"SING FOR LIFE"

"Singing in the choir has emboldened me and taught me how to perform charismatically and with vigour to audiences, and to enjoy myself while performing. I have lost my fear of the spotlight and thoroughly enjoy performing."

ABSTRACT

The benefits of singing are abundantly clear to pedagogues who work with students in studios, classrooms and choirs. While there is increasing research connecting singing and wellbeing, singing is not yet recognised as a prescription to be used by medical practitioners as a tonic for maintaining good physical, social and emotional health. Recent literature in the field has focussed on the impact of singing for older people and, of late, the advantages to cultures of promoting singing with young children. Drawing on this research, this poster presentation posits that singing has health and wellbeing benefits throughout the entire lifespan. Results from existing studies into infants and singing are presented alongside material relating to school children, adolescents, those in middle age and older people. With this background, the poster has two specific focusses designed to demonstrate the capacity of singing in two critical phases of the lifecycle: Firstly, the findings of new research into the benefits of singing for men are presented. Preliminary findings indicate that singing aids in changing lifestyle, reducing aggression and managing depressive episodes. The implications of this work for medical practitioners and psychologists are provided. Secondly, findings from a study into the use of music to make dementia patients are presented. Participants in this project were involved in singing sessions three times per week. At the time of the intervention, their level of agitation was measured. Later in the day, their level of agitation was measured, with a view to establishing the influence of singing on both patients and carers. The advantages of using singing in this way to benefit institutions, carers and patients are presented. Finally, the process of training singing teachers to facilitate the programs described above is interrogated. Particular reference is made to an awareness of changes in vocal physiology through the lifecycle, alongside psychological considerations inherent in the delivery of such programs.

LITERATURE SNAPSHOT

"Music has a long reputation of invoking religious states, healing the diseased, comforting the sorrowful, energizing the weak, soothing the distressed and even raising the dead. Drumming, harmonics singing, chanting, t'ai chi playing and reupholster organ music all create altered states of perception and evoke awakenings. Spontaneous remission of physical disorders and moments of spiritual insight and bliss are important parts of our natural abilities and instincts..." (Campbell, 1992, p. 1).

"At various times in and various cultures over the past two and a half millennia – and probably still further back in time – music has been medicine. Performing or listening to music have variously been thought to achieve something more than arousal or entertainment, something different from, though often related to, enhanced spiritual awareness, something that beneficially outlasts performance – that maintains or restores the health of mind and, even, body" (Mosher, 2006a, p. 1).

REFERENCES

Dr. Scott Harrison is Lecturer in Music and Music Education at Griffith University. A graduate of Queensland Conservatorium and the University of Queensland, Dr Harrison has experience in teaching singing and music in primary, secondary and tertiary environments. Performance interests and experience include opera and music theatre as both singer and musical director, including over 20 years as singing chorus and minor roles with Opera Queensland. His teaching areas focus on teacher education, research methods and gender. He convenes research higher degrees at Queensland Conservatorium and is currently supervising 16 post-graduate students in topics as diverse as jazz vocal improvisation, contemporary worship singing, queer masculinity and musicians' health.

SNAPSHOT: Quantitative data from music making with elderly people facilitated by student volunteers. Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, Canterbury.

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