

CONDUCTORS NON- VERBAL AND VERBAL TECHNIQUES TOWARDS BETTER MUSIC INTERPRETATIONS AND EXPRESSIONS

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Abstract

The expressiveness of music are coloured by several fundamental elements such as: musical instruments, music skills, music arrangements, and the conductor himself. Inspiring expressivity from the young musician is probably the most challenging part in expressive music making when compared to professional musicians. However, previous researches have shown that there are common techniques implemented by professional conductors and band directors to enhance the expressiveness of their orchestra. This research focuses on techniques that are commonly used by professional conductors towards inspiring musicians in conducting expressive music performance. Video observations and analysis were made based on three eminent conductors during rehearsals. Data from the video analysis showed that non-verbal and verbal instructions such as expressive voices were mainly used throughout the rehearsals. Also evident were expressive voice and actions which were frequently used in enabling the musicians to have a clear understanding and feelings of the piece. Moreover, the use of appropriate metaphorical languages with appropriate movements, facial gestures and expressive voices are crucial if the musicians do not deliver the music as instructed for the first time. The research shows that, the use of expressive voice, singing, demonstrations of sound, facial gestures, hand flow, and acting are regularly used by all the three experts, mainly with student musicians.

Key Words: Conducting, expressivity, facial gestures, metaphorical languages, expressive voices, expressive performance.

Introduction.

The study was carried out in a Malaysian Education University that offers a 4-year degree in music program to train secondary school music teachers. The program incorporate courses such as teaching methodologies, music theories, band managements, instrumental ensembles, conducting, music arrangements, instrumental pedagogies and music performances which are designed to generate capable and competent music educators with the ability to apply current knowledge, and efficient teaching practices in diverse teaching situations. However, it is observed that most of the music students demonstrated limitations in search of credible music interpretations and expressions from members of the instrumental ensemble. The goals of this study is to identify the verbal and non- verbal instructions employed by renown professional music conductors during their orchestra rehearsals. Videos of these renown conductors were selected based on the research requirements and data were carefully observed, analysed, categorized, and transcribed. It is hoped that the findings of this study could enrich the music educators' skills and knowledge

of verbal and non- verbal instructions that are useful in inspiring musicians for better music interpretations and expressions.

Statement of the Problem

Most music student teachers from the university demonstrated inadequacy in music interpretation and expressive instructions. Documents from previous observations of the student teachers' teaching practices showed that they had difficulty employing expressive verbal communication such as the use of expressive voices, appropriate metaphorical language as well as suitable movements and facial gestures towards inspiring the ensemble members for credible music interpretations and expressions. These matters have been internationally reported among music teacher trainees (Henry & Rohwer, 2004; Miksza, Boeder & Biggs, 2010). Therefore, this study is undertaken to identify the verbal and non-verbal instructions by several prominent music conductors of the world on videos through a systematic and sequential procedure. According to Berz (2005) music educators have done an excellent job in developing student teachers' skills and knowledge in music but lack the aesthetic practices in conveying the expressiveness of the music. These young music teachers must be trained on how to balance between the technical mastery and artistic aspects of music teaching particularly in terms of the approach to music interpretation and expressivity. Music educators who fail to inspire the artistic and expressive aspects of the music must not expect their student musicians to demonstrate expressive performances (Berz, 2005; Laukka, 2004 ;Miksza et al., 2010).

Deficiencies on the Evidence

There has been rising interest in the emotional features of musical interpretation, with a number of researches assessing teachers' efficiencies in inspiring the expressions of students (Broomhead, 2005; Juslin & Laukka, 2004; Woody,2000, 2006). Woody (2006) assessed the efficiencies of aural modelling, practicing verbal instructions with metaphor and verbal instructions in demonstrating concrete musical expressions. Hill (2003) investigated the practices of music educators demonstrations on expressive interpretations. Juslin, Karlsson, Lindstrom, Friberg, and Schoonderwaldt (2006) conducted a research on computer response that highlighted the musical messages of human emotions. However, this study meant to observe and analyze the process of inspiring musicians through verbal and non- verbal skills of the conductors to effectively communicate emotional characteristics of music to enhance the expressiveness of the repertoire.

Definition of Terms

1. Music Expression. The inspiration, feelings, emotions and sensation of a performer of student musicians who deliver it through performance(Laukka, 2004).
2. Music Interpretation. Understanding the connection of the written music and the inner meaning of a music before deciding on how to accomplish them in an artistic style (Lane, 2006).
3. Non verbal Aural Modelling and Imitation. Woody (1999; 2006) defined this as the use of significant motion or movement, indicating musical sounds on music instruments, and listening to music recordings which aim to instruct how to achieve relevant techniques and expression.

Literature Review

The Training of Pre-service Teachers in Music Education

In terms of successful music teaching, researchers found that numerous pre-service music teachers and music educators stated that realistic teaching competency is the most essential skill as compared to other factors (Henry & Rohwer, 2004; Wayman, 2005). Furthermore the instruction of emotion and other concealed aspects of music have contributed to the progress of music education particularly in improving ones' own student musicianship (Berz, 2005; Woody, 2006). As a result, many researchers have examined various causes leading to this situation. According to Juslin and Laukka (2004), studies about emotions in music have currently become a trendy research whereby the teaching of music interpretation and expression remains a challenging task for music educators (Johnson, 2007; Juslin & Laukka, 2004).

Teaching the implicit meaning of music by the music educators seemed to have a negative impact to trainee music teachers which in turn have lead to uncertainty in practicing efficient instruction skills and knowledge (Hasten & Guerrero, 2008; Laukka, 2004; Miksza et al., 2010). Additionally, some music educators have questioned their own competencies to teach music due to lack of sufficient preparation and training (Hasten & Guerrero, 2008; Ward, 2007). Current employers need teacher who are equipped with adequate training to face the "challenges and complexities of the years" (Bartell, 2005; p.145). Therefore, educators must prepare young teachers to instruct effectively, and assign qualified mentors to support their professional growth. (Bartell, 2005; Hasten & Guerrero, 2008). It has been revealed that poor and insufficient training of music teachers caused unenthusiastic effect on the music students in schools (Tobin, 2006; Smith, 2004). According to Dennis (2006) training for pre-service teachers includes essential courses in music as well as methodology of teaching music and it requires some time for the pre-service teachers to become successful music educators.

Verbal instruction

Woody (1999) mentioned that students who are able to verbally illuminate expressive descriptions into visualizing solid musical properties are expected to present better interpretations in their musical performances. Expressive statements and instructions are valuable by which the emotions of the conductor can be understood and inspire student musicians. Professional music conductors use expressive communications of which metaphorical languages may be adopted to help student musicians understand and capture the implicit meaning of the music pieces (McCallum, 2007; 28 Woody 2006). Arrais and Rodrigues (2007) suggested that using metaphorical words is important to teaching and developing expressive instruction experiences of pre-service music teachers. Woody (2006) revealed that verbal instruction unites with the mental imaginary and metaphorical languages to express moods and to elevate motion of a performance. It is crucial for music teachers to rouse up the expressiveness of feelings and emotions to improve their expressive aptitudes in promoting mastery skills, and develop into effective music educators.

Teaching Music Interpretation and Expressivity

Most music teachers feel uncomfortable because of their teaching boundaries, mainly on music interpretation and expressivity (Conway, 2002). Juslin et al. (2006), initiated that one of the major reason music teachers are unable to shape an expressive music ensemble is due to lack of knowledge of theories and hands- on teaching exposure. Quality education is the objective of every university, however research at higher educational institutions revealed that unsuccessful instruction is a major cause of ineffective learning (Eison, as cited in Diamond, 2002). Despite the implication of expressivity in performance, expressive coaching

skills are normally ignored in music training situations (Juslin et al., 2006). Rosenthal, Durairaj and Magann (2009) revealed that in provisions of instructing expressivity in music performance, proper education and teaching experiences are essential. Woody (2006) studied various instructional methods about expressive musical performance that student musicians can emulate to what they have been taught in the making of expressive performances. Aural modelling or verbal and non-verbal instruction models may assist in generating expressive performances but educators must emphasize which models are most appropriate in accomplishing the learning objectives.

Hands- on teaching models in actual situations are important to the growth of pre-service teaching skills. Similarly, McCallum (2007) proposed using appropriate knowledge for real teaching situations, serving as a beginning stage to exhibit student-teachers' pedagogical capability and to collect instantaneous comments about their instruction skills. The conductors are accountable for the interpretation and expressions of their teaching and ensemble performances (Hinton, 2008; Lisk, 1996) and school administrators, parents, students, and the government have high expectations of teachers' professionalism mainly in conducting music ensembles. Therefore, music teachers must acquire all the essential skills through broad experience in real teaching or during musical activities such as conducting the orchestra or small instrumental music groups.

Expressive gesture and movement

Teaching instrumental music ensembles involves learning about abstract concepts in music. Music educators use arms and body movements, eye contact, facial gestures, to emotionally inspire their interpretation of the expressive virtues in music to students (Laukka, 2004; Woody, 2006). Analysis of non-verbal communication on teachers instructions such as hand flow, facial gestures and body movements revealed that it can transmit teachers' ideas to their student musicians, enhancing a better interpretations of the work through rhythm, phrasing, and dynamics (Kelly, 1999).

In conducting, Duke (2005) mention that most music educators fail to educate students to utilize expressive and effective conducting techniques which may result in the student's lack of required knowledge and skills. Morrison et al. (2009) revealed that persons who are capable of achieving expressiveness and clarity in conducting are capable of stimulating student musicians to perform expressively.

Aural (non-verbal) Modelling and Imitation

Aural modelling or Non- verbal instructions and imitation is another crucial element applied by music conductors and educators in training musical expressivity because music cannot always be articulated through words, but by analysing live or recording music played by teachers (Woody, 2006). According to Hill (2003) the, "demonstrations of a teacher can quickly convey ideas for interpreting music and help students to play beyond the notes" (p.281). Hill also informed that professional conductors and experience music educators used most part of rehearsal time demonstrating varying visual gestures in dealing with varieties of music which enables musicians to interpret and express feelings through their instruments. Whitaker,(2008) stated that communication in the learning process involves three steps (1) teacher displays the musical performance, (2) the student imitates the teacher and (3) a detailed feedback or response is specified by the instructor to the student.

Research Questions

In line with the research problem identified in this research, the following research questions were identified:

1. How do the conductors display their verbal instructions in demanding for credible interpretation and expressivity from their musicians?
2. How do the conductors display their non- verbal instructions in demanding for sensible interpretation and expressivity from their musicians?

Research Methodology

The study utilized qualitative research methods to gain a deeper understanding of an individual or group understanding (Stake, 1995; Yin 2009). The researcher and an experienced instrumental music professor from the university on site took broad notes through video observations of rehearsals from three renowned orchestra conductors. Each video was carefully selected based on the research demand. The researcher used qualitative data collection through the engagement of an inductive approach that are critical and interpretive and the information were then coded and analysed (Stake, 1995; Yin 2009). According to Stake(1995) fundamental case studies analyse case for its own purpose. This study examined the conductors verbal and non- verbal ability to inspire members of the orchestra to perform with convincing musical interpretation and expression.

Participant Observations

For the purposes of data validity, both the researcher and an experienced instrumental music professor observed the selected videos of the three conductors in rehearsal with their students. The professional musicians provided information regarding the conductors' verbal and non-verbal instruction via the observation protocol. This was to avoid possible vagueness and bias of data (Gall et al., 2007; Peshkin, 2000). The observers illustrated all information by writing specific practices and effect of the conductors' verbal and non-verbal instructions on the observational protocol (Patton, 2002). The researcher collected all the observational protocol forms, and obtained data clarification from the instrumental music professor (observer). The information was then analyzed in detail and systematically categorized and transcribed. The data analysis comprised of (a) noting patterns and themes to classify or categorize patterns or topics in a participants views, (b) displaying contrast and comparisons to reveal the similarities and differences, and (c) considering details into the general (Miles and Huberman's, 1994).

Results

This study was based on three research questions, which intended to examine the orchestra's conductors in applying the verbal and non- verbal instructions and the impact on enhancing musicians sense of interpretation and expressivity. The conductors' actions in the required teaching practices (CA), included; (a) verbal instructions (CVI), (b) nonverbal instructions (CNV), and (c) Impact of the expressive movement (IEM).

Results for Research Question

The first research question: How do the conductors display their verbal instructions in demanding for credible interpretation and expressivity from their musicians?. The researcher's notes, and data from the observational and interview protocol were used to address this research question and to strengthen the data validity.

Firstly, the conductor's practices of verbal instructions regarding musical interpretation and expression were evident through the videos. Data obtained through the interview with the instrumental music professor provided more detail information's on the conductors implementation of verbal and non-verbal instructions. It was observed that the use of expressive voice which includes pitch and tone, and the use of metaphorical languages, were

commonly demonstrated by the three conductors. In addition, all three conductors used short, brief, precise, and expressive voice in their instructions.

Vowel such as du, da, ta, ti, tikiti, takata dududu are fundamental in music instructions and was frequently displayed by all three conductors. It managed to inspired their musicians to perform the exact articulations which makes the music to be more artistic, meaningful and expressive. Vowels were delivered with expressive voices using detail articulations effect and dynamic levels that enabled the musicians to visualize and perform the music as it was required.

They used metaphorical languages such as "the flow of the river, the hooping of the little birds, and pulling of white hair " to visualized the emotion and expression of the music to their musicians. The metaphorical languages seem to emerge spontaneously base on the performance and the conductors will change for better words until they effectively communicate emotional characteristics of music. These three conductors used varieties of expressive voice quality which included pitch, projection, and tone to encourage their musicians to perform the required interpretation of the music. It is observed that one of the conductors for example, displayed a dark, warm tone, low pitch, accent and projected his voice to inspire his musicians to perform big, loud, low and bouncing sound. The conductor also used vowel such as bom, dumm, damm, which was well- synchronized with metaphorical languages in demanding the musicians for credible music interpretation and expressions. Besides that, the conductor also synchronized it with metaphorical languages. He mentioned that " imagine a big dinosaur eating ...yum....yum...and the footsteps showed the size of the dinosaur... doomm,, duumm, doom ... and suddenly its stop eating and raise his long neck in a very cautious way then continue walking and eating the fresh green grass and threes...". These examples referred to the conductor's rehearsal with student musicians, therefore, the selections of words or metaphorical languages were based on the student musicians background and environment which is crucial in inspiring these students musicians interpretation of the music.

The colour of the conductors' voice depend on the characteristic of the required sound. They sing the phrases using appropriate vowels, tone colour, dynamic levels and expressions until the music is aligned with the required characteristic. Vowels such as tak, ta, tu ,tik, were used to enhance strong effects while vowels such as thi, and dhu, encouraged the musicians to perform soft and relax kind of feelings.

Result for Research question 2

Research questions 2 :How do the conductors display their non-verbal instructions in demanding for sensible interpretation and expressivity from their musicians? The result of the data analysis on non-verbal instruction noted from the observational protocol initiated revealed that all three conductors applied techniques that involve non –verbal instructions in their conducting. All conductors were initially observed to be very expressive with gestures involving all kind of musical emotions. Both observers agreed that expressive instructions of different emotions can be clearly observed through the conductors hand and body gestures, mainly in the slow and aggressive movements of the piece. The hands flow was smoothly moved and synchronized to its tempo. The rise, fall, wide and small hands sign were observed to be fundamentals to all three conductors which enabled their musicians to pursue with the required dynamic levels. Moreover, it managed to shape the tone, displayed different articulations, and moods which inspired musicians to interpret the music to its finest and expressive levels.

These conductors used their hand strokes, facial gestures, head and body movements to stimulate technical requirements and to establish the exact articulations of the piece. There were various kinds of movement displayed by the three conductors to assist musicians in

performing the expressiveness of the music. It is observed that wide, high, and open hands with big open eyes can inspire musicians to perform loud and bright tone. It was also observed that the movement of their hands and fingers managed to control the tone, balance and blend of the music. It was demonstrated that the three conductors used wide, high, strong arms with strong grip fingers to inspire musicians to perform loud, heavy, strong, and dark tone. Moreover, all three conductors were able to control the music using their hands with artistic finger movements which was well-synchronized with their body and facial gestures, showing the feelings of emotions that managed to inspire and instruct musicians to perform the required expression.

Data from interviews with the second observer also mentioned that all conductors knew the piece very well and were able to detect inappropriate technical mastery, tone, dynamic, and mood which does not accomplish the desired interpretations of the music. All three conductors usually stopped the music, provided short and precise explanations together with expressive gestures before conducting the music again. These actions were repeated until it reached the conductors' satisfaction. Every repeated phrases or measure was instructed using more detailed and expressive actions such as waving, striking, jumping, which was synchronized with expressive facial gestures to inspire their musicians.

It is observed that movements of the head, neck, mouth, eyes, arms, fingers, body, and legs are commonly used by all conductors. Each movement depended on their interpretations of the music elements such as emotions, tempo, dynamic, blend, tone, and articulations. Conducting of the music depended on the conductors' own interpretations and expressions. However, it was observed that their hand movements and facial gestures were more expressive and detailed on certain phrases and phrases were repeated due to lack of expressions. Both observers mentioned that the conductors' movements were more detailed when repeating similar phrases. Details of these instructions were displayed through their expressive finger movements, head shake, neck, open and closed eyes, movements of their mouths and lips. However it was observed that all professional conductors do not apply non-verbal instructions such as demonstrations of instrument playing, and audio visual.

Head and Neck movements

The conductors moved their heads according to the flow of the music performance. It was observed that they could control the dynamics by raising or bending their heads. Similar movement was also used for cueing the musician to start playing by facing and bending their heads. The movement was also used to show acknowledgement or establishment of the performance from the musicians. The head bending was also displayed to show agreements or satisfaction of the conductor to the performance. It was also observed that they often shook their heads for aggressive expressive effect such as attacked, frantic, and majestic sound.

Facial Gestures

It is observed that the conductors' facial gestures inspire the expressiveness of moods and emotions such as being sad, happy, creepy, majestic, and cautious. For example, the big, wide, open, sparkling eyes, forward chin, neck, and open mouth give the effect of big, bright, and strong sound giving the majestic effect to the performance.

Hand and Finger Movements

Hand and finger movements are fundamental and are the most active in instructing and inspiring musician interpretations and expressions of the music. They manage to instruct and control for proper tempo, dynamic levels, tone qualities, and articulations. The flow, angle, and the speed of their hands, arms, hand wrist, give a big impact to the music effect such as

smooth, tight, light, heavy, big, small, and roughness of the music. Moreover finger movements provide details of instructions on articulation effect such as staccato, legato, slur, and tenuto.

Body and leg movements

Body and legs movements were very limited and were displayed to encourage for effect such as dynamic levels, and tone weight. Among the movements observed were moving the body forward, backward, downward, upward, and right to left. Leg movements were limited to a step forward and backwards. However, these conductors sometimes used their body and legs movements in acting, and imitating actions such as marching, hooping, jumping, and walking. It was observed that these non- verbal instructions managed to inspire the musicians to perform with better interpretations of the music.

Conclusion

This study revealed that the combination of expressive instructions (verbal and non-verbal) encouraged the musicians in interpreting the expressive aspects of the music and helped to lessen the time required towards achieving credible interpretations of the music. The research has also verified the challenges faced by conductors in encouraging musicians to perform with expression. In addition, the research data showed that the combinations of expressive verbal and non-verbal instructions had contributed to the aesthetic effects of the musicians and the overall orchestra performance. Thus, it is essential for policy makers to understand the power of effective music programs, to provide an inspiring environment which supports and facilitates instrumental music programs in schools.

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