

Paper #2

Thoughts, Reflections, and Future

Connecting with people and making lasting impressions plays a major part in someone's/ something's success. Without connection, all is lost. When I began diving into my choral program project, I was a little down realizing that despite already existing efforts, underserved communities remained underserved. I took this to be an opportunity for growth and development in the realm of music education. I tend to worry about things I have no control over. The fact that I haven't acted sooner so that even more young students could have as many opportunities as they wanted to learn and grow in music, at first, had me down. I felt like I was also hitting dead ends with trying to connect with an existing program. The programs I had learned of, were not set up to nor on board for an outreach choral program. That is, until I got connected with the director of the Pacific Youth Choir program.

Pacific Youth Choir program teaches young children from about age 5 through the teenage years. They start with the youngest students at the beginning of the day, and move up in age as the day goes on. I found this to be exceptionally beneficial for the students that were physically able to be there. However, what I have really been trying to find is an outreach program.

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Not all parents are able or willing to transport their kids from school or home to another location that isn't school or home. Not all parents use a car for transportation, and in less advantaged areas this becomes more likely. Parents that want their kids involved in music should all be granted the opportunity. With Pacific Youth Choir, they have an outreach program that reaches two schools, but from what I have gathered still seems to be predominantly white. I have observed that many students in disadvantaged schools also do not have the experiences of integrating with other students of all classes, colors, gender identities, etc. By keeping people of different backgrounds and experiences separated, the later (or even less likely) they will be to discover the beauty of all our differences. Music is a language that everyone can learn to speak.

The sooner the language of music is learned, the sooner and more efficiently conflicts outside of the realm of education, can be addressed and resolved. I say this, because there seems to be a never ending barrier between people of different colors and backgrounds.... Unless the barrier has been broken down. I've learned that sometimes it isn't quite enough to be raised in a home where color doesn't make the human, rather the character of the individual. We as human beings have been gradually "re-separated" over the course of time since segregation has been disposed of. If we just look around, there's no question that we live in a world where white people reign and anyone else is less than human. Music humanizes everyone. Music reminds us that we are all connected. During the current times our nation and our world face, I find it the most important to do everything we can to hold and make bonds with each other.

After watching rehearsals of the Pacific Youth Choir, I found the connection between singers to be strong and vulnerable. No one really likes to be vulnerable, and no one really makes it so without intention. There must be intention behind this kind of vulnerability, and on

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top of that, singing in choir makes vulnerability a necessity. I find singing to be the most transcending experience when it is shared with a group of people. It is an unspeakable feeling, and when it is real, everyone can feel it. When everyone feels this, it naturally heals, illuminates, and creates connections between everyone involved.

In our book, it speaks of Aristotle's definitions of friendship (p. 176). He defines "perfect friendship" as equal and balanced, which I find to be present in a well-practiced choir. Another thing I love about choir is the teamwork aspect where everyone is working together to reach the goal (performing well). Everyone has to trust one another that they know their own part, know the music thoroughly, and if someone has to breathe in the middle of a phrase (or sneeze, or cough), the other singers will continue with confidence.

"Singing is listening is singing is listening is singing is listening..." is a quote that hangs in my choir room at PSU. Part of a successful choir performance is making sure everyone is intently listening to the people around them, making a core sound. These sounds build together to create auditory satisfaction for performers and audiences. Not to mention, make people feel feelings. If I say "Singing is listening," to me, it reminds me that I'm not alone and I must listen to the other singers around me to contribute to the best balance of sounds possible. If I do not listen, I could be too loud. If I do not listen, I could mess someone else up. If I do not listen, I'm possibly off and leading others astray. If I do not listen, I am not working as a team member anymore. Some music has tension, and when I hear the tension building, I know to lean into it and trickle away when I move to my next note. I cannot ever successfully do this if I do not listen. Without listening to each other, we pass up special musical moments as well as connection with our own individual magic within ourselves. All of these things I can relate to

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many other situations that don't have to do with singing. If I'm a community partner, and I'm telling everyone my ideas and not listening to others around me, any project I have will not succeed how I hope if I do not listen and work as one of many. In my opinion, this is how all leadership should be. Even when there are leaders, everyone must listen. No one is exempt.

Selfishness is something that everyone has, yet must learn to get ahold of. Selfishness does not serve others, and ultimately serves no one, as karma has proven time and time again. Singing in choir pushes teamwork and listening into another dimension. It makes trust, a required "ingredient" to a perfectly balanced choral cake (or pie, if you don't like cake). In order to earn trust, we must prove our dedication and loyalty (which in singing together means doing the work and learning your own part, & looking out for success for the whole group). Choir makes a family, and that family is special. If everyone could experience this, think of how much more family, understanding, and love there would be instead of fear and hate.

I have just been directed to someone else that may be able to help me with this outreach program, and I also have other meetings lined up as far as my research goes. Patience is key, if I truly want this project to be a success. I know that because Pacific Youth Choir has an outreach program, I will need to focus on an outreach program that is for K-3. PYC only extends their outreach to grades 3-12. In order to grow this outreach program, I will also need to propose a possible undergrad program within the Music Education department of PSU. Finding great people to work is one thing, but finding great students that need to fill practicum hours is another. It could potentially be wildly successful as long as it is presented and prepared extensively.

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Right now, I'm starting small and working on what could even exist within the realm of possibilities for a program like mine. I'm looking forward to the next week, so I can hopefully begin a new chapter in this journey in pursuit of social justice through singing together. I've made connections, reached out, planned my meetings, and now I look forward to the mysterious next steps.