

The Development Of Malaysian University Choir : A Case Study On Current Choral Practice From The Perspectives Of Choir Members

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to study the development of Malaysian university choirs. Specifically, this study focused on current choral practice from the perspectives of choir members. Although the number of university choirs has multiplied over the past twenty years due to the increased tertiary music programs being offered in

Malaysia, very few studies have been conducted from the choir members' perspective, especially in the Malaysian context. In seeking greater understanding, this study was conducted using quantitative method. Questionnaire was distributed to choir members from selected universities to gain insight into their experiences with the choirs, to discuss the challenges they faced, and to seek strategies in improving the overall quality of the choir. As a result, all choir members acknowledged the importance of choral activities. Financial constraint was the most crucial challenge faced by the choir groups. Besides, greater opportunities to get involved in performances and competitions especially outside Malaysia was essential to ensure a better standard of the choir as a whole. A lot of talents are supposed to be seen and assisted as they are also contributing to the good reputation of a university as well as a country. Financial problem should not be an obstacle to the development of choir in Malaysia. Therefore, this study provides a better understanding about the development of university choirs in Malaysia by looking at the choir members' experience, identifying challenges faced by them, and formulate possible strategies in order to raise the overall standard of university choirs in Malaysia.

Keywords:

Choir, Choir Member, Choral, Malaysian University Choir

1. INTRODUCTION

Choral music refers to music which is sung by a choir group. Choir is an organized group of singers who sing together, especially in church (Collins English Dictionary, 2009) while On Music Dictionary (1999) defined choir as a group of singers who usually sing in parts with several voices on each part. There are several types of choir: 1) Mixed Choir which is the most common type consist of Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass voices often abbreviated as SATB; 2) Male Choirs which have the same SATB voicing as mixed choir but with men singing the upper part called trebles or boy soprano and men singing the alto known as countertenors; and 3) Female Choir which consist of soprano and alto voices and this type of choir often abbreviated as SSAA. 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). Singing in choir is 'being with' and 'doing with' which highlight qualities of interconnected among the members and it give new experiences of unity. The choir serves as a platform where the choir members felt safe, connected with other people, and experiences a sense of unity (Hetty, Astrid & Staffan, 2008). There is still a lot of work to be done to bring Malaysia's choir to international standard choir. In Malaysia, there are several platforms that are polishing and highlighting artistic talents especially in choir among children until adolescents. For example, Permata Seni Koir under the administration of *Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara* (JKKN),