

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHARACTER OF CHORAL ART

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Abstract

Choral singing as a form of artistic-musical expression is among the most widespread components in the musical tradition. The value of choral singing is extremely great, not only because of the collectivity but also because of the development of life joy, humanism, love for the people, for the family, and the good fortune of all. The cultural and social mission of choral art is reflected not only in the creation of mass music but also in the development of sociability, in the sense of discipline for collective work and cooperation. Choral art contributes to the development of human love for man, in the deepest and most human sense of the individual and community. Its noble mission creates suitable conditions for the refinement of aesthetic criteria and other cultural parameters. Choral art is a very complex phenomenon, it is a field that includes not only the competitive component but also the social, psychological, anthropological, economic, political, pedagogical, scientific, medical, religious, cultural, etc. All these practical elements as well as the magical ones related to the power of music give choral art a multidimensional character which will be discussed in this paper through the descriptive method combined with the approach of observations. Experiences and interviews will be attempted to sensitize not only the participants and leaders of choral formations for a more dynamic and quality work but also all lovers of choral art and public institutions for stronger support of this meaningful and fruitful art.

Keywords: Choral singing, collective work, noble mission, competitive and social component, institutional support.

Choral singing as a form of artistic-musical expression is among the most widespread components in the musical tradition, a tradition that originates from the Illyrians, Romans, ancient Greeks, and other ancient civilizations. Thus, becoming an integral part of human beings and making the human race not only with more pronounced musical sensitivity but also elevating it to a higher degree of intellectual, emotional and social development.

Throughout the history, we have encountered all kinds of sayings, conversations, and written versions of the role of choral art. For example, in the meetings of rulers, kings, emperors, and various state leaders, among other things, choral singing was not left out. They, during the mutual conversations, wanting to understand the economic, trade, political, military, educational, and cultural levels of the countries and states that have led them, initially asked each other about the level, type, and number of coral formations, because they have been convinced that from the quality of the choirs, they would understand a lot also about the quality of society in general. (Lazić, 2014, p. 13).

From learned people with great life experience, I remember hearing that, the degree of civilization of a people can be understood only through three elements: the mountains, the cemetery, and the choirs. Depending on the cleanliness, maintenance, and quality of these assets, also depend on the quality of life, public order, and social order. Therefore, historically, choir singing has occupied an important place in the social life of people. Let us recall, for example, the persistent and unremitting efforts of the past to make singing in the choir part of the educational process. During the medieval period, the church was in such great need of singers that the respective schools were opened. There was a scholarship system that enabled talented and poor students to sing in the church choir and thus the opportunity to attend school. This direction, so-called useful, to a considerable extent has been professional music education. In addition to

convent schools, dormitory-type homes have often been established for abandoned and orphaned children. The children of these houses have been at the full disposal of the church and, for them to be preserved for this purpose, conservatories have also been formed. For example, it is known that H. Schütz, F. Haydn, and F. Schubert were cadets of such dormitories, whose initiatives date back, as we see, to the Late Middle Ages. In such schools (orphanages) choral singing has played an important role. (Rojko, 2014, p. 24)

In later periods, great efforts have been made to make choir singing a compulsory subject even in non-church circles, in schools, and in various educational institutions.

In many European countries he is considered ignorant, uncultured, one who did not know how to read the scores, one who did not know how to sing beautifully. On this occasion, I am mentioning a story that has to do with the musical education of a gentleman: The Elizabethan musician, Thomas Morley, in his book "Plaine and Easie - Introduction to Practicall Musicke" quotes a letter he received from a young gentleman who was so embarrassed at his inability to sight sing when asked to do so that he made immediate arrangements to learn the art. "The mistress of the house presented me with a part, earnestly requesting me to sing. But when after many excuses I protested unfeignedly that I could not, everyone began to wonder. Yea, some whispered to others, demanding how I was brought up: so that upon the shame of mine ignorance, I go now to seek out old friend, Master Gnorimus, to make myself his student". (Ramadani, Nga kënga në këngë, 2013, p. 12)

Classicism, romanticism, and avant-garde singing in the choir have been important forms of musical life. Today, singing in the choir is the most widespread form of musical activity and this "status" (position) has only thanks to the content and multidimensional meaning. According to the research of "Singing Europe" conducted in 2015, it turns out that in Europe there are about 37 million choir members, which is 4.5% of the total number of EU residents. This is because, as the Berlin-based musicologist Habakuk Traber says in an analysis of choral singing prepared for the Goethe-Institut "... from folk songs to oratorios, from amateur singing to professional ensembles, from children's choirs to the pensioners, for millions of Germans he is more than a passion. (Peter Zimmermann / Andrea Jung-Grimm, 2012).

"Choral singing is a magic thread that offers human hearts. Choral singing is great art because it not only unites people but also beautifies them. The love of choral singing is not nostalgia, but love for life, for everything noble and high-strung spirit created by the artist." (Ramadani, Këngë të zgjedhura korale, 2010, p. 7) "Listening to choral songs with artistic content sets you away from the worries, the sorrows, puts you away from bad spirits by bringing you in a balanced comfortable, pleasant condition, because choral singing itself implies a rule that results in harmony and beauty. So, this art, which is built on the principles and standards, helps in purifying the soul, the development of high moral virtues, strengthening the love of beauty, and accommodates all mental disorders, cures nerve disease, and cultivates spiritual harmony." (Ramadani, Dëgjo këngën dhe harro brengën, 2015, p. 9)

A study conducted by Salgren Academy at the University of Gothenburg has provided results that speak to the tremendous impact of choral singing in favor of mental and emotional well-being. Musicologist Bjorn Vikhof, who led the study, explains that the heartbeats of choir members not only slow down when they start singing together, but also that they slowly synchronize to be heard at the end as a single matching beat with the tempo of the song. (Popović, 2017).

The foremost composer of the Elizabethan age, William Byrd wrote a few lines on his views of the benefits and beauty of singing in general and choral singing. Here is an excerpt from his observations which we hope you will enjoy: "First, (singing) is a knowledge easily taught, and quickly learned, where there is a good master and an apt scholar". "The exercise of singing is delightful to Nature and good to preserve the health of man". "It doth strengthen all parts of the breast, and doth open the pipes". "It is a singular good remedy for stuttering and stammering in speech". "It is the best means to procure a perfect pronunciation, and to

make a good orator...". "Since singing is so good a thing, I wish all men would learn to sing." (Ramadani, Nga kënga në këngë, 2013, p. 12) The value of choral singing is extremely great, not only because of the collectivity but also because of the development of life joy, humanism, love for the people, for the family, and the good fortune of all. (Siegmund-Schultze, 1967, p. 89). Paul McCartney with much conviction said: "I love to hear a choir. I love the humanity to see the faces of real people devoting themselves to a piece of music. I like teamwork. It makes me feel optimistic about humanity when I see them cooperating like that." (Ramadani, Nga kënga në këngë, 2013, p. 5).

"Nothing is more beautiful than understanding, harmony, and choral singing! Hearing the voice of choir singers, you become already part of that voice. Choral singing is not experienced differently but as a whisper of the heart. Singing in chorus means education for life, peace, and civility." (Ramadani, Kush këndon, keq s'mendon, 2010, p. 7).

To understand this better, we have to deal with singing outside the choir, with pop shows, with video clips of our time, with the chaos that occurs in the music market, highlighting the great differences between good and evil, between constructive and destructive, between beautiful and ugly. Are not "images of half-naked girls, stale scenes, developed muscles, tattoos on the intimate parts of the body, meaningless choreography, texts without salt" (Veleno, 2016) and accelerated internationalization, which every day, not only hurt our eyes and our ears, but they also violate our intelligence, just a few motivating moments to become members of the choir as soon as possible, where singing is valuable and done with dignity because it is "a sound architecture where harmony is always in the service of melody, wherein the modal structure represents decently the national identity, where form and content are in constant touch, where the inspiration of the artist is transformed into an ideal." (Ramadani, Jehon kënga korale, 2017, p. 8)

The chorus is beneficial to humanity, after all, it brings culture, because it helps to develop the mind. Singing in the choir, among other things, helps "mastery of the mother tongue - due to the metrics of the text; of foreign language due to easier memorization of foreign words, also helps physical shaping due to rhythmic body movements" (Bez glazbe, život bi bio pogreška, 2016) and upright scenic posture and so on. This means that singing in the choir plays not only a social and educational function but also the role of the connecting bridge with all other areas of life. A very important reference point when it comes to the choir and choral singing is the festival that as a cultural institution enables meetings, new friendships, exchange of experiences, etc. Then through the competitive function in the festival, the choir raises not only the sense of responsibility, seriousness, and discipline but also that of competition.

Choral art is a very complex phenomenon, it is a field that includes, not only the competitive component but also social, psychological, anthropological, economic, political, pedagogical, scientific, medical, religious, cultural, etc. The sociology of choral singing is concerned with the choir's dependence on society and its effect on social flows. The choir is a cultural phenomenon, part of the life of modern society, and part of everyday life, it is the fruit of our education. The anthropological approach delves into the biological, psychological, sociological, and cultural aspects of choral art, or to what extent current choral singing relates to the archaic mentality and collective consciousness. When we talk about the pedagogical aspect of choir singing, we think of the educational component, the tendency of young people for general knowledge of choral culture, "for this special value where collective consciousness is greatly developed and where it contributes to the aesthetic acquisition of reality." (Siegmund-Schultze, 1967, p. 89). The political aspect of choir singing means that the choir is always observed as a political tool because historically it has served as an ideology, a state interest, a certain political structure, and a concrete power. In economic terms, the choir is an area that cannot be understood in isolation, separate from economic developments, but very interrelated and in close relationship with them. In the moral and human sense, singing in the choir represents perhaps the most important segment, because it creates the strongest interpersonal connection, from which springs joy, smile, understanding, tolerance, and collective responsibility... An anecdote describes the work of a

choir of prisoners, which also involved a dangerous delinquent who was serving a life sentence for serious crimes. This man was quite musical and was considered the best bass in the choir. When it came to choir activities he always came first and went last. He performed the works with dedication and submitted them to the order of the conductor. One day, this choir had to take part in a festival that was to take place in another city. On the way to the far place, the bus had stopped several times, stopping at some restaurants, where the members of the choir, in addition to refreshments, took the time to take some pictures. One of the tenors, who had only a few months left until the end of his sentence, addressed the best bass, the man who was serving a life sentence, telling him that now was the opportune moment to escape from prison bars and escape from the darkness of the cell. But he had given her the unexpected and very surprising answer: I cannot leave my friends alone, I cannot leave the choir because all the work we have done in the past will fail; I want to be presented with dignity at the festival and of course, we will be rewarded for our work with the deserved place. Believe me, I cannot leave my friends in the mud, because there are some other festivals and presentations!... Singing in the choir not only teaches you to sing but also to listen to others, in which case it strongly influences your adaptation to the circle, making you more humane. A study conducted by German scientists at the Universities of Frankfurt and Berlin has concluded that “those who sing in a group (choir) reflect a lot of positive energy” (Loš, 2016) and this only further confirms the well-known popular saying “Who sings, means no evil.” The historical aspect has to do with the flow of choral singing through the centuries. Each period is characterized by a certain type of cultural development, with certain socio-political and economic circumstances, which have necessarily dictated the course of choral singing. When we talk about the aesthetic side of choir singing, we must emphasize that this art not only provokes feelings, evokes memories, and creates experiences, but also filters out the artistic taste. The biological aspect deals with the physiological processes that take place within the body of choir singers (soloists). The technical aspect has to do with the tools and instruments used in the realization of a musical work, the technique of singing, the way of conducting, etc. In the spiritual sense, choral singing means the connection between physics and metaphysics, a connection whose roots have been treated since medieval church singing, in Gregorian corals. To receive prayers from God, they had to be well-knit, well-prepared, and well-sung. The metaphysical character of choral art can also be explained through the views of Schopenhauer who wrote, among other things, that “the four voices of every harmony: bass, tenor, contralto, and soprano correspond to four degrees in the chain of existence: the mineral world, the plant world, the animal world and the human one. This is amazingly reaffirmed by the basic musical rule, which states that the bass must stand at a considerable distance below the other three voices higher than themselves... In this rule, we now see the musical analog of the fundamental construction of nature, where living beings and organic beings are much more interconnected than with the inorganic, non-spiritual mass of the mineral world, from which they are separated by the most defined and most distant boundaries in all of nature...” (Schopenhauer, 1999, pp. 70-71). Harmony, balance, and order in choral singing must correspond to the harmony, balance, and order of the cosmos. So when the choir reaches the spirit world, it is already in the melodic and harmonious world of sounds.

Conclusion

Singing in the choir should not be treated simply as a musical activity, but as a phenomenon as historical, practical, physical, biological, didactic, aesthetic, as well as a magical, phenomenon that puts you at peace with yourself, and that, is one of the foundations most important of well-being. Therefore, only the correct understanding of the essence of singing in the choir can change the approach to this very complex phenomenon that is necessarily conditioned by the circumstances of the time, achieving that in this case change not only the number of choral ensembles and festivals but also their quality, including all Balkan countries in transition where peace with itself is a severe test.

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