

Echoes in Performance: Lived Experiences of a MUZIK Harmonie Artist

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Abstract

MUZIK Harmonie is a performing group based in Leyte Normal University in the Philippines created to foreground world-class performances drawn from various genre of music arranged in concert format. Over the years of its existence, members embraced artistic pride in performing distinct repertoire from Broadway, classical, and popular genre while preserving harmonious relationship among members imbued with various musical expressions and sensibilities.

This study encapsulated a singer's lived experience as a performance artist of MUZIK Harmonie highlighting his perceptive meanings elucidated through singing alongside the interactive relationships developed as illuminations of camaraderie's resonance with meaningful performance. Likewise, his narrative explorations articulated essences through his journeys elucidating deep intersubjective meanings of his lived experiences viewed through the lens of the self within cultural milieu.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of a MUZIK Harmonie performance artist. Investigation of experience included thick descriptions of the participant's sense of worldview revolving around rehearsals, performances and various interactions both in and out of the stage. Knowledge derived in the study was emergent, not generalized, and the meanings resided in the participant as he viewed reality in multiple perspectives.

Results of the study revealed that camaraderie among members of MUZIK Harmonie has a direct impact in effective singing; listening as the capacity to absorb sound reverberates quality performance through balanced understanding of musical utterances; vulnerability as a form of indulgence has a way of eliciting performance risk if not guarded by the performer; silence as power achieved through meditation deepens an artist's sensitivity of life's embracing power. Lastly, confluence of performer-audience elements creates a web of communicative meanings through non-verbal and non-determinate cues.

Keywords: singing; music performance; phenomenology

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The use of phenomenology in music research has been done in the past. Clark, T., Williamon, A., & Lisboa, T. (2007) investigated the different types of preparation and pre-performance routines in which musicians engaged; musicians' thoughts and perceptions of both themselves and their environment while performing; the musical, psychological, and non-musical skills deemed essential for success, including the means by which such skills were acquired; and the type of demands and stressors that musicians faced, along with the strategies they employed to manage them. Themes were generated describing the 13 participants used in the study. They were motivation, preparation and performance experiences.

For motivation, the research indicated that love of performing, expressive or communicative part of performing, the challenge music performance presented as well as the chance to be someone enticed participant musicians to perform music. For preparation, the study exemplified the need for artists to be adequately prepared, such preparation building up as performance was getting closer especially in ensemble playing where adequate practice was construed as sacrosanct policy. For performance experiences, several contingencies were identified such as self-efficacy, strong emotional connection and love for music.

Szyszkowska, M. (2018) displayed the uses of phenomenology in finding musical aspects of everyday existence as well as in describing and illuminating the art of music. He cultivated the idea that music as phenomenology is everyday experience, perception and meaning. Likewise, music can illuminate everyday experiences and influence perception. Perhaps, that is what music is truly is, not only perception but affective changes in perception, and therefore phenomenology of music should make studying this its primary task (Szyszkowska, 2018).

Research Questions and Theoretical Propositions

In the conduct of this phenomenological study, the following research questions were asked:

1. How do members of MUZIK Harmonie create sense in relating to one another on and off performance?
2. What meanings are created during interaction?

The study used a single performance artist of MUZIK Harmonie as research participant (N=1) signifying his voice, lived experiences, and their meanings, as the privileged voice. Ontological assumption depicts multiple realities from various perspectives; epistemological assumption views the nature of knowledge as emergent; axiological assumption emphasizes aesthetic value of the participant's creative expressions. Following the idea that reality is multiple, perceptive narratives of his experiences may or may not be experienced by other

members including other music groups of Leyte Normal University due to the nature of this study that is grounded on multiple realities. Since meanings are contextualized and emergent, the following theoretical propositions are identified:

- Singing requires careful examination of one's capacity to relate to other singers within a group
- Singing requires listening to sound produced as a whole not just as individual expression
- Quality singing is a product of being sensitive to all aspects of experience whether performing or not performing. It includes rehearsals and bonding moments among members.

The theoretical propositions highlight assumptions of the privileged voice, the lived experience and the meanings of the single participant. Because knowledge is emergent in this qualitative study, meanings are likewise emergent.

Methodology

In exploring the lived experiences of the participant, phenomenology was used. Phenomenology is a study of people's conscious experience of their life-world; that is, their "everyday life and social action (Schram, 2003, p. 71). Phenomenologists are interested in the lived experience (Van Manen, 2014, p. 26).

Locale and Period

The study was conducted primarily at Leyte Normal University during rehearsals and off-performance interactions for a period of 3 months.

Data Collection Method

Primary data collection was done through interviews conducted between the researcher and participant with semi-structured questions raised during the process. The following questions were asked:

1. Could you share your general experience with MUZIK Harmonie?
2. How do you find working with other members?
3. What important experiences can you share that are important in your singing?
4. Is there is any significant meaning in your interaction with other members?
5. Why do you say it is significant?

Result and Discussion

In exploring the participant's general experience with MUZIK Harmonie, the following narratives were highlighted:

"It is a good experience to sing with the group. I like the people. I also build strong foundations of friendship during rehearsals. This sense of camaraderie is deepened during conversations while learning songs. I also manage to listen from others. Listening gives us cues about music pitch and allows us to be sensitivity. This is only during rehearsals. Outside performance, we go out as a group most of the time. Through sharing of stories, we feel connected with each other and the bond is almost unbreakable."

The narratives illuminate a deep connection between singing and friendship nurtured during rehearsals and in everyday practice.

“It is a big help singing with them. I improve my singing more because I communicate with them and we know each other”.

Importance in communication is critical in quality singing as exemplified in the foregoing statement. To further enrich communicative interaction, the participant uttered the following:

“Singing is communication. There is an idea that a singer should always communicate with the audience. This is true, but singing in a group involves communicating with other singers on and off performance. There must be interaction so that the whole process is beneficial to all. There can only be meaning of any performance if members communicate musically and all other aspects of experience.”

Regarding important experiences bearing signification to singing, the following insights were drawn:

“Again, as I said earlier, for singing especially in a group, it is important to have good relationship. It is comfortable to sing if I am in good terms with all members. One time there was an incident that sparked disagreement between me and a soprano of the group, I could not sing properly because my mind was bothered by the events that caused our disagreement. I immediately reconciled with her. With that I realized singing is meaningful when there is good camaraderie, indeed.

Based on the previous statements, significant meanings in the participant’s interaction with other members were identified:

“From my interaction, it is important to work as a group like singing the parts of a song together so that errors will be discovered and balance is achieved in singing. Also, being with the group means belongingness, a kind of community where each one of us cares for each other. We listen to our stories, to our singing, to our jokes. We go out a lot. We share food and we laugh heavily when we are together.”

For the last question, “why do you say it to be significant?”, the following ideas were noted:

“Collaborative singing is important because we should sound as one not as different voices. To do this, I also need to listen to the others so I can adjust my pitch, tone and overall experience. Another thing is a sense of community makes work easy for everyone. We do not just sing because we have to sing, we experience other things like telling jokes and we go out a lot as a group. Singing is life for us. We experience what people feel. We love, we have, we are jealous – all these things are normal for any people and we experience all of them.”

“As a singer, I can be vulnerable. Some aspects of myself can be lost in the process. I have to carefully guard my emotions so that I will reserve some things that are personal, just for myself, the others don’t have to know. You see, performing on stage means engaging with the audience, establishing rapport and such and at the same time I have to internalize the lyrics so that my singing as well as the group’s performance is meaningful. Sometimes in the quest for meaningful expression, I get lost. My sense of self is no longer there and it becomes difficult to go back to my true self. I indulge sometimes and this vulnerability can be a minus to a performer if not carefully guarded.”

Phenomenological Analysis

Themes

Mirroring Comradeship in Quality Performance

MUZIK Harmonie is an ensemble of singers where comradeship is nurtured while embracing individual character. In achieving musical solidarity, performers evolve as human beings while embodying group consciousness that is both sensitive to individual and social expressions.

How is it done in the light of individual expression? Nurtured group personality is a dictum shared by everyone else so that even in the midst of artistic differences, cohesion prevails and differences melt in oblivion. In other words, “coherence in disagreement” gives reverence to fostered relationship despite occasional squabbling as an inevitable condition. Thus, collective singing is a testament of unity where individual sensibility juxtaposed with group expectation creates a delicate balance of the self within cultural milieu.

Camaraderie among members in MUZIK Harmonie is, however, not Utopian, but rather always constitutive and engulfing dialectical tensions. For instance, every now and then some members who do not attend rehearsals will be summoned to explain reasons primarily done in order to rectify obnoxious behavior, a practice considered therapeutic because it relieves tensions and admonishes dissensions.

Unity in Collaboration

Collaboration glorifies interdependence among the different parts, an articulation of mutual dependence that is exceedingly rewarding. In other words, sharing of ideas places all members on equal footing with other members instead of muting the unprivileged voice. Hence, the idea of mutual dependency means co-existence instead of competition. If the latter pervades, group solidarity vanishes and dominion prevails.

Next, working as a team enhances individual talents where countless discoveries are realized. What are these enhancements? MUZIK Harmonie’s group singing develops strong individual character because it embodies refinement of skills in placing correct pitch, perfecting melodic articulation, and positioning transition in a clear and spontaneous manner. In a sense, good collaboration develops strong individual skills.

Listening as a Human Virtue

Singing as an articulation of notes that pass through the vocal cord is not only about sound production. It also involves processing from both internal and external domains of musical utterance including silence. Within internal domain, sound production occurs when singing from the diaphragm physically stirs the stomach as air is absorbed. Slowly it expands, requiring one to listen intently so that a pleasing sound is produced.

Apart from listening internally, a singer also listens externally with the surrounding sound emanating from other singers. The critical part in listening is that being able to hear what the others express allows one to absorb and react properly in communion with the others. For example, loudness and softness of tones are conceived as a chain of confluence such that when one hears the other singing in parallel motion, it creates a domino effect.

On a more generalized view, listening absorbs sound which renders interpretive singing in a more meaningful and profound way where achieving balance is realized through conscious processing of thoughts and sensations. Insistence upon active listening suggests immediacy of response as spontaneous reaction which produce good results. As a collaborative process, listening creates a community of sensitive artists who dwell upon nuances of expressions from dynamic interactions sought during performance.

On the other hand, the art of listening during rehearsal practice hones interpretation through repetitive singing where errors are corrected, sound production sustained, and meaningful expressions strengthened. Even more, listening does more than listening as it magnifies purposive action through trial and error mechanism elevating performance sensitivity to a much higher level.

In deepening practice, ritual of listening is a conscientious effort to be practiced by all MUZIK Harmonie artists perceived as a humbling experience nurturing professional growth. Allowing someone to correct and change an old practice as a consequence of attentive listening must not be construed as diminution of talent. Next, listening as a virtue is one thing but over-listening is another thing. Over-indulgence to what another singer does can restrict creative imagination to flow naturally, entrapping more than opening a window of opportunities where effects can have cataclysmic results. It must be realized that group singing means listening to a lot of voices such that over-listening can lead to discordant singing if not addressed well.

Overall, the art of listening is an art itself. It is a creative process of absorbing the surrounding sound in unique ways. Similar to information processing in cognitive learning, listening involves breaking down of components and analyzing individual units as they relate to the whole process. The critical part is how such pondering enables an artist to exhume depth of schematic meanings in order to exude quality performance free from cognitive dissonance.

Life's Narrative

Following the idea that singing embraces life, it does so in exponential terms. In searching for meanings, singing is construed as a medium and message. As a medium, it enables the singer to transmit messages to the listener, but more than transmission, singing is a message in itself as it encapsulates the life of a performing artist where his music exhumes memory of human condition.

Life is engulfed with powerful emotions drawn from various experiences. During performance, feelings of love, anger, jealousy and excitement are articulated when music is mirrored in hauntings of melodies and lyrics, such emotional connection magnified through dark tones and thick harmonics passages, among other manifestations of attachment.

The struggles and tensions in singing as a practice is similar to tensions in human condition. What is magnificent in artistic performance is its capacity to transform cataclysm into creative imaginings turning tragedy to revelations of vulnerability exposing truth in creative ways. Creative tensions, on the other hand, engulf norms in artistic performance through normative rules implored as one learns and unlearns in the creative process. Indeed, creative tensions define performance effectivity through a combination of technique and musicality that recognizes tension as part of elucidating truth. Also, singing as a representation of cultural practice within a person's reality whether mundane or surreal in character recognizes the depth of experience from tensions created as a life-embracing force which characterizes singing.

As an expression of life itself, a person's interpretation of sound resonates to the listeners as a confluence

between performer and audience interrelationship. Similarly, life as an interaction between individuals in a society equates with what singing does as it enables interaction to unfold. The process of interaction in singing is generally non-verbal, symbolic, and behavior-induced where sound's magic goes beyond words. In here, meanings are multi-directional, indeterminate and vulnerable as with life.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

On the whole, the foregoing explanations characterize some aspects of hermeneutic phenomenology signifying that our most fundamental and basic experience of the world is already full of meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2006; van Manen, 2014).

From the narratives, it is evident that singing as part of a cultural practice uproots certain beliefs and practices as an artistic expression which embraces life's tragedies and triumphs rendered poignantly and beautifully.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability is encapsulated in the following narrative:

"As a singer, I can be vulnerable. Some aspects of myself can be lost in the process. I have to carefully guard my emotions, so that I will reserve things that are personal, just for myself, the others don't have to know....."

Such revelation highlights self-vulnerability of an artist. In the narrative, an artist's loss epitomizes the spirit which engages in emotional connectivity, dwells upon the abyss of feelings and gets lost somewhere. Expressed vividly, "I will reserve things that are personal", the statement emphasizes creating boundaries of self-expression especially when one gets carried away, such boundaries shunned vehemently. Guarding the gates of vulnerability indeed, is a challenge to endure. As a technical requirement, a singer has to control emotional vulnerability in order to guide performance towards a positive direction. Thus, it should be the audience who should dwell upon emotional attachment through association and entrainment as the case may be.

Vulnerability means putting performance at risk because allowing oneself to indulge in uncharted thoughts and emotions can render such imbalance if not guarded well. Even if through discipline an artist is guided in making sure expressions elucidate meanings, vulnerability accounts for susceptibility to life's innate power which can lead to disastrous results when not contained. Singing is vulnerable to life's wondrous possibilities where emotions are perceived as natural conditions, but, the key is to guard the self, making sure that vulnerability does not lead performance in disarray.

How is the concept viewed from another angle? Performer's vulnerability to complex emotions that leads to loss of the self is a metaphor for death of the true spirit haunting an artist. The spirit that defines an art is the spirit of the person represented in the immortality of the art. In here, art in singing is a representation of immortality. Vulnerability is putting the spirit in uncertainty collapsing the inner will by strengthening an outside force trying to conquer inner emotions. When the conquest succeeds, purity leads to destruction, an emblem of erosion of the inner core. When life is vulnerable to things and feelings, such accounts for meaningless existence for the spirit that defined the core is lost, searching and getting lost at the same time. When that happens, the essence in singing is in a precarious condition that needs to be rescued by a profound utterance of meanings through music.

Horizontalization

Horizontalization is the process of laying out the data for examination and treating the data for having equal weights; that is, all pieces of data at the initial data analysis stage. These data are then organized into clusters or themes (Merriam, S. & Tisdell, E., 2016).

In this study, horizontalization is explored in many ways. For instance, in Q1: “Could you share your general experience with MUZIK Harmonie?”, the initial response of the participant, “It is a good experience with the group. I like the people”, pre-empts an idea that the rest of the interview process will elicit positive vibes, a kind of general liking that will unfold throughout the interview process.

“Singing is communication. There is an idea that a singer should always communicate with the audience. This is true, but singing in a group involves communicating with other singers on and off performance. There must be interaction so that the whole process is beneficial to all. There can only be meaning of any performance if members communicate musically and all other aspects of experience.”

It is clear in the narrative that the word “communication” is repeated several times, even, rephrased in another way like, “there must be interaction,” signifying singing as a commonplace communication practice. Further analysis of the transcript reveals that communication facilitates camaraderie which is the recurring theme in this study. Tantamount to reading text that makes sense, singing becomes important in surfacing hidden meanings and expressing emotions and thoughts while absorbing audience response as a web of interlocking meanings.

Generally speaking, communication in music especially instrumental music, is an indeterminate and non-verbal form of communication expressed through body language and sound articulation. The former accentuates bodily gestures that relate to movement in melodic utterance or rhythmic pulse while the latter pertains to musical dynamics and intensity defining musical texture. Apart from physical manifestations, communication is built in internal and external connection through sensations and meanings as human expressions.

As an internal sensation, emotional attachment to sound utterance tends to have a pre-ordinated level of attachment which leads to stirring emotion. In other words, sensation as impression and approximation elicit such connection to the sound where an audience can capture any moment during a listening moment or after. When it sparks, moments of elation or deep melancholy can subconsciously weave in creating further sensations which ultimately build emotional or intellectual meanings to the sound. Thus, an audience capturing meanings from music is capable of nurturing different sensations and meanings as part of music’s indeterminate character. Unlike verbalized music through lyrics where meanings can be elicited directly, music allows its creator and listener to wander into realms of associations.

From an external dimension, singing as a pathway to communication is nurtured by the thought that MUZIK Harmonie performers know each other very well, making it easy to communicate. In vocal training, for instance, sectional singing is nurtured during small group sessions where a vocal leader facilitates in building harmony both in music and in relationship. This activity allows interaction to be a commonplace practice interspersed in the achievement of the group’s musical target.

“Listening should always be considered top priority before anyone could actually sing because someone who listens well is able to control the sound he produces. When listening is absent, singing is meaningless”.

The importance of listening cannot not be understated. Listening is taking in the sound from another person processed internally in an instantaneous manner. Such unity of expression through listening and singing accentuates harmonic resonance that builds essence in both activities. In many instances, these two activities are interchangeably linked together creating thick layers of interpretation by virtue of their consonance.

When asked about the question, “Is there a significant meaning in your interaction with other members,” some of the responses include:

“Collaborative singing is important because we should sound as one, not different voices. To do this, I also need to listen to the others so I can adjust my pitch, tone and overall expression. Singing, also, is not just about getting the right sound but establishing good relationship. This is important because as an artist, emotional connection is enhanced when I am in good spirit with my co-members. Having good relationship makes singing a lot easier for everyone.”

Towards this end, the narratives exemplify horizontalization of lived experiences which place all information of equal value. As a hermeneutic rendering of creating essence, the process allows harmony in meaningful creations to dwell in subjective dimension of data analysis.

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction is a process of continually returning to experience to get to the inner structure of meanings. This can be achieved through re-narration of experience to get into deeper interpretations instead of just telling it once. Deeper interpretation of events opens new and richer descriptions of reality, exposes depths of human thinking, analyses situations, discovers new paths of consciousness and perspective elevating a heightened sense of awareness and understanding.

“Interaction with other members on and off performance develops good relationships, a kind of give-and-take relationship that requires a lot of listening most especially during rehearsals because it allows me to adjust my pitch, tone and my overall expression is affected providing for a meaningful singing that is internalized with deep emotions.”

The narrative provides meaningful perspective of singing not only in terms of its artistic merit but also in terms of its ability to enhance human relationship, a process deepened through constant listening. The overall singing as a process of developing vocal prowess is beyond technical merit. It creates purposeful recognition of human sensibility because listening enables one to connect with another person, mindful of what the other person has to say or feel and in return it allows the person to act upon based on interpretation of emotions and gestures they display, thus, singing encapsulates human condition.

Singing’s audacity of creating deep interpretation is mirrored in an artist’s profound recognition of various layers of associations and connections in musical sound and its resonances within self and cultural praxis. As such, a sensitive artist, for example, simultaneously draws energy from inner reflection as in the case of memory recollection as a form of attachment to musical utterance and vice versa. In the latter, memory ignition exudes further sensations leading to new levels of performance interpretation. Once again, allowing a

singer to dwell upon emotional and intellectual positioning ushers in complex layers of understanding and expressing reality surrounding the artist's creation.

On the technical side, the art of listening affects pitch and tonal rendering following the principle of ensemble singing as multiple levels of expressing tonality that leads to melting different voices in a delicate and balanced manner. Such balance enhances group identity and deepens a sense of belongingness. In this way, group consciousness develops then transcends to the culture and returns back to the individual through internalization. How is this made possible?

The give-and-take relationship of singing and listening creates a homeostatic balance between internal and external domain of uniting opposites, a paradoxical truth which results into sensitivity-drawn performance rich in meaningful dualistic interpretations. This view of interconnectedness illustrates the self in confluence with the environment. As such, the mystery of artistic performance is its spontaneous creation and re-creation of expressions, a kind of sporadic and instantaneous adjustment that is natural for group balance to manifest, otherwise, tonality makes no sense and singing becomes utterly rubbish.

"Listening is a form of meditation as I close my eyes contemplating on energy. This energy comes from the abyss of emotions, from the depths of human consciousness that manifests itself with every sound produced".

Such powerful message of singing as exuding energy is realized through meditation. This contemplative force enables an eager spirit to dwell upon emotion and thought because meditation releases energy. It provides the foundation for robust performance that can only be achieved through deep meditation. A performer's act of closing eyes, for instance, renders that moment of silence as collecting energy while listening. In here, listening becomes a profound meditative practice rather than its isolative connotation. In the narrative, meditation is achieved through powerful interaction of the sound through networked identification, a kind of assemblage creating dynamic flow.

What is the significance of such flow? Certainly, it opens up emotional and conscious connections which create meanings of the sound produced. Meaning to say, singing is a purposeful manifestation of deep-seated forces from within. It is not singing per se that dwells on technical mastery but rather it becomes an artistic expression of the inner self articulated well when performance is lauded with emotions, authentic and well-balanced. It manages to define purity in the most sublime way where its essence is simplistic yet robustly complex in character.

"I relate to the song in many ways. For one, I close my eyes and I recall moments that relate the lyrics to an experience in the past and I hold on to that experience and everything just feels good."

This narrative connects to the previous one in the sense of its resonance with memory recollection achieved through meditation. Experience from the past creates meaningful association into the words of the song enriching a state of elation. Association as a matter of connection of the surround to life's narrative brings out instantaneously upon hearing a familiar melody. In this manner, association deepens when memory retrieval is vivid.

On the other hand, audience rapport as a concept means engagement with the audience. A critical element in audience connection is internalization of the meanings in a musical performance. In other words, how one relates to the song whether it is from an experience in the past or something else is important for the audience to feel connected. But audience rapport cannot simply be achieved without deep passion in doing so. Closing

one's eyes, as the participant does, is a powerful gesture of meaningful singing because it dwells on different levels of intensity thereby nurturing emotions.

On the whole, phenomenological reduction creates a powerful story of grounded narratives that bounce back and forth as the participant dwells on essence in singing interpretation. Recollection of experiences deepens understanding of lived experience, opens new dimensions of interpretations extending far beyond surface interpretation. Finally, the process invokes truth as perceived by the participant, a genuine truth understood in multiple perspectives. These multiple perspectives define what singing is all about: that it is beyond technical expertise, that it requires listening, that it is a form of meditation.

Imaginative Variation

Imaginative variation involves viewing the data from various perspectives, as if one were walking around a modern sculpture, seeing different things from different angles (Merriam, S. & Tisdell, 2016).

Singing as a form of meditation is a metaphor for therapy possessing healing sensations brought about by humming certain melodies as one listens. Such expression is simultaneously felt while listening and singing at the same time especially when the song is heard for the first time. In the process of learning, absorption manifests itself in the act of drawing in melodies in bits of pieces, like information bits lumped together although they appear fragmented in the beginning. These episodes of chunked melodies are likened to a painting that begins with simple strokes, isolated and fragmented at first until logical connection develops. In singing, fragmented melodic structures are repeatedly analyzed through active singing, a kind of critical singing reduced to atomic interpretation. The reduction process dwells on details of correct singing posture, breathing and emotional response. In this manner, skirmishes and ambiguities are dealt with strong conviction. The emphasis on strong conviction is based on the idea that the participant's singing is always connected to group harmony. His privileged voice has to be sensitive to the group sound produced as ensemble singing is conceived as balanced singing with all the parts are interwoven, melting different voices as one unified whole. Such coherence requires conviction to be conscious of the community of sound.

In addition, singing as sound production means listening to silence as well. The gaps between notes are breathing spaces where one pauses and waits for the next sound to come out. Silence is considered important as it absorbs all the sound and Its existence allows for natural breath of the music to flow. The confluence of short and long pauses interspersed with staccato and legato notes creates variations of sound textures where distance between the notes - silence, accentuates those musical notes like a dance. Similar to this, silence exudes forms with dance-like features identified in different cadences of breathing.

In a larger realization of meanings, systems thinking emanates in group singing as articulated in oneness as a holistic process of sound produced from the interrelatedness of different voices. Apart from this holistic view, a higher element emanates from the integration of the different voices creating powerful harmonies that are not fragments of melodies. Thus, systems approach to singing manages to create an assemblage, an aggregation of sopranos, altos, tenors and basses, and on top of that rich harmonic textures surfaces out that could not be achieved if the four voices were isolated with each other.

Lastly, imaginative variation is distinctly conceived in singing as situated cognition is practiced among members of MUZIK Harmonie. The participants belong to a community of singers with each one contributing and affecting each other on and off stage. Interactions emanate whenever the group meets for rehearsals building cohesive energy through communication. Like a community of practice, mentoring is always practiced where a lot of compliance occurs especially if detailed studying of a performance piece is a must.

Next, mentoring within a community of practice is more functional than interpretive. However, construction and social construction of meanings, produced and co-produced by the singers are also constitutive and reflexive. The process of shared understanding that manifests in harmonic balance is representative of the culture of the group as one active interactant creating spontaneous meanings. As a semiotic expression, singing is construed as an intersubjective interpretation, a kind of imagining oneself situated within an ensemble of MUZIK Harmonie which co-create symbols in a harmonious way possible.

“Singing nurtures creative imagination.”

Music in general, singing in particular is a product of creative imagination. Asked about what the participant means by creative imagination, the narrative begins to flow like water on a river that never stops. First, imagination is a form of fantasy that escapes reality. When internalization intensifies, one is transported to a different world of magic where anything can pop up with excitement as new ideas and interpretations come along. Images draw emotions pushing the individual to a catharsis. It is a fantasy because it is filled with imagined sensations. Asked about the qualities of such imaginings, the participant narrates:

“Depending on the story of the song, I create personas that define actions within the plot. They are living characters within a fantasy-world. They breathe in and out with every episode. They create a story within a story. The world of imaginings is limitless, beautiful and happy. Things and objects speak like humans. They create a life of their own.”

It cannot be ignored that the aforementioned narrative of experience is drawn from creative imagination that gives life to a song interpreted. Personas are created that brings action while moving the song with a definitive plot enhanced by sensations and perceptions from the characters created. The song breathes a new life beyond mundane reality. It fulfils a goal out of the ordinary value human existence. Life becomes perpetual in a fantasy-world of singing, limitless and not bound to restrictions.

In totality, singing creates an imagined world where imaginings come out as living testaments in the beautiful reveries created. It approximates a level beyond normalcy likened to a self that “forgets” itself as a new character breathes within music and the person singing transforms to an imagined persona rich with colours of emotions.

With each member of MUZIK Harmonie in different modes of imaginings, the participant dwells on distinctiveness of individual creations creating powerful impact upon performance. To him, singing is a private practice that develops individual character in a world of imagination, in making sense.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study asked the following questions:

- How do members of MUZIK Harmonie relate to one another on and off performance?
- What meanings are created as one interacts?

In answering the first, the participant sought the following descriptions of his lived experience with MUZIK Harmonie: good relationship and camaraderie are important foundations in singing. It also entails listening

practice in singing that is sensitive to the sound taken in and processed before one can perform meaningfully. Next, collaboration is important for honing techniques like tonal pitch, musical dynamics and overall expression.

When the group is not performing, going out as a group enhances camaraderie through members' spontaneous interaction with each other. In these occasions, food and laughter are shared and a feeling of belongingness is captured.

For question number two, deep meanings are created in the following interaction: singing as a form of meditation is a therapeutic process that entails balance between inner and outer self where musical utterance foregrounds social cognition, a kind of community of practice with mentors guiding rehearsals and performances, singing and embracing life with all the emotions of love, anger, jealousy come into play through spontaneous interactions. On the other hand, vulnerability is a compounding issue that needs to be guarded by a performer in order to shield the inner core from discordance, such practice is hastened through meditation that dwells on silence capturing energy that lends to creative flow.

In conclusion, this phenomenological study opens new horizons of interpretation for quality singing. The study provides thick descriptions of everyday realities of an artist, that life goes on beyond musical conquest, that singing is life itself whether one is on stage or not.

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