

The Impact of having a Choir in the Community

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree.

It is my own work.

Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Choir singing is something that is enjoyed by many people around the communities, some are singing in church choirs, some are singing in school choirs and some are singing in community choirs. To sustain a church choir and a school choir is relatively possible because there is some sort of support coming from these institutions as the choir serves as the secondary purpose for both these institutions. People go to church to worship the Lord and decide to join the choir, so is going to school, the learners attend school to acquire knowledge and as an extra mural activity they join the school. For the community choir, the main purpose to join a community choir is to sing for the love of music and because they are not under any institution, community choirs face many challenges that include but not limited to, the money.

Amongst those challenges is the lack of knowledge about the important reason why the choirs exist, which is to build unity amongst the communities and to teach individuals the soft skills that are needed to build one's career. This study will look at contributing towards civil societies in South Africa mostly in the townships where the main focus will be developing the communities through music activities such as working with choirs from the professional point of view. Turino (2008) states that in societies around the world, music creates and expresses the emotional inner life and it also can be an avenue of money and fame. I agree with Turino, as I am also a person looking to earn my living through music. Akuno (2008) mentions that in African societies, there is music for every activity, and it does not come as a surprise that there are a lot of community choirs. In addition, music as a work of art serves physical and emotional needs while cementing psycho-social and spiritual relationships (Akuno 2008) something that is forgotten and as a result choirs face difficulty and that leads to the dissolution of the choirs.

This study will investigate problems and challenges that lead to the dissolution of the choirs by following an existing community choir, the Vrygrond Community Choir. Vrygrond community choir was formed in 2012, formed with an intention of keeping the youth busy after school. Over the years, the choir has been struggling to keep its existence going due to the challenges that they face. The mentioned choir came to the university for some assistance with sustaining the choir because the choir manager felt that the community needs something to keep them busy as it is one of the most disadvantaged communities. Vrygrond community is a multi-cultural community and the oldest informal settlement in the Western Cape, dating back to 1900 which is situated between Muizenberg and Retreat, and about 20km away from the

central Cape Town. More than half of the population in Vrygrond and surrounding communities have been victims of crime. In addition, most people from the Vrygrond community and surrounding communities are experiencing criminal activities daily, from robbery, rape and theft (Micheal, 2017).

The hypotheses I have is that, a community choir or being part of the choir can change a person's life for the better. As a person who sang in different choirs and being part of the choirs (assisting with teaching music but not singing with them) for a long a time, has provided opportunities for me that I would not have had if I was never part of the choir. The opportunities like travelling all over the country participating in the choir competitions, for example. I also worked part-time for the opera company in Cape Town and gaining stage experience, and that is something that I never thought I would do when I was growing up but because I started singing in the community choirs, all these opportunities were available.

With that said, this study will also look at the impact of having a choir in the community and how that participation in the choir can be a positive impact for the community at large. This study will make reference to the Vrygrond community choir, with the assistance from the choir manager Ricardo Speelman and the school teacher and the community member of Vrygrond, Tracy-lee Bester as participants, to give me inside view of the choir and the community. Challenges, achievements and expectations will be discussed and suggestions to sustain the choir through those unavoidable challenges will be provided.

1.2 Research Background

I have worked with choirs around Cape Town where I could easily identify a person singing in choir because music provides that discipline and the creativity on the individual. When I talk about discipline, I talk about the consistency of attending the rehearsals even when there is no competition or an event to rehearse for, just for taking the responsibility as a choir member because for the choir to succeed in anything they do, rehearsals and practise sessions are very important. The choirs that I have been part of include, Unqambothi Cape Town Sings and Thembaletu Adult Choir and both these choir are no longer in existence and I am saying that with sadness. Also, Blacking (1995b) states that music making is a system of social interaction. I have learnt all of this at tertiary level and working with the community choirs (being it a school or the community choir) that making music is indeed a social interaction. We can make

our societies a better place through music because as Akuno (2008) highlights, music is a window into society. Blacking (1995a) mentions the function of music as an enhancement of the quality of individual experience and human relationship and Ballantine (1984) adds that music is a medium for expressing human emotions. It is important to note that when I talk about music making I do not only talk about the content of music learning, I talk more about the discipline that comes with music making and also how to actually sustain the talent so that in the future it can become a spoon that will feed one's family and the community as whole. In addition to that, Frith (2012) states that music making can provide different pathways through life, meaning that music may open up an avenue for a better life especially for those who are not academically gifted as it is still a struggle for some people to get to the tertiary level. It is imperative to teach our future kids the importance of giving back to their communities as well and by doing this, and I have to agree with Hallam & Creech (2010) that the future of the community music holds exciting possibilities.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter presents an overview of literature from researchers of community music, community musicians and will also touch base on the learning and teaching of music in the community setting. The section will be presented in the timeline of publication of the sources so that the shifts and changes that happened over time can be evident.

Ballantine (1984) stresses his concern and is disturbed about how people see music and their relationship to music. He further states that the praises for the beauty of the music is mostly given to the composers and in this article, he is drawing the reader's attention to think about music in the social context meaning the assumption that music and society are separate domains is false. Ballantine is trying to show the reader that the performer and the audience are as important, if not more, than the composer himself. This simply means that without the performer, there will be no music and without the audience there will be no music. In relation to my hypothesis, the reading is showing me that the society and music are inseparable and looking at the impact of having a choir in the community, it shows that the relationship between music and the community may create a better world, better musicians and better people (Ballentine, 1984).

Twenty three years later, Koopman (2007) mentions the potential that community music has as a force of music education which received little attention in terms of theoretical analysis. He further mentions that most writings only cover the projects of community music other than dealing with educational issues. He does not provide a clear definition of the term "community music" but he mentions three characteristics that can identify community music. The first is collaborative music-making which he notes that it is a practice that allows opportunities for people to engage in musical activities collectively. The second is community development which is aimed at wellbeing of the people and the third is personal growth which he believes helps people to develop their artistic abilities and identity. My research will show that people who participate in music activities have a lot to gain as all these three characteristics are the possibilities of the skills that can be acquired by the individual or by the community as a whole. Koopman (2007) also reflects on the role of teachers, issues of authority and power in the community music where he states that music learning in the community is mostly informal.

Three years later, Schippers (2010) who is concerned with learning and teaching of music in the community setting writes that there are three types of settings in which music can be

explored; informal, formal and nonformal. Schippers (2010) explains the difference between the terms as follows: *informal music learning* occurs when there is no teacher or facilitator to take responsibility for the learning experience and this is mostly the learning that happens when people are learning music from a recording or the radio, *Nonformal learning* refers to the learning that is controlled by the participants themselves, meaning private music teachers will fall in this category because this does not mean there is no structure at all, it simply means the direction of the learning process depends entirely on them. Then there is *formal learning*, which takes place in three levels namely music teaching in schools, music teaching in public or private school and the teaching in conservatories of music.

The same year as Schippers, Creech (2010) argues that community music is a complex and a wide-ranging area of practice and mentions that institutions are now sending musicians into schools to facilitate projects. As a researcher myself, I fully agree with Creech as I am also noticing that many graduates are now starting community projects. He further states that these projects include workshops, musical activities in a wide range of community settings and these are facilitated by musicians who are representing diverse musical genres and interest areas. He concludes that the intention of these projects is to flag the importance of developing sustainable, long-term initiatives that can impact on communities in a meaningful way. This reading speaks to me in a much more meaningful way as I am also a musician who is trying to show the importance of music and its positive impact in our communities.

Grodach (2011) addresses the issue of economic and community development by analysing the role of art spaces and providing arts projects, and he starts by providing the function of the art space. According to Grodach (2011), art space “function as a conduit for building social networks that contribute to both community revitalization and artistic development” (Grodach 2011). Then he further explores the factors that influence the involvement of the organizers and also the support for artistic communities. This study relates to my study in a way that the community (in my case the school) provides the necessary support to the choir by providing the rehearsal space and also, the school choir teacher is involved with the choir. This shows that communities also need to support the activities that are happening in the communities as these activities contribute to the development economy at large.

Thompson and Tawell (2017) indicate that arts-based activities can transform the social interaction of the youth. They claim that the youth is struggling with expectations, which leaves them at risk of social exclusion because academic demands of the curriculum allow little time and little resources for the development of emotional and psychological skills. Their research

shows that arts participation is an important foundation. As a person who will be teaching the music, it will be important to keep in mind that I will be setting up the foundation of greater things to come for the choir members and the community as a whole.

The sources presented shows the changes, differences and similarities that happened over the years in trying to look at the community music and its functions and most importantly the impact of participating in music activities.

Ballantine (1984), Koopman (2007) and Creech (2010) share a common idea about community music with regards to the role it plays in the community, where Ballantine (1984) stresses that music and society are not two separate items. Our societies have been making music since the olden days and it is still used as part of the culture even to date. For example, rituals require music and singing and dancing to some extent and that is something that cannot be taken away from the society. Already in that aspect, music has an impact it does to the community. That links very well with what Koopman (2007) is bringing forward. In his attempt to define the term community music, he mentions that collaborative music-making allows people to engage willingly in musical activities, for example, if people know that the success of the music making depends on each individual who is involved, more people will take the responsibility because they would know that the success of the activity depends on them but what is not mentioned is in which setting does the music-making take place. That is the reason why Creech (2010) argues that community music is a complex area of practise because music making differs in many ways, there is music making for entertainment purposes and there is music making for ritual purposes, which links to Ballantine again where he shows the inseparability between society and music. The three authors are showing that music is very important to the society.

From the time Ballantine (1984) wrote the article, there has been some developments based on the findings the other two sources bring forward. In 1984, Ballantine (1984) was talking about the separation between music and the society, where music only meant the creator (composer) of music and the society as a performer and audience. Twenty-three years later, Koopman (2007) emphasises the importance of collaborative music-making and how the music making helps people to develop their artistic abilities and identity. So, it becomes evident that active participation in making music plays an important role in the society unlike in 1984 where the important person was the creator of the music. Koopman (2007) further reflects on the role of the music teachers and three years later Creech (2010) states that institutions are now sending musicians into schools (communities) to facilitate projects. This simply means there has been

some developments even though not much has been written about the development of music in the community.

Additionally, Thompson and Tawell (2017) mention the transformation of the social interaction of the teenagers as they are the ones struggling with expectations, this simply means that there has been some transformation on the social interaction of the youth because of the arts-based activities. This statement excludes the adults who are also going through the expectations and struggles as the young people, and the Vrygrond community choir that this research will refer to also have adults who also express how being in a choir has changed how they view the world and how it has improved their well-being.

With this study, I aim to show the impact of having a choir in the community as I have noticed that there is a gap when it comes to choir music and its importance in the community. The above literature has provided some insights from different perspectives of viewing the importance of having a choir in the community.

Chapter 3

3.1 Nature of the research

The nature of this study falls under qualitative research, meaning this research has used text as practical material and its interest was in the perspective of the participants, (Flick 2011). He further states that qualitative research has a long history in many disciplines, for example social sciences which is currently summarized under qualitative research. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995) qualitative method is an important mode of inquiry for social sciences and other applied fields, and for this study, this method was the suitable option over the quantitative method.

Creswell (2014) also states that qualitative research studies people by interacting with the participants in their natural environment and focuses on their (participants) meanings and interpretations. He further adds that the emphasis is on the quality and depth of the information not the quantity of information, like in the quantitative research where they mostly focus on the numbers. Have (2011) mentioned that the crucial feature of this approach is to search for hidden meanings, multiple interpretations and unheard voices. Therefore, the qualitative approach for this study was suitable because I was looking at the real-life stories that were presented by the participants and I needed to interpret their stories and make sure that I present them well for the study.

3.2 Research ethics

In order for me to be able to conduct the interviews successfully and be able to interpret the above-mentioned stories, I needed to get their consent to do that. So, I applied for the ethics clearance and it was approved by the department and by the university (see Appendix A). The ethics clearance served as an agreement between me and the participants about the use of the data. I sent both the participants a hard copy of the transcribed interviews and the copy of the draft, just to make sure that they go through the report before I submit the first draft, in doing so, they were going to be able to tell me if I presented them incorrectly, fortunately all came back well. I also asked for permission to use their full names for the study and both of them agreed.

3.3 Methodology

When I did my field work, interviewing a choir manager and a school teacher in the local school of Vrygrond, the Vrygrond Primary School, I thought it was the hardest task I had to perform because I had scheduled a meeting with both the participants for the same day, but I was going to take them on different times and we all agreed on that, including the choir manager. And it never happened that way, the choir manager told me that he was busy with some other meeting in town and will schedule the interview for another day (promising to make it as soon as he can) and I agreed because I had no choice. So, the one interview that took place on that sunny Saturday the 3rd of November was with the school teacher, Tracy-Lee Stacy. Nettl (1983) states that getting started in the field is a time of stress because for his research, he was told to come back on a certain day and could not be angry about it like I was. This made me realise that fieldwork is not as easy as I thought it would be and even though I was thinking all this time that my field work was the hardest, most researchers go through the worst.

This meant that then my plan had to change to accommodate the situation that I was facing. I was very adamant to conduct both interviews on the same day, so I waited for the choir manager to finish his meeting in town. While I was waiting, I got to meet some of the choir members and talk about the choir in general. Because I never got her permission to make use of her name, she will remain anonymous, but this member, which is one of the oldest members of the choir could not stop talking about the choir and its existence. I picked up from her excitement that having a choir in the community means a lot to her. She further added that she wishes to see the choir grow even bigger because her life has changed ever since she joined the choir and she felt like if more people from the community could join the choir, the community can be better.

The initial idea was that, I will attend a rehearsal with the choir and then conduct the interviews later as the teacher had to be somewhere before she could see me. I had to adapt to the situation because I remember I had an afternoon meeting, but I had to cancel, research had to take priority. Abu-Lughod (1986) emphasizes the importance of adaptability when collecting the data and I agree with her as I have experienced that myself. So, I have come to learn that the process of fieldwork and its success depends entirely on the personality of the researcher more than anything, because the sudden change of what a researcher is expecting can be very frustrating for someone who has worked so hard to develop a method. Myers (1992) states that personalities are tested as we have to adapt, and a researcher's strengths and weaknesses are

tested as well. I had to be strong and keep my focus on the end goal and that goal was to collect the data, by any means necessary.

The second interview took place five days later, after a number of attempts to organize the time with the choir manager, Ricardo. On a Thursday the 8th of November, I had to leave everything and go to his work place, wait for him to finish his work and conduct the interview. And through all of that, the interview was successfully conducted.

Data collection

I have used structured interviews and I had closed questions for both participants in order to get the data from the participants, where I only had a different set of questions for each participant (Appendix B). The reason for that is because both participants have different perspective about the choir (one being a choir manager and the other as a community member) and it was important for me to have those different views from both parties. Both interviews were conducted in person, the first of which was with the school teacher, Stacy-Lee Tracy, on the 3rd of November 2018 and it took place at the Vrygrond Primary school and that is where she teaches music as well. The second interview (with the choir manager, Ricardo Speelman) took place on the 8th of November 2018 at his work place, this is due to the fact that we were unable to meet on the initial scheduled day, but the important thing is the interview was conducted. There was also a possibility of using the modern technology like Skype, especially for the choir manager who was unable to make the set time and the scheduled day. The difficulty of finding a video camera led to me conducting the interviews with an audio recorder, because I also wanted to analyse their reactions and behaviours when certain questions were asked. Casley and Kumar (1988) explains that it is important to examine both verbal and non-verbal behaviours to understand the views and the perspectives.

I initially hoped to interview more than two people, a third preferably a community member who does not know anything about music (like a pastor) but who reside in Vrygrond. This was going to give me a different view and in-depth understanding of how the community of Vrygrond view the idea of having a choir in their community, but because of complications that the manager was unable to explain to me, I had to accept the two participants. Interviews were recorded with an audio device, with Ricardo's interview the longer of the two, going closer to 20 minutes, because he had a lot to say about each and every question (refer to the interviews) and Stacy's interview was just under 10 minutes as she was just going straight to

the point in answering the questions (refer to the interviews). Both interviews were transcribed (Appendix C).

Data analysis

Data analysis is one of the most important steps in the research process, states Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2008) and after the data was collected, I needed to organise it and Roulston (2013) emphasizes the importance of reorganizing and representation of data. But I first had to go through it a number of times to make sure I got everything I wanted. Liamputtong (2013) explains that reading the data repeatedly in an attempt to understand it, is a process of data analysis. This study has made use of the Narrative analysis to analyse the data collected from the participants and Liamputtong (2013) states that this method aims at unfolding the way in which individuals make sense of their lived experiences. Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2008) mention that narrative analysis involves considering the potential of stories to give meaning to individual's stories.

Maree (2007) also adds that narrative analysis refers to a variety of procedures for interpreting the narratives generated in research. With this type of analysis, the stories that were told by both the participants were analysed and retold in a way that was going to make it easy for the reader to follow. However, Liamputtong (2013) highlights that researchers need to provide a link between ideas when retelling the stories because in the stories people tell, events do not appear in a sequential order as Gibbs (2007) states, so it is up to the researcher to provide the links and the sequence to these stories.

Chapter 4

Description of the interviews

4.1 Choir manager

Ricardo Speelman is a Vrygrond community choir manager, lives in Vrygrond and he studied music part-time and from his own pocket. The choir came about in 2012 when Ricardo (who was active in the community centre) was asked by the German volunteers, who were also active in the centre running an NGO, to keep the children busy after school. The idea of a choir came after the German volunteers realized that Ricardo loves music and he was also using a facility in the community centre already and there was no choir in the community.

One of the important reasons to start the choir was that it is socially uplifting, as Ricardo believes that music is the tool that one can use to uplift the community. Socially uplifting in this instance means that the community can have opportunities through some of the members singing in the choir, for example one member of the choir might excel from the rest of the choir and get an opportunity to take his or her talent to the next level, maybe get a sponsorship to study music further and that opportunity alone can change one family's life for the better which will positively impact in the community at large. Community can also fight poverty and crime through music, for instance the community members may join the choir and have little time to think about their state of living, which will result in thinking less about doing criminal activities because criminal activities are normally influenced by poverty. That is the reason why the choir's aim is to eliminate poverty and that is the most important thing to Ricardo.

The reason why he chose the choir platform was that he wanted to inspire children and anyone who loves music and everyone who wanted to make a positive difference in Vrygrond through music, because he believes that not everyone is academically gifted therefore some may be creatively gifted and utilize their talents to earn a living. In addition, he touched on the issue of the country's educational system where he complains that the current system of education in this country is not designed to encourage people to pay equal attention to the creative side of the learner "hence there is such a high unemployment rate" he said.

The objective of the choir is to make a difference in the community (again, to uplift the community and to eliminate poverty and crime) and the surrounding areas as the choir also includes members from the nearby areas. This means that the more the community members

get involved with the choir, the better are the chances of making a positive difference in the community.

With that said, he mentions that it is difficult to keep the choir together and feels like the lack of activities, the performances for example, is the reason why it is difficult to keep the choir together. His strategy then is to find out what is working and what is not working in terms of people, understanding them and getting to know them but most importantly he notes that he needs to be patient with them and try to come up with different activities for the choir, like performances amongst other things. This, he believes, is one of the ways to keep the choir together because the members will have something to look forward to and be motivated to attend rehearsals because the choir will have “end goal” he claims.

He mentions the importance of having an end goal because he feels like people do not show interest if they have no end goal, all they do is practice and having an end goal or even a sub-goal can be a good strategy to keep the choir together. The choir learns music through the use of technology, where they send each other songs and lyrics via WhatsApp, as most of the songs on their repertoire are hymns that have been done already by other people or famous groups, so they download music from Youtube and send it around the WhatsApp group for members to learn. “There is not actual theory that has been done in the choir” he says, stating that he uses his music knowledge in terms of breathing exercises and he wishes that the choir can have more formal approach (music education) to music learning as musical education can complement the choir members talents, whether it is to play an instrument or singing.

One of the achievements of the choir so far is that the choir is busy recording a single, which Ricardo asserts as “a milestone”. Another achievement is obtaining a set of t-shirts for the choir to be branded as a choir because he feels like people were not taking the choir serious as they had nothing to show, for example the uniform, and 30 t-shirts have been acquired. Next to the biggest achievement of the choir so far is the huge donation received from an overseas choir that they are in partnership with, where R40 000 was donated to the choir to buy instruments and now the choir has several instruments to use just for the basics like practice sessions and rehearsals. The biggest achievement is the choir going overseas in December 2019 to partner with the Swiss choir in Switzerland, an all-expenses paid trip. With excitement, he further continues that the choir is ready, and they are looking forward to the trip.

The biggest challenge that the choir is facing is financial support, and that affects the vision that the choir has, which is to make a huge impact in the community. That is only a small

portion of the financial challenge. He further reflects that even if the choir wants to plan an event, the choir does not have resident band members so they normally ask a certain band to accompany the choir for a specific function and “those band members are quite accomplished in most cases and they do this (performing) for a living” he said, emphasizing that the choir will have to cover that cost. The choir also lacks financial support to make sure that things run smoothly, so that they can make sure that the choir gets a good end product, and getting good end product might attract those who undermine the impact of the project of this magnitude in the community, and it all comes down to the financial support to make things happen.

Communication with choir members requires money, for example, most choir members do not work, and they do not have money to buy cellphone data, so the communication becomes a problem due to lack of the finances. Administration is also another challenge that the choir is facing, as the choir does not have a website to properly brand itself, which requires a monthly subscription which goes back to the financial challenge. But Ricardo is an optimistic person as he mentions that he does not want to focus on the shortcomings but would like to focus more on the positives and take those positives as blessings. Proper office facility is another challenge that he mentions, claiming that the choir has to pay for a proper office set up and safe place that is secure and that will require a monthly fee. He makes an example about a break in that happened at his place and the laptop was stolen with all the choir stuff, they are only left with what they have on emails but basically, they lost everything.

Transport is one other challenge because the choir is working intercommunal, so often the rehearsals are challenging because the choir must have money to fetch people who are outside Vrygrond community. Sometimes the choir finds it better to use the church that has all the things (instruments) set up already but that will mean the choir must pay for transporting all the members to the church and that again, goes back to the financial challenge. He makes an example about an instance where the choir had to pay R200 for one evening in one of the churches that has all the things (instruments and microphones).

He states that music is important because the soul needs music, music is also soothing, it helps increase the brain capacity that becomes active and it has a positive impact to the mood. He also mentions that there is a health factor as a benefit that one gets from music and state it is as something positive and constructive.

4.2 Community member

Tracy is a school teacher at Vrygrond Primary School. She has been at the school since 2009 until present but never heard of a choir outside of the school choir. She further claims that the choir has been there, but she did not know about it. She feels it is necessary for the community to have a choir as it will focus on the cultural part of the child and also holistically in terms of the music. She indicates that one good thing about having a choir in the community is that a learner from her school will leave the choir but will move over to Vrygrond community choir “which is for me a bonus” she says, adding that few of her grade seven learners are already part of the Vrygrond community choir. She knows that Ricardo Speelman started the choir due to a lack of cultural activities in the community of Vrygrond and she also knows that Ricardo is passionate about the music and his love for music drove him to start the choir, but she is not sure exactly when the choir started “few year ago” she says.

She comments on the inconsistency of members as a major challenge, lack of transport which all goes down to the lack of financial support but states that Ricardo’s drive goes beyond those challenges and he makes it happen. The advantage of having a choir in the community is that music uplifts whoever is in your vicinity, she says but from her personal point of view music brings people together. She makes an example of the production the choir had where they saw people from all walks of life (people from different cultures and different religions) coming together and unified under the banner called music.

Tracy would like to see the choir grow stronger and bigger, in terms of the membership as well, she would like to see them travel the world but most importantly she would like the choir to unite Vrygrond community. She mentions that the community is divided due to many things, mentioning the socio-economic challenges (alcohol, drugs, poverty and crime) as one factor that divides the community and feels like a project like a choir might bring relief (just a sense of knowing that no matter how bad it is, we will overcome) and unite the community “that is what I want for the Vrygrond community choir” she says.

Music is definitely important and the reason why she says that is because holistically a child needs to be developed not only academically but also in other areas. For some people music takes them out of a certain problem that they are currently in and allows them to be free or feel free.

Chapter 5

Analysis

5.1 The choir and the community

Vrygrond community is one of the many South African communities that are exposed to high poverty and unemployment rates (Micheal, 2017), which often result in crime and drug use, just like teenage pregnancy and drop out at secondary level which are also very high, and this normally result in criminal activities especially by the youth. Starting a choir, Ricardo thought, will bring opportunities to the community so that the youth can think less about doing anything wrong in the community and that means the community needs to have activities going on around the community. Ricardo Speelman (who was asked by the German volunteers) started the choir in 2012, with the aim of keeping the children busy after school and because of his musical background, Ricardo took on the task to uplift the community through music as he believes that music is the tool that one can use to uplift the community.

Ricardo also believes that community can fight crime and poverty through music, this comes after he made it clear that members who are in the choir have little time to think about their state of living, which result in thinking less about criminal activities that are normally influenced by poverty. Tracy on the other, a community school teacher, who did not know about the existence of the choir until recently, emphasized a good thing about having a choir in the community as she explains that a learner from her school will leave the school choir and will move over to join the Vrygrond community choir. This will ensure that Ricardo's aim of keeping the youth busy after school is fulfilled. Another good thing she mentioned about having a choir in the community is that the choir will focus on the cultural aspect of the child development, I think she means because the community choirs mostly focus on the cultural music and then the child will get to be exposed to that side of the music as well other than the school choir music.

She is aware of the passion that Ricardo has for music and she trusts that one of the reasons why Ricardo started the choir was due to the lack of activities in the community. Activities such as concerts, public performances and fundraising events are all activities that can have a positive impact especially in the disadvantaged community and they can uplift the community. So this simply means that the above-mentioned activities can be socially uplifting, for example, a continuous participation in such activities might lead to a few members of the choir discovering some hidden talents (like one might excel in singing or playing an instrument) and

that might bring an opportunity for one to take his or her talent to the next level and that opportunity alone can change one family's life for the better and positively affect the whole community. Tracy also adds that an advantage of having a community choir is that music uplifts whoever is in one's vicinity but from her personal point of view, she believes that music brings people together.

Ricardo chose the choir platform because he wanted to inspire children and anyone who loves music as well as everyone who wanted to make a positive difference in Vrygrond. He believes that not everyone is academically gifted therefore some may be gifted creatively and they can utilize their talents to earn a living. He blames the high rate of unemployment on the country's educational system where he states that the system is not designed to encourage people to pay attention to their creative side. So, Ricardo believes that, for the choir to make a positive difference, more community members should get involved in the choir set up, not just as singers but also as supporters and hopefully as investors as well.

5.2 Challenges

When both participants were asked about the challenges that the choir is facing, different responses came up but there were common answers, for example transport and finances were mentioned by both participants as major challenges. Different responses include a difficulty to keep the choir together as mentioned by Ricardo, where he mentions the lack of activities like performances as a major challenge that they are facing but he has a strategy in place to deal with that challenge and his plan is to basically understand the members and be patient with them and try to come up with different activities, performances for example. Tracy also mentions this challenge, but she presents it as consistency of members, where members are losing interest due to the lack of activities. So, Ricardo believes that by organizing more performance platforms, members will have something to look forward to instead of attending rehearsals without an end goal and members will regain interest, not only the members but also the community.

Tracy did not dwell much on the challenges as she believes that Ricardo's love for music and his drive goes beyond the challenges that are faced by the choir. On the other hand, Ricardo could not stop mentioning the financial challenge as he believes that this challenge affects the vision that the choir has, which is to make a huge impact in the community. It seems like the well-being of the choir depends much and mostly on money. To plan an event needs money as

the choir normally hires accomplished band members (Vrygrond choir does not have resident band members) and these band members need to be paid as they are also trying to make a living. To contact members requires money, most of the choir members are not working and buying cellphone data to communicate becomes a problem and that result in problematic communication. Transport is another challenge mentioned by both participants, and this is due to the fact that the choir is working intercommunal, working with other people from different communities around Vrygrond. So, the financial challenge goes across all the elements that the choir needs to fulfill in order to for the choir to run smoothly and make an impact in the choir.

5.3 Achievements and Expectations

Ricardo went on to discuss how the choir learns the music and he indicates that the choir learns the music through the use of technology, making use of WhatsApp specifically. Because most of the songs on their repertoire are hymns that have been done before, they download songs and lyrics from Youtube and send each other via WhatsApp so that the members can learn a piece of music. He wishes that the choir can have a more formal approach, like music education, to music learning because he strongly believes that music education can complement the talents they have in the choir. Which will result into more achievements than they already encountered.

Talking about the achievement, with a smile on his face, Ricardo says that the choir is busy recording a single, which is “a milestone” he says. Again, he feels like having something to show will interest more people to join the choir hence he considers the recording a milestone. Branding of the choir with 30 T-shirt, was another achievement for the choir as the choir had no uniform of any sort at all. R40 000 donation from an overseas choir was another achievement, now the choir has some instruments for rehearsals and practice sessions. And the biggest achievement so far is the choir going to Switzerland in December to partner with a Swiss choir in an all-expenses paid trip.

But before the achievements comes the expectations, and Tracy as a community member shared some of her expectations. She would like to see the choir growing stronger and bigger, in terms of the membership as well. The fact that they will be traveling to Switzerland is exactly what Tracy would like to see happening more often but most importantly, she would like to see the choir uniting the Vrygrond community. Tracy believes that the community is divided and this division is caused by many things that includes the socio-economic challenges (alcohol,

drugs, poverty and crime) as one factor but she feels that a project like a choir can bring relief (not necessarily ending all the social problems but just giving one a sense of knowing that no matter how bad things are, it will be okay) and unite the community, that is all Tracy would like to see the choir doing in the future.

5.4 The importance of Music

When both participants were asked the importance of music, both adamantly said music is important with Ricardo mentioning that the soul needs music because music is soothing, furthermore music helps increase the brain capacity that becomes active and music has a positive impact to the mood. Pierce (2015) mentions that the research continues to confirm that there are many cultures and individuals who have used music to heal, to influence and to better understand the world around them. Tracy insists that a child needs to be developed not only academically but also in other areas as well and also feels that for some people, music takes them away from certain problems they may be facing and allows them to be free or feel free. In addition, Ricardo concludes that there is also a health factor which is a benefit one gets from music.

Chapter 6

Discussion

This study aims at looking at the impact of having a choir in the community and the results indicate that having a choir in the community is socially uplifting, according to the choir manager Ricardo. Socially uplifting in a sense that the choir will bring activities that the community can be part of, for example concerts and other musical performances and that will bring friends and families together, some in support of their family members singing in the choir and some in support of the community event. The hypotheses I had was that, a community choir can improve a person's life for the better. I sang in different choirs for a long a time and being part of the choir provided opportunities for me that I would not have had if I was never part of the choir. These opportunities include travelling all over the country participating in the choir competitions, working part-time for the opera company in Cape Town and gaining stage experience, something that I never thought I would do when I was growing up but because I started singing in the community choir setting, all these opportunities became available.

Vrygrond community choir was started by Ricardo with the aim of bringing such opportunities to the choir and the community. I have come to realize that Vrygrond community is one of the most disadvantaged communities with multiple cultural groups and that means crime and poverty are the major problems. Many criminal activities are influenced by the lack of jobs, which result in major poverty for the majority of the community and that normally leads to crime as most people in such communities resort to crimes and this is due to the high unemployment rate that the country is facing. "Community can fight crime and poverty through music..." States Ricardo, emphasizing that members who are part of the choir have very little time to think about their unpleasant state of living, so that means there is no time to think about criminal activities that are influenced by poverty.

The choir is using the school, Vrygrond Primary School, for rehearsals and Ricardo states that Tracy has been very helpful in making sure that the choir gets the venue when they need it. The rehearsal days are Wednesdays and Saturdays, and this is because some members are unable to make it on Wednesday, and therefore can be able to make it on Saturday. His initial aim was to rehearse every weekday but due to financial challenges, they are unable to have members everyday as they have members outside of Vrygrond and requires money to have them in the rehearsals. The choir has 25 members and hoping for more members going forward,

and these members range from age 16 to age 41 (the eldest member I had an informal conversation with).

According to Ballentine (1984) music and society are not two separate items. Culturally speaking, music is part of the society and different societies will participate in music for their cultural practices. The information I got from my participants show that the Vrygrond community has lost its culture due to the lack of musical activities for example, they state that there are no events (especially music events) in the community where people can go and enjoy, like concerts and public performances. Tracy, the school teacher, highlights that having a choir will bring back the cultural aspect in the community and the children will be exposed to their culture as the community. Turino (2008) argues that indigenous participatory practices are there to enhance social bonding and according to both participants for this study, a united community can fight crime and poverty. The indigenous participatory means that people will come together and participate in the indigenous activities and that will again uplift the community as members and especially children will be exposed to the cultural element of their community and from Tracy's personal point of view "music brings people together".

Tracy, as a community member, mentioned some of her expectations from the choir. Her expectations include seeing the choir growing stronger and having a bigger number of members, and as I mentioned earlier, the bigger the number of the choir members the better for the choir because that will mean more people will be exposed to the opportunities that comes with being a choir member. As much as she would also like to see more of the overseas trips happening, she said that she would like to see the choir uniting the community, because she feels like the community is divided by a lot of things like socio-economic challenges. The socio-economic challenges she is referring to include but not limited to alcohol, drugs, crime and poverty. But of all her expectations, the important thing to her is for the choir to "unite the community" she said.

Because the choir normally consists of many members (exact number varies according to different choirs) this simply means that many people are getting exposed to the available opportunities. I always believed that if many people are willing to be part of the choir, many people will be getting opportunities. For example, if there is a 4-member band and one member decides to leave the group, the group will be affected immensely by that loss but if a choir of more than 30 members loses three or four members, the choir can still go forward without feeling the loss. Ricardo believes that the choir platform is important because not everyone is academically gifted and some may be creatively gifted, thus utilizing their talents through

singing in the choir and looking for the opportunities to earn a living and improve the state of living. But he further argues that more community members should get involved in the choir either directly by becoming singing members or helping with day to day running of the choir or indirectly by supporting the events of the choir and hopefully investing in the choir as well, for the community choir to work effectively so that it can better serve its purpose.

Some unexpected results of my findings came about when the challenges facing the choir were addressed. By the look of things, the well-being of the Vrygrond community choir depends on the money and the choir consists of mostly unemployed individuals aged between 18 years old and 41 years old, so finance is really a major challenge. “Financial challenge affects the vision that the choir has, which is to make a huge impact in the community” this comes after Ricardo could not stop mentioning the finance problem. The choir finds it very difficult to organize these events that are lacking in their community because they do not have financial muscle to pull them through. For example, Ricardo mentions that planning an event costs money, as they have to hire accomplished band members because the Vrygrond choir does not have resident band members. They also have to contact members of the choir and that requires money, this is explained by Ricardo as that choir members are not working and buying cellphone data becomes a problem which in turn result in problematic communication. At this point I would like to acknowledge that my results are limited as they are not able to show what the money would be used for exactly, buying members the cellphone data? Or contacting the members, how?

Difficulty in organizing these events means that there will not be any activities going in the community and the lack of activities is one of the reasons why it is difficult to keep the choir together. “Members are losing interest due to the lack of activities.....” Ricardo states, adding that if the members have nothing to look forward to, then members lose interest and that is another challenge the choir is facing. Another big challenge mentioned by both participants was the transport because the choir works intercommunal, this means that the choir has members from the surrounding communities as well and this is according to Ricardo, so that means to get everyone together at the same place becomes a problem.

From my point of view, the Vrygrond community choir needs money to fulfil all the responsibilities that the choir has in order for the choir to have a positive impact in the community. The choir is currently receiving some funding from the Swiss choir, and this is new funding that the choir recently acquired. The funding is mostly for the instruments that the choir is lacks as they were unable to rehearse without them.

Ricardo's wish is for the choir to have a more formal approach to music learning. Currently, the choir learns music through listening and downloading Youtube videos (as most of their repertoire is mostly traditional hymns that are famous and have been done already) and those songs are circulated via WhatsApp, which in itself is a challenge because not everyone has the cellphone data to access that music. Schippers (2010) who is concerned about learning and teaching of music in the community setting mentions that there are three ways in which music learning can be explored, *informal music learning*, *nonformal learning* and *formal learning*.

Vrygrond community choir at the current moment falls under the category of the informal music learning as that is the learning that occurs when there is no facilitator to take responsibility for the learning process and it mostly happens when people are learning music from a recording, just like how the Vrygrond choir is doing. This is because Ricardo is not a formal music educator, he does have a music background, but he does not know how to teach music to the choir. His role therefore is to facilitate the day to day running of the choir, circulating the songs via the WhatsApp group of the choir and manage the rehearsals. He did mention that his music knowledge comes in handy when they are doing warm ups and voice exercises.

Schippers (2010) explains nonformal learning as the learning that is controlled by the participants themselves and the direction of the learning process depending entirely on them. My thinking is that Ricardo's wish to have a formal education is for the choir to make use of this way of learning the music because for the process to depend on them, they need to be musically trained in order to take control of the music learning process in the rehearsal space. This way of learning also comes with the personal development of each and every individual because every person takes the responsibility to make sure that the rehearsal is a success. The third way of learning music as mentioned by Schippers (2010) is a formal learning which takes place in schools, public or private school and in the conservatories of music (music schools), for example, the teacher and the learner setting. Ricardo believes that having music education can complement the talent they have as a choir and that will result in getting more achievements.

Through all the above-mentioned challenges, the choir has managed to earn several achievements which include the recording of the single, and Ricardo mentions that as a milestone because he feels like people will grow interest in the choir if they see that the choir has something to show. This is the reason why he was so delighted when the choir acquired a set of 30 T-shirts to brand the choir because the choir does not have a uniform so the T-shirts

will be used as a uniform for now, again this made Ricardo happy because they will have something to show. The choir also got a donation of R40 000 from an overseas choir, so that they can buy instruments for rehearsals and practice sessions. But one of the achievements that the choir is looking forward to, according to Ricardo, is going to Switzerland in December to partner with a Swiss choir “in an all-expenses paid trip” he added with excitement. As much as the choir is struggling with a number of challenges, the important thing is that they are not giving up on the aim of making an impact in the community. What this means is that, the choir will be exposed to the international stages and Ricardo will learn a lot about managing a choir and dealing with the challenges that they are currently facing. Furthermore, the experience will change most of the choir member’s lives because going overseas is an opportunity of a lifetime.

I am very glad that I was able to get participants who have different views or who perceive the impact that the choir from different angles. For example, Tracy views the community choir as something that can develop the community as a whole, like having activities in Vrygrond so that the community can be a much better place, whereas Ricardo looks at the choir as something that can uplift the each member personally, this is evident when he mentions that the overseas trip will change each of the choir member’s life. This then means that, the personal growth of a single member of the choir can improve the community because it takes a single to person to change the world. For example, if a single member’s state of living improves, the family of that member will be able to do better in terms on the earnings and spending, that will lead to more improved family, which can have an impact in the community.

When looking at the impact of having a choir in the community, the results highlight that having a choir can have a positive impact because the community will be uplifted, this include fighting crime and poverty through music. This can happen through having an active choir with the support from the community, and when I say active, I mean a choir that is able to have events and activities where the community be involved directly or indirectly. The results, however, do indicate that planning these much-needed events is a major challenge because the choir does not have financial muscle to organize these activities and events, as every challenge that the choir is facing requires money.

Chapter 7

7.1 Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of having a choir in the community, with reference to the Vrygrond Community choir. The two participants Ricardo, the choir manager and Tracy, the school teacher and community member provided some insights on the results that shaped this study. Through their participation on this research, I was able to realize that having a choir in the community has a positive impact on the community. Vrygrond community is one of the most disadvantaged communities with multi-cultural groups, and crime and poverty are major problems which are mostly influenced by lack of jobs. According to the choir manager, the community can fight poverty and crime through music, and this is possible if more people from the community can join the choir because being part of the choir, people can have little time to think about crime.

Having a choir in the community can also expose children to the cultural element of their community because people will come together and participate in the indigenous activities and that will uplift the community, Tracy's personal view states that music brings people together. The choir is facing many challenges, financial struggle being one of them as that is the main one that affects the vision of the choir which is to make a huge impact in the community. Another challenge is the transport because the choir is working intercommunal and getting everyone together at the same place becomes a big problem. Even though the choir is facing many challenges, the choir has some achievements under their belt, the recording of their single in the professional studio, the acquiring of T-shirts for the branding of the choir as Ricardo felt that one of the reasons that the choir is struggling to get more members is because they have nothing to show as the choir and getting those T-shirts, more people will grow interest in the choir. The choir also got financial donation to buy rehearsal instruments from an overseas choir, the same choir that invited them to Switzerland in December 2019, and Ricardo added that the trip is an all-expenses paid trip.

This trip will have a positive impact on the choir members and that will have positive impact on the community. This is highlighted by both participants as Ricardo is more interested on the personal upliftment of the choir members and Tracy is more interested on the upliftment of the community. The positive impact on each individual of the choir will expand to other members of the community, which will grow bigger and influence the whole community.

7.2 Recommendations and Suggestions

Through this study, it is evident that sustaining a community choir is much more difficult than sustaining a church choir and/or a school choir and this is due to lack of financial support that the community choirs face compared to the former two institution-based choirs. And because the community is not institution-based, I would recommend that the community serves as a support structure for these choirs to be sustainable as the success of these choirs have a positive impact on the community at large. Both participants mentioned the impact that the choir has in the community and with more support from the community, the choir may achieve more and that will reflect on the community.

My suggestion will be for the community choirs to start engaging with the parents of the choir members as the start and develop the idea of supporting the choir. Not just in terms of finances but also in terms of attending the events when the choir is hosting an event, offering spaces to the choirs (the councilors that manage the halls, fields, and community centres can help) and most importantly allowing their children and adults to be part of the choir and encouraging them to attend choir rehearsals as it was mentioned that attending rehearsals is the important part of running a choir. By doing this, the choirs can address the challenge that the participants mentioned, the challenge that there is a lack of activities and this suggestion may help to minimize that challenge because with support from the community and making choir a community's pride, the choir can have more performance platforms for example more choir competitions.

With the support from the community more business sponsorships may come forward to help the choir because some businesses are managed and owned by community members for example small businesses in the communities. These businesses can help in sponsoring the choir as that will have a positive impact on the business as well because more people will be attending these events and that will help growing those businesses. So, the support from the community can play an important role in the sustainability of the choir and with good structures (choir committee), willing choir members and supportive community members, the future of the community choir is going to shine bright.

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Appendix A

Ethics Clearance Certificate



South African College of Music

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Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 2626 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 2627
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<http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/sacm>



17 October 2018

HDC REF: 04/2018

Dear Abonga Sithela,

What impact does having a choir have in the community

Thank you for your ethics application. It is my pleasure to inform you that the HDC has formally approved the above-mentioned study.

Please submit the form to Sheila Taylor for record keeping.

Approval is granted for two years.

Please submit a progress form to the HDC if the study continues beyond the approval time frame.

The on-going ethical conduct remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

Please quote the HDC REF in all your ethics related correspondences.

Yours sincerely,

signature removed to avoid exposure online

Associate Professor Sylvia Bruinders

For the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC)

Consent Forms

University of Cape Town
Faculty of Humanities
Consent Form

Research Title:

What Impact does having a choir have in the community?

Name of the Researcher:

Abonga Will Sithela

Department address:

South African College of Music, Music department, University of Cape Town.

Telephone:

0763606882

Email:

STHAB0001@MYUCT.AC.ZA

Name of the Participant:

RICARDO STEELMAN

Nature of the research:

The idea of the study originates from the fact that there is a lack of music activities in our communities and that affect the unity as there is nothing that brings them together. This study will look at the impacts of having a choir in the community of Vrygrond making reference to the Vrygrond Community Choir.

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.
- I understand that this research might be available to readers in a university library in printed form, and possibly in electronic form as well.

Name of the Participant: LICIA FREILMAN

Signature of the Participant: Signature removed to avoid exposure online

Date: 08/11/2018

Name of the Researcher: ABONDI STELLA

Signature of the Researcher: Signature removed to avoid exposure online

Date: 08/11/18

University of Cape Town
Faculty of Humanities
Consent Form

Research Title:

What impact does having a choir have in the community?

Name of the Researcher:

Abonga Will Sithela

Department address:

South African College of Music, Music department, University of Cape Town.

Telephone:

0763606882

Email:

SIHAB0001@MYUCT.AC.ZA

Name of the Participant:

Tracey - Lee Bester

Nature of the research:

The idea of the study originates from the fact that there is a lack of music activities in our communities and that affect the unity as there is nothing that brings them together. This study will look at the impacts of having a choir in the community of Vrygrond making reference to the Vrygrond Community Choir.

- I agree to participate in this research project.
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- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.
- I understand that this research might be available to readers in a university library in printed form, and possibly in electronic form as well.

Name of the Participant: Tracey-Lee.

Signature of the Participant: Signature removed to avoid exposure online

Date: 2/11/2018

Name of the Researcher: ABONGA SITHOLE

Signature of the Researcher: Signature removed to avoid exposure online

Date: 02-11-18

Appendix B

Choir Manager interview questions

1. Do you have any music background?
2. How and when did the choir come about?
3. What was the reason for starting a choir?
4. What do you want to achieve as a choir? Aims and Objectives.
5. How do you keep the choir together? Strategies.
6. How does the choir learn the music?
7. What challenges and achievements do you have as a choir?
8. Why do you think music is important?

Community member interview questions

1. First time having a choir in the community?
2. What does it mean to have a choir in the community?
3. How did the choir come about?
4. What are the challenges facing the choir?
5. What are the advantages of having a choir in the community?
6. What expectations do you have from the choir as a community member?
7. Do you think music is important? If Yes, why?

Appendix C

Transcription of the interviews

Choir Manager Interview

Question 1

My name is Ricardo Speelman, musical background yes, I do have. I studied part-time not full-time by prominent teachers of music on a part-time basis out my pocket.

Question 2

The choir came about in 2013 at the time I was using a facility in the community centre, there was also an NGO that was run by German volunteers that were also active there in the centre and from there they had an aftercare program for children and they got to know that I'm in to music and from there they asked me to basically keep the children busy and those interested in music, that was in 2012 actually.

Question 3

There were a combination of reasons, one them being that it's socially uplifting, music is the tool that you can use to uplift the community and that is what I wanted to do, I wanted to inspire children and youngsters and anyone that love music, wanted to make a difference in Vrygrond through music and I saw that the choir was a right platform to do so.

Questions 4

One of the things is to eliminate poverty to a certain extent and I'm very big on that because a lot of our people are not academically gifted, but they might have a certain talent, they might be creatively gifted and unfortunately currently our educational system is not designed in such a way that it sort of encourages people to pay equal attention to creative side hence there's such a high unemployment rate.

One of the objectives of the choir is actually that and another one is to make a difference in our community and surrounding communities because we not only working in Vrygrond, we also working in surrounding areas, I mean I worked people from Mitchel's plain before so yha.

Question 5

It's a challenge, it's difficult to keep the choir together, you know. it's challenging task but what we do is to find out what works, what doesn't work in terms of people, getting to

understand them, getting to know them and be patient with them and try to come up with different activities like I believe one of the ways to keep people busy is through events like performances and so on and once you have set dates and everything in place you know you have to work as a team and that becomes essential and that is one of the ways that I find works for actually keeping the choir together. But if you just basically practise every day without having an end goal and not having any targets in place and not having any events in place then people don't really show interest because they know that there are no commitments, sub-goals in whatever the goal so there need to be sub-goals under that.

Question 6

Our music we learn through downloads and stuff around technology, we use technology sending songs around via WhatsApp or whatever platform is available for us to interact to one another as choir members, so we send lyrics and most of the songs we are do are traditionally done before like hymns and so on there and there should be a certain arrangement of it so we just distribute it amongst ourselves. There is not actual theory that has been done in the choir like musical education, I use the knowledge I have in terms of breathing exercises and various exercises, but we don't have any other form of set-up other than my knowledge that I have that I impart to the choir members. At the current moment there is not which brings us to the conversation that we had you, I and the Professor Rebekka Sandmeier were we discussed an outreach programme which never materialized due to certain challenges where actually wanted stuff like that to happen where we have a more formal approach to this particular short coming, because we don't have musical education to compliment our talents weather it is to play a musical instrument or to sing whatever and that we enhance that through formal education of some sort and yha so currently it's not yet happening hopefully soon.

Question 7

Achievements that we have as a choir so far are where the choir is now basically busy recording single we currently busy in studio and that is a milestone, the second achievement is that we didn't have t-shirts or any sort of uniform and as I am speaking right now Im going to a meeting tonight where we will actually obtain our first set of t-shirts for us to be branded as a choir to have some sort of a uniform and then there is another donor who has approved that a total of 30 t-shirts have been acquired. We have received a huge donation of R40 000 from an overseas based choir that we in the 2-way partnership with for us to buy instruments

and we have now several sound instruments to use just for the basic stuff like practise session and rehearsals and so one. Things are happening and obviously the biggest is the opportunity of us going overseas next year December to partner with the Swiss choir in Switzerland which is quite a big opportunity with all expenses paid etc etc etc so we getting ready and looking forward to that. And there are on going discussions and planning that happens around that between myself VCC and the said partner.

Challenges that we have is not making such a huge impact as we would like to because of the fact that we have very minimal financial support, it's very difficult without that or even if we can just get the resources, we don't have the monetary injection. Even if we want to plan an event, the choir don't have a resident band members being part of the choir we normally just ask a band to accompany us for a specific function those band members are quite accomplished in most cases and they do this as a living so we have to cover that cost and so on, so we carrying lot of costs as we planning an event so we lack financial support to make sure that things run smoothly and make sure we get a good end product. Not because we want to be fancy or anything but that is what is going to attract those that undermine the impact of the project like this so that is what is going to attract them and make them pay special attention to what we doing and so on, and show them there is a positive thing that can come out of Vrygrond the positive way you don't have to resort to going to do drugs or whatever, there is a good life that you can have in a positive and constructive way, so that's one of the challenges that we have. We would love to embark on projects like helping senior citizens, helping those that are vulnerable like now recently there was a fire that broke out in Capricorn where 500 families lost their homes, we couldn't do much and as much as we would love to and one was choir member was actually involved and she lost everything and there was very little that we could do. Some organizations made soup and sponsored food and clothes and all of that, we couldn't do that much and would love to show that and say listen people that are involved in music, they do stand for something and they give something and if given the opportunity and resources they can make the change, can make the difference in any situation that the community might face, so that's one of our challenges. We also having challenges from the administrative point of view in terms of the choir properly branding itself and having a website as an example and stuff etc etc and all things that goes with that and obviously if you have a website you have pay monthly subscriptions, contacts amongst members who don't work and don't have money to buy data, some members don't even have WhatsApp cell phone so there communication is problematic because when announce

changes in our normal schedules we have as a choir they are not, things are not running all smooth because of these short comings and don't have money to buy data so they will say "no coach I didn't get that or I didn't see that only saw it this morning". So those are some of the challenges that we have and yha basically in the nutshell, just to list a few because there is always a challenge, but I don't really wanna focus on the shortcomings as I would like to focus more on the positives and take that as blessings. Just recently, they broke into my place and they stole the laptop that the professor donated to us and I haven't told her that because I don't know how she will react and the choir's PC was at my place and they stole that PC as well and all our stuff was there, everything except of what we have on emails and records stored somewhere on some drive of some sort but basically we lost everything. So uhm those are some of the challenges that we have, a proper facility we have to pay rent for a proper office set up and safe place that is secure will need a monthly fee of some sort that we have to pay, that's one of the challenges. The other one is transportation, we are working intercommunal, in other words not just in Vrygrond, we work with other communities as well so often rehearsals are challenging because we have to have money to fetch people or if we outside Vrygrond like in one occasion, we just find it better if we use a church that has all the things set up already and the choir just go and rehearse there that will mean transport, someone will have to come up with those transportation costs and it is often that we don't have funds to actually cover that which means that we can't attract as many people as we would like to and I can't make the changes I would like to make because of those challenges, one evening we went to practice in one of the areas, we had to pay R200 just for that evening so that one is obviously a challenge.

Question 8

Music is important... I don't think there is a soul in the face of the earth that does not love music. I think the soul needs music, music is soothing, obviously depends on the type of music you listening to and so on but music is something good, musical education is something equally good for example when you play an instrument, hand independence and all of those things actually help to build your or increase your brain capacity maybe not to increase but increase the size of your brain that becomes active, more of your brain power gets used when you play musical instrument and this has been scientifically proven that it can basically make a person smatter than you would be if you hadn't played an instrument so it can, yha. Music is important, obviously the impact it does to your mood, there's a health factor as well so all of those things are the benefits that you get from music and it's

something positive, it's something constructive, that shouldn't even be a question (laughs) you because music is just anonymous to good life I would say, to wellbeing.

Additional question

Well, uhm basically the choir is not growing as fast as I would like it to grow and projects like these should be given a priority attention as its not taking a lot of effort to establish them and to basically make an impact as well so given the necessary support the impact is huge out there and the project like this can, so all we want is just the necessary support and recognition from the different platforms and corporate businesses that have opportunities for performances there should make use of choirs and projects like these for us to then be able to make the necessary impact that we would love to make, that's basically it in the nutshell.

Community member interview

Question 1

Yes, it is the first time. I've been at the school since 2009 until present and I've never ever heard of the choir outside our own school choir, so this is for me the first time that the Vrygrond community choir has established. It has been there, but I didn't know it, we as a school didn't know about it.

Question 2

Me being a choir teacher at the school I see the necessity of, not only focusing on academics but also on the cultural part of the child holistically so in terms of the music at the school I run it I do the programs and it means that this learner will leave the school choir but will move over to Vrygrond choir which is for me a bonus because it won't just end when they finish or graduate grade 7, it will continue and few of my grade seven learners are already part of Vrygrond community choir

Question 3

I know it started with Ricardo Speelman, I know he is the founder of it, I know that he saw there is a lack of cultural activity within the community of Vrygrond and his love for music also drove him to start the Vrygrond community choir. So I know he's the founder. **WHEN?** I don't wanna guess, few years ago? Yha few years ago.

Question 4

There couple of challenges, yes. The consistency of members, the lack of transport, sometimes the financial does play a role. So yha, those are the contributing factors that are challenges towards the Vrygrond community choir. However, I love Ricardo's drive because he goes beyond those challenges and he makes it work, he makes it happen. I'm quite aware of these challenges.

Question 5

You know, singing is a language and for me personally, singing a melody or singing a song, it doesn't just uplift you as a person but uplifts whoever is in your vicinity. What does it mean for me personally, it means that music brings people together. The last production that we had it was people from all walks of life, coming together under the banner called music and that's just even though we are so diverse in culture and in religion and crede we were

unified because of music. That for me speak, in its own language and that for me it unites people.

Question 6

I would like to see it grow stronger bigger I would like to see it excel I would like to see it grow in terms of membership, see it grow the world is oyster so for them to explore and see them travel most importantly for them to unite Vrygrond. Vrygrond is divided due to many things and stuff, I would like this particular NGO to unite those who are so divided so that's for me personally, being also at the school for so many years there are those socio-economic challenges in this community but I would like to see this entity bring relief not only in terms of financial, just a sense of, it's not that bad we will overcome. Few months ago we were practising in the hall and this lady walked past and we sang a song and she heard us singing and actually put a post on Facebook saying she was going through something quite hectic at that point in time and as she walked past she heard these voices singing this particular song and just gave her that "I can make it" I won't identify the words of the song but that for me was like, even though we were busy practising we lifted someone out there that we didn't know of, you know. So that's what I want for the Vrygrond community choir to aspire to uplift the community.

Off the record question

What socio-economic challenges do you refer to?

I'm speaking about alcohol and drug, I'm speaking about poverty, I'm speaking about crime, violence, gangsterism, there's so many. And being here early morning late afternoon, I see it happening, I see parents that are not working, unemployment, so there are quite few socio-economic problems within this community and that's why I feel like music is the escape for some children or for some people.

Question 7

Yes Definitely. **WHY?** Holistically a child needs to be developed not only academically but also in other areas I feel that, it's like living for some people when they pick up a book they are like escorted to a different world I feel music does that to certain learners or certain people it just takes them out of that certain problem that they are currently in and just allow them to, just to be there, just to feel free you know. Music also means sense of freedom, you can be yourself some people are not musically inclined, but some people are so yha, music for me means a lot.

Added question

Is there anything you would like to tell me about the choir?

Since I joined hands with Ricardo and his choir, I've really grown as well in terms of the genre the different genres of the music and also seeing his love and his commitment for his community in terms of music, has really pushed me, like I started off being very vibrant and passionate about music at the school and driving it but then as time went on and things started getting busy, I slacked a bit but a year ago he came on board and he just gave me that momentum again like "hey, get up and start licking again", you know? So, I love that his passion has really ignited me as an individual as well.