is a spiritual need. There are six to eight kinds of choirs that are always present in turns in the worship of the two churches. There are youth choirs, adult female choirs and or adult male choirs, as well as elderly choirs. Each choir has a coach, usually an amateur. In terms of chorus he is referred to as the leader of a choir or *conductor*. The problem in this context is that the quality of the choir shown in the two churches is often low. Low, in a sense that there are always technical errors that occur during the process of training or preparing, and at the time the choir presentation is taking place in the worship service. Some of the errors that tend to occur are mostly on the choral sound aspect as a result of improper vocal techniques, inconsistent intonation, inappropriate phrasing, and breathing that is incompatible with song sentences. Continuous conditions of this will certainly produce low quality music and ultimately interfere with the quality and solemnness of the service. This condition is correlated with the fact that almost all the conductors in both churches are individuals with limited musical abilities. Their management skills as well as the technical skills of choir teaching are also very low. They have no formal musical education background, despite having to handle musical products (musical compositions) that require both technical and theoretical understanding. The conductors, who may have been conductors for a relatively long period of time, are only forged by limited field experience, therefore their choir management knowledge, especially the basic techniques in choir training including vocal chorus techniques, as well as knowledge and insight about the repertoire is also limited. This condition is reflected in the choir groups that they train. The low technical ability, as well as the lack of insight and knowledge of the conductor on choir certainly will contribute immensely to the poor quality of a choir produced. Therefore the devotion team will improve their choir management abilities, particularly their vocal skills, so that they are able to minimize the technical difficulties encountered in the preparation and presentation of the choir. The empowerment of choir leaders in vocal management and vocal skills performed by the community service team succeeded in improving the knowledge and ability of singing in the church choir, therefore producing a quality choir.

1 INTRODUCTION

This article is a report of a workshop done as part of a community services funded by the Community Service Institution of University of Sumatera Utara, known as LPPM USU. The workshop took place at the church of GKPI Sidorame, Medan. The workshop is about empowering choral leaders in two churches, concentrating on the vocal management and vocal basic techniques for church choir leaders. Singing, either individually or as a group among the

Christian community, is integrated in the worship and praises of God in every church service. Singing is also a medium for church members to express sociocultural values in their daily social life. Likewise, among members of the Protestant Christian Church of Indonesia (GKPI) Padang Bulan and GKPI Sidorame in Medan, they too also use a chorus format in the activity of praising and glorifying God. For those members of the GKPI congregation, singing is a spiritual need; through singing activities, they express their gratitude to the creator.

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In both churches, there are various categories / types of choirs. There are youth choirs, and choir of adult women and men. There is also a mix choir of adult women and men. The choir sings at every Sunday service as an integral part of the worship liturgy. In addition, the congregational choir groups also commonly appear in social celebrations associated with daily life. Each chorus has an amateur coach who also acts as a choral leader called a conductor.

The existence of today's choir conductors / coaches is in need of serious handling to grow, flourish and be able to 'give birth' to choirs of quality and is useful in the activities of church choirs routine. Its quality can show the quality of the church choir, and has good choral sound.

The problem is that often the quality of the choirs performed both in church and in social events has a low quality. Low quality means that the choir is not well prepared, so the results presented are always not maximal. This means a lot of technical errors that occur during the presentation of the choir.

The two partners, GKPI Padang Bulan and GKPI Sidorame, further explained that almost all of the existing conductors in the congregations they lead are people who have very limited musical abilities, and who are not really motivated by formal music education. Their managerial abilities as well as technical skills for choir teaching are very poor and weak. They are trainers trained by limited experience in the field, so knowledge of choir management, basic techniques in choir training, especially basic vocal techniques and their knowledge of repertoires (vocabulary genres of choir music relevant) is very limited and they do not master it well. This condition is reflected from within the choir group that they train, which is always performed every Sunday at regular service meetings.

It is a logical consequence that low technical capacity, as well as a lack of insight and knowledge of the conductor on choir and vocal, will of course contribute greatly to the poor quality of a choir produced. It is undeniable that the importance of singing in Christianity, whether in the context of worship involving large groups (such as churches) or small group worship (in homes), becomes crucial to the worshippers. It is therefore quite common among church congregations that have sufficient resources and human resources to carry out the necessary technical and practical supplies for the choir leaders, especially those congregations who are in urban areas. Such opportunities are rarely obtained by choir conductors in which have very limited financial resources.

Based on this, the community service team will

improve the conductor's ability in choir management and vocal ability, so that the various technical problems they face so far, both in preparation and in the presentation of choir can be minimized or better yet, be improved. The objectives of this study is to improve the ability of choir management and vocal engineering skills, so that the various technical problems they face so far, both in preparation and in the presentation of choir can be minimized or even improved.

2 ADVANTAGE

1. Improvement of choir leaders' knowledge of musical concepts and terminologies.
2. Improvement of choir leaders' skills in performing the correct vocal techniques while training the choir and vocal placement.
3. Improvement of choir leaders in forming a good choral sound.
4. Improved skills in interpreting musical compositions according to the scores written by the composer.
5. Improvement in the quality of choir in producing a good and harmonious song

3 METHOD OF APPLICATION OF SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY

3.1 Method of Approach Used in Community Service Program

The method of approach taken during the dedication to partners is by training, guiding and improving the knowledge and skills of choir leaders as well as choirs on choir management, musical concepts and counseling the choir leaders and participants.

The forms of activities undertaken for problem solving include:

1. Socialization of service activities which is the explanation about the empowerment of choir leaders in vocal / vocal management to produce good quality singing in Medan. The socialization of dedication activities is given to the leaders of GKPI and the choir leaders in two churches who are partners with the aim that partners understand about the meaning and purpose of the service activities. In addition, this socialization will also form an attitude and desire to want to be fully involved in the

activities of dedication. Based on this case, the implementation of the activity goes well

2. Recruitment of choral leaders who participate in the training as participants of the activity. Recruitment is done after the socialization of activities. Some choral leaders who are motivated to follow the community service activities will be asked for their willingness and commitment by the community service team.
3. Phase of debriefing or learning basic music theory.
Participants' basic learning or music theory learning is conducted in discussion and question and answer format. The participants were given materials to improve their skills in solfeggio and sight singing (listening ability and reading rhythm and melody). For this will be provided discussion materials in the form of working papers that will be distributed to the participants. In enriching their insights about the choir, they will be presented with recordings of various kinds of choirs in cassette, audio-video or CD and DVD formats. To get the essence of this material, these materials will be aired by tape-recorder, television, LCD, video player or loud-speakers. In this listening context, a discussion of sound processing techniques will be developed so that participants can express opinions and technical and unwritten questions, but appear in audio perspective only.
4. Training on choir management and basic vocal techniques
At this stage of the workshop, matters relating to basic technical matters of how to process vocals and develop the ability of choirs in producing individual sounds or groups (choirs) are priorities for transformation to the conductor / trainer. For some, by reading references to being a conductor alone can improve managerial ability in handling technical and practical choirs especially if the activity is followed by a real example.
5. Training on vocals and music composition.
At this stage, the participants will introduce the basic concepts that must be known either descriptively or in audio, for example the concept of sound balance, sound blend, stable sound (intonation), and so forth. To the workshop participants will also be taught how to

technically process the vocals. Processing vocals here means how a coach / conductor can dig a person's potential to produce a good and right voice, that is not wrong according to the rules, and be able to recognize the characters of the color of sound (timbre), so that ability enables it to process / organize so many different sounds to get a balanced sound of choral sound or in other words get a 'coherent' sound; for that reason also the singing group is called the 'choir'. But it is not possible to be a conductor if a conductor is not able to process his own voice. Therefore, this will be done manually against the participants. That is, with the direction of the community service team, the participant will be asked to sing and dig his or her own ability to produce the sound that is requested to him. In this workshop stage, the participants will be taught how the techniques of organizing / coaching the choir are related to technical stuff singing in groups, so that a conductor / trainer can produce the maximum shape and quality of choir in accordance with existing capability.

6. Evaluation
Evaluation is the final stage of the implementation of this community service. At this stage, the participant (or some of the participants appointed to represent all the participants) is asked to present the choir he or she has trained during the training process. (This exercise is not included in this community service schedule, but is separate.) For the purposes of this evaluation, the community service team will choose some choir song compositions, to be given to the designated participants, to be trained to the choir member. The choir is then asked to perform the composition in front of the participants, community service team, and other relevant reviewers.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Community Service Preparation

The implementation of this community service in accordance with the proposal is done in GKPI Padang Bulan church and GKPI Sidorame church in Medan. Based on that, on May 9, 2018, the community service team conducted a survey to GKPI Padang Bulan and GKPI Sidorame Medan with the aim of preparing for the implementation of community service

activities. In the survey, the service team delivered the purpose and objectives of the activity as well as the socialization of the activities. Then, plan the time of the activity and discuss the things that are needed for the implementation of the activity.

2. Participant Recruitments of the Community Service Activities

On August 11, 2017, the community service team went to GKPI Padang Bulan and GKPI Sidorame churches to recruit the participants of the community service activity ie the choir leader who will be trained on vocal management in a choir. The choir leader which will be recruited is at least 15 people from each church, so 30 people were recruited from 2 churches.

3. Socialization of Activities of Choir Leaders (Conductor)

After the recruitment of participants was done, the community service team then carried out the socialization of the activities. This socialization conveyed about the things that the choir leaders were obliged to understand. Furthermore, the training plan was to enhance the participants' knowledge about vocal management and vocal techniques. In addition, other goals were to achieve the enhancement of the conductor's knowledge and their ability to read musical notations and listen to the tone and interval, both melodic and harmonics. The implementation of vocal management counseling and basic vocal technique activities was conducted on June 13, 2018. In this counseling, the participants were not only from the choir leaders but also joined by the church officials and choir members.

4. Training on Vocal Management and Basic Vocal Technique

After the socialization, the next activity was to conduct training on vocal management and basic vocal techniques. In this training, the participants were not only choir leaders, but also some members of the choir and the daily board of the church. This was because they also had a great deal of curiosity about how to produce good singing in a choir and the application of good and correct vocal techniques in choir management. The materials of the training were as follows : an understanding of choir management, basic vocal techniques, singing techniques, and the benefits of producing a good quality of choir.

The training was conducted through lectures and discussion methods while singing directly. There were also brochures about vocal management given out to the participants. In the lecture session it was seen that the participants were very serious and enthusiastic on listening to the materials explained by the team, and they were actively inquiring about things that they have understood. Moreover, the participants also gave comments based on their own experiences and phenomenons that exist in the community. This lecture was very satisfying as could be known from the participants' own testimonials which many of them openly said this training really enhanced their knowledge. Furthermore, this activity helped them improve my ability in singing well in the choir.

The lecture materials include:

1. Vocal management, understanding and benefits
2. The basic technique of processing the vocal ability of individuals and groups and their benefits
3. The correct technique of singing
4. The importance of vocal management in choral singing. Besides lectures and discussions, the training materials were also provided in the form of brochures and textbooks that can be a reference for choral leaders and also to improve the knowledge of the choir members in general.
5. Vocal Management Practice in Singing

5. Vocal Management Practice in Singing

After the participants get counseled, the community service team then performed vocal management practice in singing. This practice was done repeatedly for 2 hours every meeting between the leader and the choir members with the community service team. The practice of vocal management was not only done by the choir leader but also the entire members of the choir. The community service team also provided tools to support the implementation of vocal management such as musical scores, tuning fork, keyboard and white board for writing music notation. Implementation of this activity was also monitored by the the daily congregates leaders and evaluated by the community service team.

6. *Conducting Ability in Leading a Choir*

In addition to counseling and vocal management practices, this community service activity also conducted the practice of conducting skills. The choir leaders practiced conducting in leading the choir and the community service team analyzed it. If any conducting techniques that was not in accordance with the rules are found, the team would then directly show the correct way and gave example on how to conduct a choir. Of the few choir leaders who practice conducting, it appeared that some of their conducting skills were relatively good and some were still lacking. In general, the leaders of the choir with relatively good conducting ability were those who were relatively young in age, while the rest who were sort of lacking were the older ones. The practice of conducting skills was done for 2 hours in 2 meetings at each church

7. *Evaluation of Choir Leader Empowerment Activity*

The results of the team's evaluation of the empowerment of choir leaders in vocal management and basic vocal techniques found that there was an increase in knowledge of the vocal management and basic vocal techniques, so it was expected that the choir leaders would be able to coordinate the choir better. Furthermore, the knowledge of the choir participants in singing through vocal arrangements also increased with the existence of this community service activities.

Based on the evaluation of the community service team as well as the discussion of the team with the pastor, the choir and the choir leaders stated that the activities performed by the community service team were very satisfactory and had provided such huge and significant benefits to them. The apparent change was that the choir leaders increased their knowledge in vocal management and vocal ability. The songs sung in the choir sounded better in terms of quality than before this community service activity. If this can take place continuously it will create a choir with better song quality so it will greatly support the improvement of the quality of the choir.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The empowerment of choir leaders about vocal management and basic vocal technique skills undertaken by the community service team has improved the knowledge and ability to sing in choirs in churches to produce a good quality choir. The empowerment of the choir leaders in the church should be held continuously because it strongly supports the efforts of improving the knowledge of the choir leaders and choirs so they would be able to sing better in choirs at church worship services.

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