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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the management tips and the role of the choral director in choral music performance. It is a fact that to have a proper management of the choir, one has to have certain knowledge of the choir, the singers and the song. This is because most choral directors lack the basic skills of attending to the musical and non-musical needs of the choir. According to Bach in Udoh (2008) merely to speak and to sing, are of nature.... However, to speak or sign well, are of art... (Bach, C.EP) "There is not any musicke or instruments whatsoever comparable to that which is made of the voices of men, where the voices are good and the same well sorted and ordered " (Byrd. W).

KEYWORDS: Choir, Management and Performance

INTRODUCTION

As a gregarious creation, man's endeavor since creation has been known to be intertwined with music. Whenever a group of people is found, music constitutes a major pastime. Its association with rituals is explained away by man's fears of the unknown arising from the myriads of phenomena the early man could not give answer to; but which abused animistic tendencies in him and even left some communities of men polytheistic.

The Greeks from whom the term music is derived saw it as an art or technique employed in all their cultural endeavours represented by the nine muses (gods) who were believed to direct their activities in life. Its application was later restricted in usage, to Polyhymnia, the Music of many songs (Apel 1973:548). Some medieval writers traced the etymology of the word music to the Egyptian word for water, *moys* and therefore implying or construing from this a connection with the Biblical Moses Whose name might have derived from the *moys* as well. However seen Boethius as a concept which is all-embracing, and referring to the harmony of the world, music is as well believed to have been invented by Jubal, Moses and Pythagoras. To cater for the mundane (universe) and the humana (the human soul). It is not a sheer coincidence therefore that music constitutes a major aspect of worship in the church for which the activities of the choir are indispensable.

THE CHOIR

From the perspective of music literacy, the term choir is applied to a group of church singers given to the singing of sacred as opposed to secular and mundane songs. Though the term is equally applied to instrumental groups in the orchestra, our focus here is the activities of the choir in the church, which include the upliftment of the spiritual and divine tone of the church.

Martin Luther, the Augustinian monk who championed the 16th century reformation in the Roman Catholic Church, also stressed the importance of music. To him, "next to the word of God only music deserves to be extolled as the mistress and governor of human feeling" (Jacobs 1966:70 in Udoh 2003). His reformation also occasioned a musical reformation or revolution as well in Germany. This saw in its wake, the birth of the German Chorale an

antecedent of the homophonic arrangements otherwise referred to as hymns. Apart from ensuring that music is taught in all schools within his jurisdiction, in the same way the Greeks of old made the study of music one of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy) which was a prerequisite to the study of theology, Luther made the knowledge of music a prerequisite to ordination of his ministers.

Calvin and Filippo Neri, who followed Luther's secession, stressed the importance of singing in the church. This resulted in hymns with texts inspired as it were, by the Holy Scriptures, and the *Laudi*. (Catholic hymns) which further development culminated in the oratorios, which required choirs to perform. It is not surprising that churches time immemorial have had to stress and emphasize the charismatic effect of music, and its divine imperatives in communing with God, exemplified in the formation and sustenance of church choirs.

THE ROLE OF THE CHOIR IN THE CHURCH

In stressing the extent to which sermons preached in songs including the ones performed by the choir - enter into the innermost part of the human psyche, Idolor (1995:8) informs us that the choir has enormous divine responsibility in strengthening the message of salvation a t to the heavily burdened".

In the same way as church music affords the entire congregation irrespective of cultural, ethnic, and social dispositions and backgrounds, the opportunity to display collectivity of purpose in worship the creator, so is it not an anathema to see the church choirs as those that enhance the therapeutic drive of the church with their music. It is for this same purpose that "John and Charles Wesley founded the Methodist Church in song" (Ofosu 2001:1)! In congregational and revivalist churches, next to the sermon, music is everything and the liturgy of the Catholic Church is integrated in music (Qkafor 1993 in Udoh 2010). The church choir fosters cohesion in the church; by affording the generality of the congregation the needed opportunity to participate in worship, through the appreciation of good music. There for choral music renditions in the church. These include hymn singing, anthems, canticles, gospels, responses, psalms and in contemporary African setting choruses of -all genres and ramifications. Textually what the choir sings facilitates the purpose of edification of the church and communal exhortation of God. With the Songs, boredom is eliminated in church worship to the extent that many Pentecostal assemblies are able to keep their congregations for hours on end praising the Almighty God. Just as music attracts converts and new devotees to any scene of traditional A African worship, so is it a known fact that the presence of a good choir in any church heightens the musical tone of such church. Undeniably churches with reasonable level of good singing culture due to the presence of high caliber choir, become a hob or cynosure of spiritual activity, to which converts throng and remain to increase the size of the participating fold in worshipping and giving adoration to God. Many of the new Converts find themselves in some of these churches to just satisfy their natural aesthetic cravings harnessed and aroused by the choral renditions in the first instance, but end up becoming members of the church due to the-impact of the music on their souls. Man's receptivity to music is overwhelmingly astounding; with the result that wherever music is performed people gather irrespective of the type. This is a psychological truism, which has worked immensely for many churches during church festivities. I am yet to discover any religious crusade, evangelistic campaign or outreach devoid of any form of music making. Most of the preaching's and eulogies to God are done in choral music for which the presence and efforts of a good choir enhance. The absence of such music renders these campaigns nothing but just so much less a stimulating human enterprise, and a sheer waste of effort. It must be remembered that good singing is rewarded by a quickened arousal of interest in any church worship, and a choir worth

its salt stimulates this. Hence, churches have it, as a duty, to organize and keep church choirs for the performance of these avowed roles.

MANAGERIAL PROBLEMS IN CHOIR ORGANIZATION

As a unique human organization, the church choir can have unique and legitimate problems, which can mar the day-to-day operations and performance of members. These may generate from problems of interpersonal relationships, to which immediate solutions must be found to ensure smooth running of the choir. These problems may range from the overburden attitude and high handedness of choir administrations, undue intruding into the activities of choir directors and choir masters, peremptory attitude of choir directors and leaders' threats, truancy on the part of members acts of insubordination, lateness to meetings and functions, to general disinterestedness of members, as well as disrespectful attitude towards the administration and vice versa, they produce stressfulness and psychological disequilibrium in the choir.

To foster or forestall the needed equilibrium the leader of the choir or persons placed in such positions to deal with the situation must be knowledgeable such as can draw on past experiences and philosophies in life for solution. Such persons have legitimate responsibility towards the growth of the choir, because of the responsibility placed on them as human service workers in terms of the services they render in the choir. They must as well be abreast with the sociological, economic, and characteristics of the community in which they are working, as well as the tenets of the church cultural or denomination in which they operate.

REQUISITE SKILLS FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION IN THE CHOIR

As human services workers the choir administrators comprising the clergy, church council and directors of the choir or choirmasters, are to always remain calm and well composed in times of emergency in the choir. They must apply common sense in addressing all issues at their respective merits, and radiate or project self-confidence. Reliance on responsive listening communicator Skills to both get at the nature or core of the crisis and its stressful adjuncts and ramifications, and the radiation of comfort, support and respect to the affected choristers or individual helpees help in curbing all crises at their onset. These can be attained through such physical gestures as holding of hands, putting an arm around the shoulders of the stressed individual where the cultural norms permit such, etc. as signs of reassurance and hope. It is necessary to remember that holding someone stressed up close, communicates caring and concern. It is important to differentiate between empathy and sympathy for the latter can impede easy recovery from a crisis by rather fostering prolonged dependence. Certain types of issues require Confrontational approach to get resolved because in solution of problems time is often a crucial variable such that the luxury of waiting to build relationships before embarking on assistance, may not be there and may even prolong and disrupt the operations of the choir, further. When taking the Confrontation option, it is necessary to do so to the benefit of the helpee rather than enforcing superiority or imposing one's will on the stressed chorister. The confrontation must be assertive and not aggressively done. In the constructive confrontation, it is worthy of note that one must always acknowledge the affected chorister's ability to absorb certain courses of action so that the actions taken to resolve the issue at stake may not be jeopardized the more. It is possible as a choir director or choirmaster to be empathic and confrontational at the same time. One's speech tone, body posture and facial expressions can differentiate between a hostile confrontation and a constructive one. In all these acts of problem solving to promote the growth of the choir and uplift the tone of the church generally to enhance worship, tact should be the keyword. This is

applicable whether the person in charge is all professional, paraprofessional or non-professional in approaching relationships for purposes of intervention for peaceful settlement.

CHOIR MANAGEMENT

- (1) Since man naturally is goal-oriented it is necessary to stimulate interest in the membership of the choir, by setting a goal, task, or an objective for which the choir will strive to achieve. The achievement of such goals brings satisfaction. All such achievements are rewards, as implied in Taylor and Gant's contributions to management thoughts.
- (2) It is the responsibility of the church as an organization with an enduring objective for growth, to train or support the effective training of its choristers. A choir that relies heavily on already prepared personnel instead of seeking for ways of improving on its own, lacks the needed vision for growth and productivity.
- (3) The choir must be guided by the concept of authority and responsibility. This responsibility is vested in the hands of the choirmaster irrespective of age. The choir master must therefore ensure that his authority to issue an order which must involve the responsibility of seeing that it is properly carried out, is not compromised or traded with by his own behavioural ethics:
- (4) Planning and control are necessary in the organization of a choir, for they provide proper avenues for the achievements of goals set.
- (5) The church/choir administration must not overlook sociological variables that affect the membership of the choir. An understanding of group behaviour, group dynamics or even the Complex social network within which the choir functions is an essential tool for the advancement and achievement of the stated goals of the choir in the church
- (6) Effective time management policy should be such as will help yield or achieve desired results. This involves proper planning which embodies establishment of goals, determination of existing situations and aids for or obstacles to the achievement of goals, and developing a Plan for attaining the goals set. It must be remembered that planning directs courses of action as well as the achievement of specific objectives and so concerns every aspect of life and field of endeavor (Nnuabuife 1997).

THE CHORAL CONDUCTOR AND THE ROLE:

Ekwueime (1993) refers to a conductor as the man or woman who prepares the music for the chorus, trains the singers in the art and conducts or directs the group of choral music making and group at a rehearsal Or performance of the works so prepare. The orchestra, chorus, concert bands, and other musical ensembles often have conductors. For what purpose are there conductors? When he/she stands out there in front of a chorus, orchestra, opera or any other ensemble, what is he/she expected to do? Is it just for the sake of formality? Does he/she have any function of vital importance to perform with the group and even the entire performance? With these questions in mind, an examination of the conductor and his/her roles in choral music performance is necessary at this point. The role of the choral conductor as far as this study is concerned is broadly divided into two: those before the actual performance on stage and those on the performance proper. However, emphasis is laid more on the latter than the former.

THE ROLE OF A CHORAL CONDUCTOR BEFORE ACTUAL PERFORMANCE:

- The choral conductor performs the following roles as prescribed by Coward (2006):
- i. Conduct auditions, recruit, and educate performers (chorus members).

- ii. Selects members into appropriate voice parts
- iii. Plans for rehearsal and performance schedules and maintain discipline in the group.
- iv. Works with instrumentalists and solo vocalists
- vi. Books locations, accompanists and instrumentalists

In addition to the above roles, Copper (1997) asserts that unless choral conductors are fortunate to have administrative assistants, they are usually saddled with the responsibility of handling also the administrative tasks such as:

- i. Scheduling of concerts and to co-ordinate with other choral symphonic and operatic engagements.
- 1. Designing and printing programmes and promotional materials.
- iii. Ordering of musical scores
- iv. Arranging the seating of the choir
- V. Insisting on regular attendance and commitment from members
- VI. Organizing and enforcing standard uniforms for the group, etc.

THE ROLE OF A CHORAL CONDUCTOR IN ACTUAL PERFORMANCE:

During performance, the conductor performs certain important roles, as prescribed according to Lamb (1988) Coward (2006), among which are:

i. Cuing in

Bringing in the parts, vocal or instrumental, or even a soloist at the appropriate entry point is known as cuing in the parts. Cues given at the exact time of the attack itself will often be late, especially in a fast - tempo music. It is important to anticipate the action in order to achieve results. The cue should, therefore, be prepared that is, come before entry itself, so that the effect takes place at the required point. It is usually done using the left hand.

ii. Beating of Time

Time beating is chiefly the business of the conductor's right hand. The hand traces a shape in the air in every bar depending on the time signature, indicating each beat with a change from downward to upward motion. The beat should reflect the nature of the music. A martial striking type of song will naturally be beaten with firm, straight lines with the beat virtually "stopping" at each point, while a slow legato piece will demand smooth, continuous. Lines with lots of curves and no halting point at all except at a cut off. The indication of the precise instance of the rhythmic pulse is termed the ictus of the beat and the continuous flow of the steady beats is called the tact.

iii. Eye Contact and Facial Expression

The conductor must be in contact with his/her choir through his eyes. He/she must see that everybody in the group sees him or her before he/she starts conducting, and should ensure that at all times the choir focuses on him. Amateur groups need the support of the conductor to give them the confidence to make a difficult entry, or even to sing louder or softer, to make adjustments in pitch and intonation. The conductor can bring in" any part that has an entry in the middle of the piece, by looking at the singers in the section and nodding his head or pointing at them at the appropriate time. Facial expression may also be important to demonstrate the character of the music or to encourage the performers.

ix. Interpretation of Pieces K

According to Ekpo (2007). Music as an art, is absolutely dependent on the interpretation by the interpreter. It lives only in the performance and the interpreter sensing his importance, is often tempted to place his own personality between the audience and the music itself. The present day function of a conductor, according to Green (1969), is to interpret the music for the choir". Through various means, the conductor should instill life and vitality into the music. The center of gravity, according to Coward (2006); has been shifted from the mechanical to the mental: from merely directing the music to grasping and imparting the spirit behind the notes and words. It is the conductor who unlocks the mysteries of the score. To accomplish this, demands hard thinking and imagination (p.86).

CONCLUSION

Tact, insight, naturalness of manner and enthusiasm will make the work of the choirmaster an enthralling and rewarding enterprise. The achievement of these signals the success of choir management in the scheme of the church's organization initiatives and parameters.

This paper heartily recommends a resourceful choirmaster to boost the musical image of the church. With this, a completion and frank biological derivation of the saying, which invariably cites necessity, as the unique parent of invention would have been realized, and the church can boost of effective music ministry.

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