



Color Formation of Musical Compositions of Children's Choir "Vocalista Angels"

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ABSTRACT

Vocalista Angels Children's Choir is one of the children's choir groups in Klaten Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, established in 1997. Most of the members are children from villages who do not understand singing techniques correctly or conform to classical vocal techniques. So that when practicing, this group has a different method from the classical vocal method that is standard in their coaching. This study seeks to reveal the typical character traits and the principles in practice to produce a unique character distinctive. The method in carrying out this research is mostly in the form of observations involved in data collection. Written records and audiovisual recordings are the most likely ways to obtain valid data. This method produces descriptive data in the form of written, spoken, or musical words for the group members who are the object of observation. As a result, in terms of sound production, it is very clear that phrasing, articulation, resonance, and intonation are important concerns in every practice in choral processing. In the final packaging of production, this group pays serious attention to dynamics, interpretation, and expression. This kind of knowledge is very useful for developing productive and practical knowledge for the presentation of music, especially the production of music in a chorus that has complexities that are not simple.

KEYWORDS

Children's Choir;
Composition;
Sound Color;
Dynamics;
Achievements;

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1. Introduction

A choir is a combined sound of several voices that harmonize and consist of more than one singer. The chorus is one of the arts that exist in people of various backgrounds and ages. In Indonesia, since the 1990s, ensembles have developed very rapidly in educational institutions and universities. This development made the choir much contested to the world level (Bjørst and Rodon 2021, 7; Battersby 1994, 34). There are often competitions from the sub-district to the national level. As a result, more and more qualified choir groups result from intensive training in various competitions. The current choir competition consists of many performance categories, including mixed choir, female choir, male choir, and children choir. A mixed chorus comprised of men and women, as the most common form of the ensemble consists of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, often abbreviated as SATB. The female choir, consisting of soprano and alto voices, each divided into two vocal sounds, is often abbreviated as SSAA. Male choruses, namely the tenor and bass voices, each of two representatives, are often abbreviated as TTBB. Children's choirs usually consist of two voices, namely Soprano and Alto, abbreviated as SA, or three voices, namely Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, and Alto, shortened to SMzA. There are even first, soprano, second soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, and Alto (Rama Listya 2007, 23). One choir group that has participated in various national and international competitions is the Children's Choir of Vocalista Angels (VA). They come from a small town in Java, namely Klaten, Central Java. This choir also has many achievements at the international level, among others in 2007 being ranked first in the Children's Choir at The 1st Asian Choir Games in Jakarta. In 2009 he won two gold medals in the Children's Choir and Folklore categories, ranked first in the Folklore with Choreography category, and won the best conductor at the World Choir Games in Gyeongnam, South Korea. In 2010, the group won three gold medals in the Show Choirs, Scenic Folklore Choir, and Children's Choir categories at the World Choir Games in China. In 2012 he won the Champion title in the Children's Choir at the World Choir Games in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. In 2014 won two gold medals

and one silver medal at the World Choir Games in Riga, Latvia. In 2019, this group won the Champion Prize at The 6th Vietnam International Choir Competition in Vietnam (Silitonga 2017, 49).

VA initially consisted of children who had no special musical education. They received training from not knowing at all about vocals and music. However, the significant intensity of the exercise makes them have their style or uniqueness, especially in shaping the color of the singing voice. VA tend to present songs with regional nuances with characteristics as a sign of their identity. The general choir, compared to VA, has a significant difference. The difference is the color of the sound as a result of practice. One example is unusual vocal sounds, children's natural voices to be used as choral compositions. Vocal representatives like that are often present in the presentation of songs performed by VA. However, behind the abundant achievements, VA received negative responses from some circles. They stated that VA's practice and singing technique was wrong because it was not like singing technique in general. Characteristics of typical expressions in repertoire presentation make people say that Vocalista Angel is over-expression. Regardless of innuendo, criticism, and opposition, this group still tries to show its characteristics to collect many achievements to influence other choirs. Today, many choral groups practice professionally (Platte et al. 2021, 41). Everyone who wants to be a part of the choir must follow some predetermined selection. The chorus is not just singing together in church or as part of the liturgy. The ensemble developed into a musical art full of frenetic competitions, both regional and international (Edwards 2021, 660.e5). VA always performs songs with two-voice arrangements. Generally, children's choir composition arrangements only sing songs with two voices divided. However, VA usually sings songs with performances of three to four types of voices. Although most VA members can't sing or vocalize properly, this group can present a strong musicality. The proof is that the presentation of VA has a unique characteristic, especially in delivering folk songs. This particularity becomes the character and identity of the group. How is the formation of the musical composition color developed in the VA children's choir?

2. Musicological Explanation

The musicological approach is the basis for researchers in producing qualitative descriptive explanations (Karageorghis et al. 2010, 554). The result of this research is an explanation of the elements of composition and presentation of folk songs by VA. As is the case with research principles, this research includes at least several stages, including stages (1) data collection, (2) data analysis, and (3) evaluation. At the data collection stage, it is necessary to determine the unit of analysis that will focus on the research, namely the transcript of the notation of the arrangement of the song Gundul-gundul Pacul. Observations lead to existing video recordings, both video recordings during practice activities and performances. Researchers also make direct observations and often make involved observations. The researcher pays attention to the transcript of the arrangement notation and various literature documents that become the reference for the arranger in processing musical compositions. Researchers can be directly involved in rehearsals and observe various video recordings. However, researchers must conduct interviews with people involved in VA activities, from rehearsals to performances at various events, to find information in explanations for different unique musical phrases. Of course, discussions are also not enough. Therefore, studying documents relating to musical arrangement notation in the presentation of repertoire becomes a very important stage.

In the analysis stage, the researcher begins by selecting and grouping the data and then describing the existing musical phenomena and interpreting them. Selection is a way to determine the right unit of analysis so that the research focus is not too broad by choosing the musical compositions they present most often in various festivals. The researcher selects musical phrases based on articulation, resonance, and intonation in the selection stage. The grouping of musical dynamics, the tendency of expression, and musical elements resulting from interpretation become an important issue in analytical activities. The final stage is the evaluation stage. At this stage, the researchers tried to do a deep understanding of the data and analysis results. The evaluation focuses on forming VA vocal material, specifically facilitating children who do not understand singing techniques to sing well. Forming Vocal for Musical Sound. Processing and presenting the music of a composer or arranger is impossible without concepts and models. Both of this element become a single entity that cannot be separated. The model is a musical reality that is present imaginatively while the concept is an explanation of the model that develops in the imagination of the arranger or composer (Sunarto 2020, 106). In implementing vocal and musical training, VA uses concept that the musical aspect is important, especially to produce vocal musicality. The focus that needs attention in the formation of the color

composition of the voice in the VA is on phrasing, articulation, resonance, and intonation. These elements are the attention of the trainer in every training activity. These elements are of great concern as they relate to the final packaging of a choral look. Another aspect that reinforces the typical musicality is to provide an additional touch by processing dynamics, expressions, and interpretations.

3.1. Phrasing

Phrasing is an attempt to cut off sentences in a song as a whole. The goal is to build the audience's understanding of the song. The problem that commonly occurs in the phrasing stage is the delivery of meaning in the song (Juslin and Sloboda 2013, 597; Scherer 1995, 241). We can say that the singer successfully sings a song well if the audience can understand the song's importance. According to classical vocal theory, phrasing is also a musical diction processing, namely selecting articulative words to obtain uniformity of tempo and clarity of pronunciation of consonants and vowels. The word's accent in a song should emphasize the vowel that follows the consonant in front of it (Jam 2020). The format of the phrasing practice is to try repeatedly by making adjustments to two things, namely (1) pronunciation of syllables with vowels according to cultural or language rules and (2) pronunciation of syllables that emphasize consonants that follow the vowels in front of it. An example is the sentence "*gundul-gundul pacul cul, gêmblèlèngan.*" In the first type of phrasing, they must be fluent in pronouncing "*gundul*" to "*gundhol*," thus becoming *gundhol-gundhol pacol col*. In the second type of phrasing, they must also be fluent in pronouncing the syllable "*lèng*" in the word *gêmblèlèngan*. The pronunciation of the consonant '*ng*' in the "*lèng*" syllable in the *gêmblèlèngan* lyrics must take in long. The cutting of syllables must not violate linguistic rules. The splitting of the word '*gêmblèlèngan*' into syllables must become '*gêm-blè-lèng-ngan*'. In essence, phrasing in various vocal exercises in VA must follow the language and culture rules. Once again, many phrasing methods like this are seen as musical errors because they are not under the rules or rules in classical vocal theory. Clarity of articulation will bring sound effects as a result. The emphasis on vowels in classical vowel theory is to get diction uniformity so that its meaning can be easily understood (Widyaningtyas 2020). In Audio, the sound produced in classical vocal theory sounds softer and lighter. Based on the observations in the phrasing exercise by VA, it seems that it has a different meaning because it produces a sound effect firmly based on the emphasis of consonants.

3.2. Articulation

Discussing the articulation problem in the formation of musical expression cannot be separated from the phrasing aspect. Articulation relates to the clarity of speech in singing. Several factors that affect presentation are the anatomy or structure of the body's organism, related to the human ability to produce vocals. This anatomical structure determines how the jaw opening technique and the technique of sounding vowels and consonants. The anatomy or structure of the body's organism affects the production of sound. A trainer must understand the anatomical structure of the students being taught to estimate the practice procedures performed. The anatomical structures that affect the vocals are the skull, tongue, palate, and lips (Chen et al. 2018, 5). All these elements are very influential for singers in managing the technique of producing vowels and consonants. Another important anatomical part is the vocal cords, located in the voice box or larynx. The vocal cords determine the character of the sound in terms of registers. Voices with high registers have more closed vocal cords, while those with low registers will be more open. The jaw opening technique is related to the uniformity of vowel sounds for each member. The unification of various types of existing voice characters requires similarity in practice. The final result is that the blending of voices will sound harmonious, without any accentuation of the voice character. One of the most effective ways is the jaw opening technique. In classical vocal theory, the jaw-opening method opens the mouth naturally, such as yawning. Naturally, when we yawn, we fill the space at the back of the mouth with air, causing the jaw to open. In music, people refer to such techniques as bright or light to describe the character of producing a clear vocal sound. The use of sound characters with voicing techniques is almost in all-singing categories, especially classical.

The jaw opening technique commonly used in VA exercises is different from the technique mentioned above. In VA, the jaw opening technique is to open the mouth to form a mouth like a funnel, which forms the letter "o." The purpose of this technique is to get a sound character that is round and uniform. The hope is to reduce the protrusion of the original voice character of each vocalist. An appropriate analogy to the jaw opening technique in the VA exercise is the funnel technique. I call

it the funnel technique because, in general, the funnel has the advantage of a long-range frequency. The weakness of the funnel shape is that it creates a noisy sound because it is very loud (Simanungkalit 2008, 71). However, to produce a sound character that is round and uniform, exercises like this are necessary because they will produce a sound with significant musicality. Choir groups in general rarely do exercises with jaw-opening techniques as in VA exercises. This technique is suitable for ordinary people in terms of singing because it can detect difficulty in distinguishing between round and non-rounded voices. For professional singers, of course, there is no need to be taught how to produce a unanimous voice, because they already understand the proper vocal technique. This technique is considered suitable for the condition of the VA members in understanding the conventions of vocal techniques in the choir. There is a significant difference in VA in terms of mastery of sounding vowels and consonants. Pronunciation of vowels in classical vowel theory suggests practice pronouncing them in a natural tone of voice. This method is to get the character of the voice as it is. Usually, this method conditions a smiling facial expression because it will slightly lift the cheekbones so that the sound results can show a clear articulation (Calvo, Fernández-Martín, and Nummenmaa 2012, 382). In a jaw-opening technique that emphasizes the vowel "o," the pronounced vowel sounds like the vowel sound "o." However, in fact, or not entirely so. The technique of sounding vowels and consonants in VA is analogous to chewing food, which requires total flexibility of the jaw, mouth, and lip muscles. Therefore, the exercises in question train the flexibility of the jaw, mouth, and lip muscles.

3.3. Resonance

Resonance is the reflection of sound coming from the vocal cords. The cause of the resonance process is the vibration of the head as a result of the influence of the supporting cavities, including the forehead cavity, nasal cavity, throat cavity, jaw cavity, and oral cavity. Resonance is related to the anatomy of the human skull at the head so that every human being has his resonance echo. Resonance is very influential in sound production. In the world of vocals, everyone has a different quality of resonance. The quality of the resonance in question is the echo that occurs when the singer makes his voice. Technically the volume at which the resonance occurs cannot be required to be loud or quiet. Resonance helps singers produce a firm and stable sound, even if the volume is not loud (Prier 1996, 31–35). There are three types of resonance related to the voice register or the division of the respective sound areas: the upper, middle, and lower resonances. The upper resonance focuses on the head. This resonance occurs through singers imagining a space larger than the size of each individual's head. Then, in his imagination, he sounds a note in the upper register so that he can feel a vibration spinning overhead. This resonance usually occurs in the soprano and tenor voice registers. The middle resonance is also known as the nasal. This resonance occurs by sounding notes in the central register focusing on the nose and upper teeth. This resonance is usually in the mezzo-soprano and baritone registers. The focus of the lower resonance is on the chest. To produce resonance is to imagine the existence of a large space under the trunk and then sound a note on the lower register so that the singer can feel the vibrations in the chest (Raharjo 1990, 51).

In the VA exercise, to produce resonance, they do stimulation through the pre-warming up technique, namely maximizing the work of the diaphragm muscle, strengthening the jaw through the method of opening the mouth when singing. The purpose of this technique is to stimulate the power of the voice when singing to produce a loud and resounding sound. The emergence of this sound quality makes the confidence of group members so that it affects the performance. There is also a process of stimulation through a continuous *jempling* technique. This exercise technique makes the diaphragm muscle stronger because the *jempling* approach is related to the push on the diaphragm. The inspiration will produce a loud and solid sound output. Loud and sturdy is the result of the resonant volume itself. Based on the theories that have developed in vocal training, the VA techniques are not common. However, these exercises resulted in a loud resonance from each VA member so that when they sing a song, they no longer need to control the resonance applied when singing. As a result, each member can produce a loud volume of sound. Each has such excellent power that it strikes a balance in creating significant musical intensity. As a result of the loud volume, it produces a sound character that tends to sound harsh, which makes a typical musicality. At first, the coach instructed each member to dare to make their own voice. But psychologically, for children who are unfamiliar with singing techniques, of course they will feel afraid and hesitant in making their voices. In order for the new members to have the courage to speak up, the trainer stimulates them to scream in a high and loud

voice register. As a result, at the beginning of their practice they have been able to produce sounds with a rough and loud resonance. So, sounds that are soft, light, loud, or rough are also part of the resonance. Scores often require each singer to apply a resonance technique.

3.4. Intonation

Intonation contains three important stages: dynamics, high and low notes, and fast and slow tempo. An exercise that adheres to the habits of classical vocal theory to produce dynamics is to aim at the tone at the beginning of the training, starting with a small or soft volume and then becoming loud (*forte*) with a gradual volume (Olsen et al. 2014, 119). Loud volume in this method does not scream, so it is still in the normal and reasonable volume stage. And vice versa, from loud to soft volume is done gradually. In VA exercises, the uniqueness of the dynamics is in the pressure and tone produced. For example, the dynamic pull that starts from loud volume (*forte*) to soft (*pianissimo*) or vice versa, with a drastic change in volume so that the distance from very low volume into loud is very short and will sound very loud. Such dynamics, in the language of music, are called *sforzando*. In VA, the symptom of dynamic training is the volume playing that is often jerky, with changes that tend to be drastic to the extreme. In reaching for high and low notes, in the habit of practicing according to classical vocal theory, each note that will be achieved both low and high is sounded with a light and precise voice at the desired tone. In addition, the resulting sound does not sound sharp. Understanding in terms of not being sharp is the volume of sound issued when aiming at the tone at the beginning is not loud or expressed in a small volume. Then, after getting the shot in the right manner, it developed with a louder volume. This exercise places each note properly according to the position and time the note must be sounded.

The exercises are inversely proportional to the movements in VA. Efforts to reach high and low notes, they practice catching both low and high notes by voicing loudly and loudly precisely in aiming at the style. The majority of VA members did not understand vocal techniques. At first, there were doubts. At the beginning of the exercise regularly, they cover their faces with book partitur, so their facial expressions are not visible. They are embarrassed to reveal vocal sounds that tend to be loud and loud. At first, they tend to open their mouths at a less wide volume than the practice demands, so they always produce a low sound volume. These symptoms indicate insecurity in making vocal sounds. As a result, they often produce pitch misses, sound frequencies that are less than expected, i.e., a false sound. Based on these problems, the trainer applies a special method, namely the blocking method. This method places each novice singer joining experienced singers in an innate character group so that professional singers' voices influence those who are inexperienced. This method effectively produces the sound as expected. The combination of soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and the possibility of mezzo-soprano, baritone version of the VA simultaneously form a complete harmony. Good intonation is how to place the appropriate and correct tempo. The conductor leading the chorus controls the stability of the beat. However, choir singers must also know the proper tempo placement when singing. In practicing the classical version of the vocal theory, there is a prohibition against waiting for the tempo or delaying the rhythm while singing because it will slow the song's beat. The singers must be consistent with the tempo to be sung. Every singer must always be aware of the speed of the song's tempo so that the beat remains stable. Maintaining a stable tempo is one thing that is quite difficult for VA members to do. They, when practicing together, are often confused, with tense facial expressions, finding fault with other members by looking at each other. Some members are cool with their tempo count. The stability of the tempo is related to the concentration power of each member. In addition to the power of concentration, stage time is also a major factor. In a performance, someone who does not have enough stage hours will feel nervous, which affects the tempo's stability, which will be faster than during practice. The conductor has a very big role in maintaining the strength of the rhythm. A conductor is a right solution in practicing tempo stability. The most important thing is that they must focus on the conductor's direction (Hill 2020).

4. Final Forming Musical Sound

The final stage of the formation of vocal musicality relates to dynamics, expression, and interpretation. These three things are closely related to the final forming of musical sound, especially in the presentation of the chorus as a whole. The uniqueness of the dynamics in VA is the result of the tone and tone pressure. They tend to build dynamics with the *sforzando* system, namely, processing

sounds that start from loud volume (*forte*) to soft (*pianissimo*) or vice versa. The dynamics exercises are essentially the volume play that allows for an attractive sound. Audio-wise, this is a bit surprising and gives a different effect. Cultivation of dynamics is more spontaneous and extreme. The weakness of this system is the tone control that sometimes misses, not on target. The way to overcome this is with intensive practice. For VA, expression is not only related to facial expressions, but body movements are also a part of the expression. There is an effort to emphasize that in the VA practice, the members' awareness must grow that the existence of audio and visual in appearance is an object for the audience to enjoy. This emphasis is to produce a musicality that tends to be uneven. Therefore, in every performance, they always build a visual trick. They try to appear convincing through expressions as professionals, even though they are amateur singers. The audience's ignorance of the VA's ability, which is still below average, will be covered by expressions filled with confidence from each member. To show an expression of faith, they always appear with a lot of smiles.

In addition to visual deception, expression can also be a supporting element for the musicality of vocal sounds. The trainer suggested that strong expression should be the hallmark of VA to spur the emergence of potential in producing vocal sounds. Expressions related to emotions, the singer's feelings when singing must radiate so that the song's meaning can reach the audience well. The expression function determines the VA's identity. The process of its formation is to emphasize each musical statement with maximum disclosure. That is, non-verbal body movements such as facial expressions must always change according to the song's emotions with full soul. The presentation is also related to attitude on stage. Body posture when walking on stage and non-verbal movements such as shaking the body must be under the song's rhythm or tempo. In the choir, interpretation is understanding and processing the intensity of sound in the presentation of the song. The trainer thinks about this by formulating the concept of presentation, both from musicality and visual performance. The development of ideas as a result of interpretation, they must meet certain conditions, namely conformity with the meaning of the original song. In practice, the coach stated that interpretation is one of the most important things. Interpretation can be the main attraction in every VA appearance. The focus of interpretation in VA rehearsals is on the typical musical color and stage action. Stage action for VA means developing energy to perform musical performances on stage. The point is manifested in the typical sound power of arrangement and choreography when singing. The stage action gives the impression that music as the focus of appreciation becomes energetic. Although they are not professional dancers, they also build choreographic awareness by processing the details of varied movements and vibrant sides. In presenting regional music or folklore, VA emphasizes the intensity of the choreography to attract the audience's attention.

4. Conclusion

VA is a children's choir with below-average vocal competence. However, the weakness of competence is not a barrier to get achievements at the national and international levels. There are supporting elements to achieve achievement; namely, VA prioritizes to have unique performance with sound color processing that deviates from music theory conventions. The timbre emphasizes processing on qualities that deviate from the conventional custom of choral musicality. Deviation will be successful when there is a maximization of stage action management in expressing folk songs. Stage action can be achieved if it has the support of musical compositions that also deviate from convention. The essence of quality processing in VA is an effort to build a typical voice color, which tries to avoid the tendency of music based on classical vocal theory. An important element to form the typicality is the work of music that puts forward the method of phrasing, processing articulation, resonance, and intonation. These methods become the most important elements in managing dynamics, expression, and interpretation, thus proving that VA has a strong and unique position in the folk music category. The vocalist's shouts in bringing folksong can form a distinctive character. Shouts with high notes are musical potentials that are not found in the general folk song presentation dictionary. VA awareness determines the quality of expression, dynamics, and interpretation

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