

School and university music collaboration: A case study of a performance of Britten's War Requiem

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ABSTRACT: Britten's War Requiem is a large-scale orchestral and choral work requiring a variety of musical resources that are unlikely to be found within a single organisation. The performance reported in this article involved four conductors each responsible for preparing their own group of musicians (an orchestra and three choirs). Musical collaboration is needed to provide all the components for realising the score accurately. If carefully considered, the process of collaboration can provide opportunities for enhanced learning, intergenerational understanding and the motivation for pursuing active music making. If successful, musicians' desire to continue collaborating will be evident. This qualitative case study employed interpretative phenomenological analysis to explore the implications of a performance of the War Requiem through the lenses of the four participating conductors. The participants discussed their experiences on two occasions, before and after the performance, and reflected on how they understood the experiences of the members of their 'own' groups. Although the ambition to perform such a work was admirable, not all facets of the process were positive. The implications are discussed in terms of an understanding of successful musical performance collaboration. Empathy and respect between participating groups is recommended for a successful performance and for a continuing desire to collaborate further.

KEY WORDS: Collaboration; intergenerational choirs; peer learning; interpretative phenomenological analysis

In 2015, a performance took place of Benjamin Britten's War Requiem at a university in Australia. Several forces were required for this large concert work. A large orchestra combined with a smaller chamber orchestra, three soloists and three choirs, each directed by its own conductor, collaborated in this project.¹ The three choirs were an adult choral

¹The concert formed part of a series of commemorative events marking the 100th anniversary of the landing of Australian and New Zealand forces in Gallipoli during World War I. The date was also chosen specifically to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

society, a university student choir and a group of secondary school choristers. In this article the process of collaboration is examined from the perspectives of the conductors of the orchestras and the three choirs. The practical challenges of combining forces and other factors are also explored. Participation in a performance of a large-scale work such as Britten's War Requiem can be a transformative experience for a young musician. Moreover, if the collaborative process is successful, participants' desire to engage in further musical collaboration will be evident. The aim of this case study was to find out how the conductors perceived the collaborative process both for themselves and their four groups, involving different generations of musicians, by interviewing them before and after the performance.

Collaboration

Musical collaboration combines resources, human and otherwise, to achieve what cannot be done in isolation. Britten's War Requiem has to be performed by a variety of groups, unlikely to exist within a single organisation. Large-scale performances can provide rich and meaningful experiences for musicians that are memorable. Musicians – especially young singers and players – are likely to find performing the work memorable not because the organisers set out deliberately to create a musical experience of epic proportions but because it is, necessarily, a large-scale event in which individuals take part in something much bigger than themselves (McCoy, 2000), and in which they may undergo changes as a result. As Beckman and Graves (1997) point out, “[c]ollaborative performances involve the understanding of compositional intent and something equally or even more challenging: mutual respect” (p. 20). Large-scale musical collaborations demand a high level of mutual respect as they draw on the assets and abilities of the members of all the groups involved. They can have positive effects on music teachers, students and the wider school community:

A central issue for all involved in the musical education of young people, is how to connect the three contexts of the school, home and community to enhance positive attitudes towards music making, to build on existing opportunities to engage in music making, and to bring together the wealth of music activity, resources and expertise (Temmerman, 2005, p. 118).

If respect is not mutual between the members of the groups that constitute the whole ensemble the benefits of collaboration may not be fully realised. In addition, it can be challenging to mount large-scale events involving different constituent parties each with their own aims:

Collaborations take time. They're messy. They're sometimes frustrating. Yet collaborations enable us to undertake projects of a scope that might be impossible for an individual to do alone. Collaborative projects often evolve with a degree of richness that individual efforts cannot achieve (McCoy, 2000, p. 39).

The present study involved choirs from the community, a university and a school. Echoing Beckman and Graves (1997, cited above), research into the social, mental and physical health benefits of community music organisations involving older people suggests that, in order for intergenerational collaborations to be successful, mutual respect needs to be established between groups to dissipate stereotypes and lay the foundation for a positive experience between groups (Joseph & Southcott, 2014). Universities with large, flourishing music programmes are well positioned to enable these positive musical exchanges and

community arts centres can to establish relationships with schools. Bowell (2014) reports, for example, that “some cultural centres have become cultural brokers, co-ordinating and instigating arts-based projects within their local communities” (Bowell, 2014, p. 3).

If the collaborative process is a positive experience for the participants, partnerships are likely to be sustained. Schippers and Letts (2013) observe that “the key to sustainability rests with the profound connections among those involved in the various components of music making” (p. 287). Conversely negative experiences of collaboration could result in participants’ lack of interest in engaging in future joint projects.

Intergenerational music making

Purposeful intergenerational engagement focused on a shared activity can break down generations’ stereotypical ideas about each other, build respect and understanding, and contribute to the development of a more harmonious and understanding society. Intergenerational music making has many and varied benefits. According to Bowers (1998),

...attitudes of senior citizens and university students can be affected by positive interaction between intergenerational singers. Stereotypical attitudes between the young and old can be affected, it seems, when opportunities to know and appreciate other generations are provided’ (p. 16).

In their case study, Beynon and Alfano (2013) describe the process:

Normally these groups would not associate socially, but as the older singers interact with the younger singers in choir in rehearsals and in social settings ... the boundaries of age are blurred. They realize that the stereotypes of the younger generation that they subconsciously develop are challenged by their conversations and musical sharing; likewise, the intimidation that the younger singers feel about communicating with the older singers is broken down (p. 126).

The benefits of intergenerational music-making are not just social. It can create new, opportunities that are different from musicians’ usual activities and are therefore potentially challenging. It is not necessarily the case, therefore, that all collaborations produce benefits for the individual performer. To be memorable for the right reasons, the collaboration has to offer the possibility of high-quality music making: “As intergenerational music programs continue to develop, there should be a continued focus on a quality musical experience for all participants” (Bowers, 1998, p. 7). In such programs students can work in new environments with unfamiliar conductors alongside experienced, adult musicians. These factors can be critical in the students’ development as musicians:

To share the stage with accomplished, even professional, musicians performing a large work for orchestra and adult choir is an exciting, memorable experience for a children’s choir. The challenges are dramatically different from the weekly repertoire for the youth choir (Lana, 2008, p. 48).

Limited research has been undertaken on musical collaborations involving school ensembles, using quantitative and mixed methods to observe the attitudes of participant musicians (Conway & Hodgman, 2008; Weinstein et al., 2016). The present case study of an intergenerational musical collaboration uses a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of musical leaders from each group, reported before and after the performance, seeking to establish the factors that allow for successful performance collaborations between musical groups of different generations.

METHOD

Background

In the latter part of 2014, the head of the School of Music (SoM) at an Australian university contacted the conductor of an adult choral society (CS) to invite him to contribute to a performance of Britten's *War Requiem*. There are no formal connections between the SoM and CS although they have collaborated in the past. The SoM at the university is one of two tertiary music institutions in the city and focuses on the study of Western art music. It has a student symphony orchestra, a symphonic chorus involving voice students and other music students, a symphonic wind ensemble and other musical ensembles. The symphony orchestra is often conducted by the Head of School although other conductors take responsibility for particular seasons. CS was established in 1931 and consists of around 100 amateur choral enthusiasts. They have been conducted by their present conductor since 2011 and regularly perform large, choral works in Austral Hall², often with orchestras and soloists.

The head of the SoM then contacted the head of music from a secondary school with a specialist music programme and attended a meeting with the music staff to pitch the idea of collaboration. Initially, the head of the SoM suggested that the students in the school orchestra would take part but it was decided instead that a group of volunteer school students would rehearse the children's chorus at lunch times under the supervision of a music teacher who works at the school in a part-time capacity.

The children's chorus rehearsed twice a week for eight weeks until week of the performance; CS, the symphonic chorus and the combined symphony and chamber orchestras each rehearsed once a week for four weeks until the week of the performance when the four groups met in the venue for the first time and rehearsed together intensively for three days. Since time was at a premium there were few opportunities for social interaction or attention to particular details of the score. The three soloists rehearsed with the choirs and orchestras for the first time on the evening of the third day; there was a run-through on the fourth day and the performance took place the same evening.

Choice of methodological approach

Phenomenological case studies use a qualitative, idiographic approach to investigate a phenomenon, in depth, from the participant's perspective. In this case the phenomenon was the experiences of four participants involved in a musical collaboration. Data were subject to interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which is "concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience ... it aims to conduct this examination in a way which as far as possible enables that experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 32). It was also chosen because the participants are known to the researcher and an element of contextual understanding allowed for a more focussed approach to data collection and subsequent analysis: "it requires a process of engagement and interpretation on the part of the researcher and this ties IPA to a hermeneutic perspective" (Smith, 2010,

²Austral Hall (a pseudonym) is a large multi-purpose venue suitable for large-scale concert events on the university campus. It has a capacity of roughly 1000 people and has an extendable stage with tiered seating for around 150 choristers and a large, three-manual pipe organ.

p. 10). The participants were interviewed during the two weeks before and two weeks after the event. The longitudinal aspect of the study enabled the researcher to explore the extent to which perceptions of the event changed over time (Yin, 2009).

Procedure

The performance of Britten's *War Requiem* took place in August 2015. Two sets of interviews were arranged; the first set took place during the two weeks before the concert and the second set took place during the two weeks after the concert. The same open-ended questions were posed to allow the participants to reflect on their answers, which sometimes generated subsequent questions to explore the issues more fully. Pre-concert questions included:

- What is your role in this collaboration project?
- What challenges have you encountered with this collaboration so far?
- Have there been any benefits for your students being involved in this performance?
- Is there anything you would do differently if you undertook another collaboration project?

Post-concert questions included:

- Do you think your students benefited from the collaboration experience?
- Would you consider another collaboration performance for your students in the future?
- If you had not participated in this collaboration, what kind of activity would your ensemble have done instead?
- What advice would you give to music educators considering a collaborative performance project?

I recorded the interviews and transcribed them verbatim. I then read the transcripts repeatedly, relying on my own close understanding of musical collaborations to identify emergent themes, according the richness of the meaning of the ideas expressed and the emphasis placed on them by the participant or the number of times they were repeated, and annotated them in the right-hand margin of each transcript. Following Pringle et al. (2011), who write that inferences drawn using IPA "need to be firmly rooted in what the participants are actually saying, with direct quotes being used widely to substantiate findings" (p. 21), the themes are illustrated in what follows using the participants' own words.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following important themes emerged from the interview data: Challenges; Communication; Empathy and respect; Peer learning; and Being memorable. These themes are addressed in turn.

Challenges

The obstacles that were presented when staging this performance were varied and considerable, and are discussed under five sub-headings.

Funding

The decision to go ahead with the performance could not take place until the necessary funding had been obtained by the university. Ben explained, "We thought we were putting it on but we didn't know because of a funding situation." The delay in making the decision had a knock-on effect for other administrative tasks and then rehearsals. He continued: Those scores arrived incredibly late, so I had two rehearsals in our first semester with them. Then there was a seven week break between semesters. We've come back and we're now in week three and I've had three rehearsals with them and next week is the performance...I've had the equivalent of about six rehearsals at this point on Britten's *War Requiem* which is exceptionally difficult and that's through no fault of ours, it's through funding situations.

Musical complexity

The music itself was a considerable challenge. Ben noted the difficulty with his double role of preparing the university chorus and singing the baritone solo role:

...learning notes for starters but actually [being] vocally healthy, doing that while preparing the chorus so when it comes to the actual performance night, I have to balance, how do I warm them up while maintaining my own composure and get myself organised?

Following the concert, Ben reflected that he was unhappy about his own performance, "only just because I didn't have enough time to prepare it as I wanted." Denise also felt unsatisfied with her contribution during the performance, saying, "I did not nail my conducting. I cannot think of a time in fifteen years that I did not prepare myself fully. It's so bizarre, it's so not me." Ben commented further on the difficulty of the *War Requiem*: "Musically this is a difficult piece and it's a different musical language to what most of us are used to, it's not your typical Western Art Music, it's a bit crunch-chordy." This description of the dissonances found in Britten's score was echoed by Lorenzo who stated, "...it's just a very difficult piece. The choral singing in particular is really angular." Denise discussed the musical challenges for the children's chorus, reflecting, "...they were really shocked, they just couldn't make head nor tail of it." Denise found the music quite different to the normal choral repertoire she would work on with her students and noted a need for a change in approach: "When I teach repertoire here I would usually use *sol-fa*. Some of them are used to me working that way and teaching repertoire that way and I haven't felt able to do that."

Limited preparation time

The musical challenges of the work were compounded by the lack of time. Denise stated: "It felt like we didn't get enough of a chance to rehearse anything much beyond learning the notes and singing them in tune." and that "it wasn't perfect, it was far from perfect." Denise felt that participating in this large-scale event was difficult for her as she only works two days each week at the school. In considering whether she would seek out further

collaboration experiences she observed that “doing this collaboration made me realise that I’m not full-time any more and to take on a project like this part-time is actually not ideal. I wouldn’t actively seek anything out for a year or two.” She elaborated further, “...right this minute, it’s challenging for me to get in here. Next week I’ve got to organise a bus, excursion forms...when am I going to do that?”

Spatial issues of the venue

Further challenges emerged relating to the venue for the performance. The university that provided funding for the event stipulated that it must occur in Austral Hall. Lorenzo explained that despite the generous dimensions of the hall, the orchestra and the choirs would not fit on the stage:

We looked at a whole bunch of options including the back of the hall and having the audience face the other direction but in the end we decided that instead of having what would have been a quadruple thrust stage, we would have had to get extra staging in. We’re going to put the orchestra on the ground and we’re going to lose seats in the auditorium.

Intergenerational issues

Before the performance Lorenzo predicted that the children’s chorus would have difficulty staying awake for the relatively late night that was required of them:

I think a bigger problem for the children’s choir is that if this performance starts at 7:30pm, by the time we’ve finished it’s going to be getting towards 9:15pm. How’s their concentration going to be?

Following the event, Denise confirmed Lorenzo’s concerns: “Unfortunately on the night I had students battling to stay awake and I think for me that took away a bit from enjoying the music.” Generally Denise had found that working with young choristers and adults presented different challenges particularly in relation to illness. She recalled several instances:

I had a girl ill... her eyes were rolling back in her head and she couldn’t sit on the chair... then she walked off. When I came out she was nowhere to be found. ... When you’re working with adults, you don’t deal with it but if you’ve got a group of kids... I was ringing mum, I called the mum in, the kid was recovering, the mum went home, then by the time I came back, the kid was ill and so you’re trying to make sure they’re all quiet because the other director [conductor] is trying to talk to their adults over here and mine are like this [hand signs indicating talking].

Denise was the only teacher from her school accompanying the children on the night of the performance. The lack of collegial support in a supervisory capacity undoubtedly added to the pressure she encountered on the night.

Communication

The theme of communication emerged strongly and was discussed positively by three of the participants but the fourth participant experienced a disconnection between herself and the other conductors. David felt that the communication between the conductors was successful: “We all work really well together and so that’s been no problem at all.” David and Ben created opportunities for the two choirs to attend the other’s rehearsals and Ben

worked with David's choir on two occasions, which further developed the close communication between them. David continued,

[Ben] and I have a fairly consistent attitude to the way we prepare a chorus and in particular the way that we work with this piece. We also made sure that we had time between the two of us to sit down and go through the score and actually discuss particular approaches to certain things; the way the semi-chorus is being treated between the two choirs, the way the divided parts were being treated between the two choirs, what version of the Latin we would sing...

Ben values clear and effective communication in the collaborative process, suggesting that other potential collaborators:

...just have a quick, little check in, even if it's a five-minute phone conversation and to keep a running list of things. ... I think this aspect of really planning it early and not being afraid to keep going over the same old ground just to make sure that the various parties are really on the same page...I think it gets a better musical result.

Denise did not experience the same level of effective communication as the other conductors. Before the event, Lorenzo noted, "[School] children's choir, frankly I haven't seen them yet and I feel like... and I'm sure they'll tell you, they're feeling a little bit ignored... the whole thing is barrelling towards us at a rate of knots and organisationally we're struggling." The decision to have Denise conduct the children's chorus was communicated less than two weeks before the performance. As Lorenzo explained,

Today I was thinking, 'I've got to get out to [the school]', because actually now that I've been studying the score, it's likely that we're going to need a [school] children's choir [conductor] to conduct the children's choir for at least a portion of the *finale* where the whole orchestra stops and the choir goes off on a different tempo.

Lorenzo was keenly aware that communication with the school had not been effective. He continued, "...that's where I need to ring [the school] up and say, 'Can we help? Do I need to come out? Do you feel on top of it?'" Lorenzo also said, "I think the communication issue with [the school] is an issue, we need to resolve that quickly." Nevertheless, he did not visit the school to resolve the communication issue adequately. If there were any inconsistencies between the expectations of the different groups or their musical interpretations, these would emerge in the first rehearsal, which Lorenzo identified as being a high-pressure situation due to lack of time.

Ben was also aware of this issue before the performance. As he explained, "I've been asked to go to [the school] to work with the boys [*sic*] and I just physically don't have time to do it, so that's an issue but that was a strategic decision to say, 'Well okay, it's not vital.'" The children's choir consisted of girls rather than boys. Despite this, Ben felt, before the event, that communication between parties was successful: "I don't think we'd do anything differently. We did what we had to do which is get together early to talk about who's doing what." After the performance, however, he said:

I think some of that could have been fixed up from a collaborative point of view had there been more attention to detail or time spent on certain elements... the kids' choir; incorrect Latin, incorrect time signatures, 5/4s ended up being 6/4s that had to be corrected in the final rehearsal. ... It was a little bit unsteady in the performance but it's okay. The Latin in the kids' [*sic*] was just wrong, 'per-pe-chew-a', and 'loo-chay-at.'

Denise felt that communication was not as effective as it could have been in the early

stages of the project. Describing the major challenges, she noted:

Probably communication-wise. For a little while there, getting it off the ground I think... it was a little bit slow-going to get information. ... You can send an email or you can leave a message but the person might not be in their office for a few days and then they need to consult with someone else and then they get back to you and it can take quite a while.

When asked about the prospect of working with older people, Denise revealed that she was not aware this was a component of the project:

They don't know anything about that yet because I didn't know... I can tell them that today because today will be the first time I see them since I chatted with [Lorenzo] so I can tell them, 'these are the other groups that you can expect to see on the day.'

That Denise did not know which groups were involved in the project suggests a disconnection with the process. This disconnection was manifest when Denise arrived at the dress rehearsal and the organist accompanying their sections had not been called. This had implications for their ability to be involved in the rehearsal. Denise elaborated as follows:

We had a call on Saturday at 4:30pm, so I had all the kids come in then but really they weren't required to sing and then I was sort of there supervising them until the performance and it makes for a much longer day when you have the kids there until late at night...it would have been great to have a particular musician there... then we could have rehearsed with him, seeing I had all the kids there at 4:30pm, it would have been good to be able to rehearse then. [The organist] Yeah, so he wasn't called which is fine but seeing as we were there, that's 40 people, just one extra person would have made a big difference but I didn't think to check.

Although Denise was not responsible for contracting any of the musicians, she reflected that her role in communication was something she felt would improve in future collaborations: "Working with someone external to your own school, I'll be more aware next time, just to check that stuff; that it all marries up." Denise suggests that this oversight was hers although she had not been responsible for employing the organist or any other musician to be at the other rehearsals or performance. The oversight resulted in students being called to a rehearsal for which they were not needed. They then spent three hours at the venue before the concert unnecessarily which may have contributed to them being tired.

Communication was an important factor regarding not having satisfactory access to the venue in the week of the performance. Lorenzo summed up the circumstances best:

There are exams in there on Thursday and Friday and part of it is because the guy who booked the hall wasn't in the School of Music, was an idiot and didn't book a rehearsal time at all and it wasn't until two months later that we went back and said, 'You have got us booked in for the Friday haven't you?' We had to scramble to get the Wednesday night. So those things make it tough and I think that's the thing I'm going to regret the most because we're just not going to have enough time.

Lorenzo and the other participants indicated that effective and clear communication in collaborations can have direct outcomes in the musical performance. The transcripts suggest that communication was clear between three of the participants but that there were manifest musical and logistical problems for Denise.

Empathy and respect

This performance project involved three generations of musicians (school children,

students, community singers) and the way in which the different demographic groups worked together emerged in each of the transcripts as being important. Although the average age of the overall ensemble was not a critical factor in the social cohesion of the project, age-related differences ultimately affected both process and product. Lorenzo discussed the manifestly different aims of the groups attributable to their demographic characteristics:

...it's not only the different age groups; what I think is more difficult is, the different aims of the ensembles...it's a student group that's trying to be a professional group... CS is an amateur choir... that's a different approach because you need to keep the choir happy or else they will stop coming to rehearsals...being a high school group; completely different again because they're teaching different things from the ones that we're teaching.

Lorenzo reflected on what can happen if the approach of the conductor does not suit the demographic of the group, observing:

I've seen a collaboration before with another conductor...he just yelled and screamed at CS, it was just really nasty and I thought, '...if you did that with university [kids] it could be effective, but with CS, you could see then shutting down, the more screaming that you did.' With that group, because of their aims, that's not the way you get the best performance out of them.

This observation suggests that when groups of different ages with different aims are collaborating, careful consideration needs to be given to effective communication. For David, the project suited the aim of his group perfectly:

The aim [...] is...to raise the professionalism of the choir, just to speed up their learning process, give them a better understanding of music in general and the music that they're singing and then hopefully we will have a faster and more interesting rehearsal period and then hopefully, better performances.

He understood that the experience of collaboration with highly skilled music students from the university enhanced the experience for his choristers in the CS and was a motivational factor for them. He also suggested that the university students benefited from collaborating with his more experienced and senior musicians, noting that "there might be something that the university students get from seeing people who are at different stages of their life as still involved in music. I think that's important." Yet seeing older musicians does not equate to collaborating with them successfully, to develop intergenerational understanding. Ben discussed the differences between the university choir and CS members' experiences of collaboration, observing:

I think in particular with that age gap, where the average age [of CS] is sixty plus, I think that was really quite empowering for CS, so I think they actually got immense benefit from it. ... The average age is sixty-something so their voices are comparatively past it. They don't have anywhere near your musical training skills, but that doesn't mean they are not of value.

Ben discussed the collaboration with his university students after the performance, saying, "There was a fair bit of frustration about being with CS ... You've got fuller, older, richer voices, arguably a bit more musically inaccurate and arguably a bit more wobbly because they're largely older people." Ben's perception of the mature members of the CS may have been reflected in the attitude of the university students to the adult singers. Lorenzo elaborated on a perceived tension between the two choirs:

...mixing very experienced community choir singers with what are essentially semi-professional musicians, there's a frustration in that relationship always because CS don't watch quite as much as they should and CS think the kids are whipper-snappers and sometimes inclined to push the CS group around a little bit, which they are.

Although there was no indication of organised social interaction leading to a respect for intergenerational differences, Ben suggested that the older choristers benefited musically from joint rehearsals with the university students:

To watch...I'll call them seniors and I mean that in a positive sense, come along and work with our students, and at the end of it come up and say, "thank you so much... I was a bit worried and now I've been to these extra rehearsals and working with the young people, I'm really enjoying this, I'm really getting into it."

David argued that musical collaborations can prove difficult if participating groups are not benefiting equally: "...you would need to make sure that all the constituent groups were getting the same out of it that everyone else was getting out of it."

The collaborative process was experienced very differently by the children's choir. They did not participate in activities that brought them together with the other musicians prior to the rehearsals during the week of the concert. Denise noted, "While I was in the midst of it I became very aware that the group I was working with was a group of young high school students and the groups everyone else were working with were adults." When discussing musical situations in which two groups were being addressed in different ways, David observed, "So you'd need to be careful in this environment to make sure that neither party felt like they were the ones who were just tagging along." All four participants suggested that this was actually what occurred. As Lorenzo noted in relation to communicating with much younger musicians, "I found it quite difficult to ensure that what I was saying to the choir was in the appropriate language for them to understand what I was trying to say."

Peer learning

Lorenzo expressed the view that students benefit from making music with peers who have more advanced skills and spoke of this process taking place in a previous university/school collaboration. He explained,

For that event we have the ability for our students to help the younger students play the music so there's a capability gap that's being bridged in performing the music. We would have done a better musical performance on our own but by having the collaboration in, we could do a really interesting performance that involved a lot more students and they can get a lot more out of it.

He also discussed one of the practical benefits of peer learning within the context of collaboration, explaining that many music students

are going to become teachers that deal with younger students and understand what's going on and for them they get to have this inspiring experience of doing repertoire that they could never do before so that's a collaboration that's about lifting skills from their end and from our end doing something about pedagogy.

In some instances, the peer learning that took place in the *War Requiem* performance had an inspirational effect on the students. Lorenzo said:

The children's choir when [the soprano soloist] sang were just transfixed. She was singing behind them and they all turned around to look and their eyes were huge. ... I think that's

something most of those kids will carry for the rest of their lives.

Ben also noted that the experience of making music with the more advanced university students was beneficial for the younger school students, explaining that “they’re working with a higher level of student and you watch the school kids actually go, ‘Oh, here we go’, and they step up quite a deal as opposed to working with another school where they may be a better standard.” He observed effective peer learning taking place between the university singers and CS choristers in the rehearsals: “I’ve noticed the odd one sort of just leaning across and singing a little bit more directly into the other person’s ear when they’re getting a wrong note in a polite way which I think is great.” He also noted, however, that the process of peer learning was not always enjoyable and successful:

The CS, there were lots of things that undermined the things I had been working on and I know that (a) because I’ve watched them, and (b) because I know [David] very well because we work together in other projects. I know he’s said the same thing to these people over and over again about where consonants go and it actually undermined the performance I thought quite a bit in spots. I felt had some of my senior students not been there, there would have been some major derailments with people with their head in the scores and either racing ahead or lagging behind.

Despite the musical challenges of the collaboration, Ben felt that the process was important, saying, “It’s really important for our students to both receive from other groups and give back.” He noted that all the musicians were learning from more experienced peers regardless of the stage they were at in their musical development. As he explained to his students:

Don’t underestimate the value you bring to these students by your presence because they look up to you because you’re three/four years ahead of them. They’re aspiring to be you. You’re watching [the soloists]; you’re aspiring to be them.

David felt that his adult choristers learned a great deal from their university student counterparts: “...they’ve been impressed by how quick the kids are at pitching the notes and reading their rhythms and actually getting on top of all those musical aspects.” He thought his singers would take the experience with them into the future, suggesting “...well this is how professional young music students go about learning their music and maybe this is how we can go about it in our community choir context.” More generally:

You sit on a stage with a fantastic singer or you stand in a choir with people who you’ve not stood beside in a choir before and you’re going to hear some of the things that they do and it’s going to change some of the things that you do.

Denise suggested that the school students would probably see university student musicians who had attended their school and that a meaningful experience would result. She said, “They would probably see them as being some elite students from here and now they’re involved and I’m involved too. That would be a bit of kudos for them.” After the performance she noted, ‘Apart from their own self-esteem, to be involved with groups that they perceived to be just outstanding musicians...the opportunity to work with people like that and musicians of that calibre; the directors and the musicians, to hear the soloists.’”

Being memorable

The decision to perform the *War Requiem* involved several factors including the appropriate

timing of the commemoration of the ANZAC events. Lorenzo reflected on why the piece was so important to him personally:

This work has a very special place in my heart and even thinking about it, it makes me all *verklemt* [overcome with emotion]. I first heard this work on the night of the Oklahoma City bombing. It just happened to be on in Indiana...what I remember is thinking about that bombing on CNN...there was a fireman walking out of the rubble, holding a baby and the baby was dead, arms were hanging...and I went to see the *War Requiem* that night and when they got to that Wilfred Owen poem that is about Abraham bringing his child to sacrifice and then God comes down and says, 'You don't need to sacrifice your child'. There wasn't a dry eye in the house. It was an incredibly moving moment and for me that's always made the work a really moving piece.

Lorenzo felt that the performance of the *War Requiem* would be memorable because of the size of the forces required, suggesting that "The ones they remember, and speaking from my own experience, are always the big collaborations ... Just bringing together that many people is exciting." He also discussed the suitability of the work for the occasion:

This is my chance to do something big and exciting so there's a bit of personal in it, there's a bit of musical in it and I can think of no work that better reflects the horror, the grandeur, the massive nature of war than this work.

Due to the difficulty of the music and the cost of staging performances of such large works, the *War Requiem* is seldom performed in smaller cities. According to Lorenzo, this would contribute to the memorability of the concert: "There's a good chance that for 90% of the people who do the *War Requiem* in a couple of weeks' time, that will be the only time they will ever do the *War Requiem*." Ben concurred with this view, adding, "Kids in [the school] will remember this experience in 35 years' time when they're lawyers, accountants, GP's, council workers, whatever and they go to a concert. I remember the first time I sang with a big orchestra, it becomes a life-changing experience for them." And he also observed the emotional effect of the conclusion of the performance:

[Lorenzo] stops the whole piece, paused with his hands up as one expects to do with that sort of solemnity, then gradually puts his hands down. While he was doing that I snuck a look at the audience to see what they were doing and no-one wanted to move. Even when he put his hands down completely and it wasn't until he shuffled a little bit on the podium and half turned around that people wanted to applaud.

Ben's observation supports the idea that the performance was as memorable for the audience as for the participating musicians. David discussed the impact of performing such a large work:

...to feel like it's gone as well as it could have gone but you're also happy that you're now moving on because you inhabit a piece of music like that. ... You spent months learning it, you spent months preparing it, you go through that excitement of the last couple of weeks and then when it's done you kind of miss it and you are also relieved that you don't have to think about it any more.

For Denise, it was the lead-up to the performance that made it memorable: "I feel excited. I'm excited for the kids because they are so positive... they think they're quite special." After the performance, she reflected on the enthusiasm of her school students, describing their sense of importance in being involved in such a project:

...they possibly sensed that their bits were important and the huge amount of other

performers were all listening to them... they were contributing and when they had their bit, they were very important.

This sense of importance was not diminished because of the comparatively small size of the group. Rather, Denise felt it contributed to memorability of the event for the young musicians.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The performance of the *War Requiem* resulted in a number of benefits for all the groups involved. The children's choir and CS experienced a surge in enthusiasm and participation rates were higher than usual: Denise had expected there to be a reduction in the number of children taking part but this did not occur, and David reported that retention of choristers was unusually high for the time of the year, despite the challenging nature of the music. There were, however, inconsistencies between the experiences of the conductor of the children's choir, on the one hand, and the other three conductors, on the other. Nevertheless, they all felt that the experience of being part of a large group of performers, around 250 in all, did not diminish but rather enhanced each individual's sense of their own importance.

The musicians' experiences of working with different conductors besides their own regular conductor and being exposed to alternative musical ideas enhanced their understanding of the work, and potentially their musical learning more generally. At the same time, they were learning from each other, either as the result of direct instruction or more indirectly through observation. Exposure to a range of learning situations helped participants master a difficult work and may have contributed to the memorability of the performance for them.

The disconnection between the conductor of the children's choir and the other conductors was evident in the performance. Communication was lacking throughout the preparation process resulting in the failure to inform Denise fully of the details of the project. When questioned in the first interview about working with older musicians she expressed surprise because she did not know that CS were participating. Denise was the only participant to express insecurity about her involvement in the project, and when asked about future collaborations after the performance responded with uncertainty and little enthusiasm. The experience of turning up to the rehearsal with around forty children aged 12 to discover they could not rehearse as the organist had not been called may have increased her sense of disconnection. Denise reflected on her involvement in the first rehearsal and felt personally unready. She also felt that her students were equally under-prepared. Denise was not enthusiastic about collaborating in the future. When asked about pursuing further collaborative experiences, she responded "I wouldn't actively seek anything out." Large-scale performance collaborations clearly require significant commitment and taking a leadership role while working part-time can be difficult. Similarly, Ben felt that his own performance was compromised by his failure to prepare adequately for his dual roles as conductor and singer. Increased social bonding may take place in large groups (Weinstein et al, 2016) but the present case study produced no consistent evidence for intergenerational social integration. This may be because, while Conway and Hodgman (2008) observed in their study of an intergenerational collaborative choir project that

“...singers in both groups were seemingly more comfortable singing next to singers from their own groups, and they believed that more time rehearsing in the ‘mixed formation’ would make the experience more comfortable” (p. 234), the university choir and CS in the present study did not sit in mixed formation. Frustrations could have been avoided and musical experiences could have had more impact if time had been spent considering social cohesion between musicians before the groups came together.

Although the present study is limited by the specific circumstances of the project and the personalities involved, musical collaborations between groups from different institutions, of different ages and with different aims, may be informed by the findings reported above. Future research could compare the experiences of participant choristers and musical leaders.

Conclusions

Collaborative performances are exciting for many reasons. They allow musical groups to come together to perform works that cannot be given by isolated groups. They provide opportunities for singers and players to experience music in new ways. In some cases, however, even large-scale collaborations producing meaningful, memorable and powerful performances could be fairer and more inclusive.

In the case of collaborations seeking intergenerational integration, an environment of respect and understanding needs to be engineered with care, by ensuring that each group is aware of the role played by the others before they start working together. In the present study all four participants clearly articulated frustration at missing an opportunity for intergenerational understanding: the attempt to establish social cohesion was made in hindsight by expressing the benefits of working with other groups only after the event.

The study sought to establish the factors that allow for successful performance collaborations between musical groups of different generations. The following factors emerged from the interview data: overcoming logistical challenges, empathy and respect between participants, peer-learning between participants and the memorable nature of the event.

University outreach to schools involving music is highly commendable because it can provide all participants with positive experiences. In response to Temmerman (2005), who wrote, “Conceivably, what appears to be most lacking is an organisational structure or mechanism to bring together in a meaningful way the abundance of expertise, skills and good music practice that exists in the various sectors at the individual artists, arts organisations and school level” (p. 119), it can be argued that the impact of outreach is maximised when participants are equal partners and communication between them is effective. If future collaborative performance projects such as the one described here are to be undertaken, it is important that the impetus comes from the organisational structure Temmerman suggests rather than from a single individual. It would not be difficult to improve the process of collaboration by incorporating the recommendations emerging from the interview data, but it is important to do so if the experience of taking part is to be beneficial for all.

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