



3/5 Management of collective vocal practices **Tours, 18/22 – Saint-Lô 23 October 2014**

Choral singing and prevented people : Introduction **by Isabelle Humber and Mériam Khaldi**

Choral singing always refers to a collective practice. To build themselves, the group needs to work regularly.

Global overview

The term "prevented public" is used in the cultural language in France, but there is no literal English translation. Here's what we mean by "prevented public"

"Prevented public" designate the public who cannot attend all public activity, on the usual place of artistic practice (to sing) or cultural practice (to attend an a concert).

Behind this general term, we refer to people with severe disabilities preventing their movement (and not all disabilities), the very old people, people in hospital, people in jail ... To sum up, a lot of different and varied situations, which are difficult to treat all in a single and in a same way. Another word has existed in France for several years, but that also means the school public, business...: captive audiences. As if being in an institution (hospital, prison, school...) automatically captivated people to take part in an artistic or cultural activity.

Today, we have chosen to have a look at this situation through 3 axes, which can interfere at some points:

- Singing in jails
- Choral singing and disabled people
- Singing in hospitals

Elements of context

Most of the time, when you deal with prevented public, the link is done via the institution or the structure that is responsible for taking care of these people. We, cultural actors, don't have any direct relation with the public of the institutions. The only common way of working would be in relation to the structure that accompanies the people, through the strong and complex notion of partnership.

Partnership is first to determine an interest to set up an action. This interest might not be the same for cultural partner and non-cultural partner. Everyone must remain in its field of skills, to ensure quality of action that will satisfy the defined objectives. So roles should be clearly defined: the cultural or artistic partner will set up a cultural or artistic process which will be assessed with cultural or artistic criteria. The other partner will stick to his role and assess the welfare, discipline, openness to others or the development of knowledge...

Sometimes the cultural partner, invited to work in an environment which is not familiar, loses the artistic requirement he should have. As if singing practice became a recreational activity, comforting activity, or animation activity. As if the public became the main object of the project, and therefore music being relegated to secondary consideration.

Historical and legislative context

If we work in environments that have an other primary purpose as cultural and artistic activity, it's because the notion of cultural rights exist in international law:

***This project is supported by the European Union Longlife learning program
Leonardo da Vinci 2013 - 2015***



Programme pour l'éducation et

Several international texts raise the questions about "cultural right"; the first text is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, dated from 1948 ; it's therefore fairly recent texts!

This text, in article 27, says:

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

In 1966, UNESCO proclaimed the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation, whose 1st article states:

1. Each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved.
2. Every people has the right and the duty to develop its culture.
3. In their rich variety and diversity, and in the reciprocal influences they exert on one another, all cultures form part of the common heritage belonging to all mankind.

In 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights adopts the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

In 2007, the Fribourg Declaration of Cultural Rights collects and explicit cultural rights that are already recognized, but are present in many international texts. This statement promotes the protection of diversity and cultural rights within the system of human rights.

We can say that cultural rights allow us to understand the principle of universality of human rights while taking into account cultural diversity.

Nevertheless, cultural rights always seem to be the least understood and least applied in international law.

With protocols and devices, our public policy is trying to give different audiences access to culture. We cannot cover all of them today, so we'll only speak, in the public "so-called" prevented about people in hospital, people in jail and disabled people.

Scientific context

The links between brain and music are the subject of scientific research in many countries; researchers have noticed a real passion for these issues for a decade.

Currently, several assumptions have been scientifically proved, here are some examples:

- Music has an impact on the brain : when we are listening to music, it's not just one or the other hemispheres of the brain that is involved (as is the case for the language), but the whole brain is activated. Music changes the brain mechanisms. It activates for example the production of dopamine, a molecule responsible for transmitting information between neurons. It is this molecule that causes thrills listening to some tunes.
- Music is able to treat some pathologies: through stimulation of brain plasticity, music can restore the neurons network. Music acts in cases of brain injury, Parkinson's disease, or aphasia (speech disorder). People who no longer speak start singing, Parkinson patients start dancing... The memory of a melody heard once may reactivate the memory and stimulate the brain of Alzheimer's patients...
- Music can have a preventive effect on health: the more you stimulate your brain in your youth, the more it creates branches in the brain. So there will be for these people neuronal resources which will allows a greater compensation in case of degeneration. Music prevents

people from aging and brain damage. And this is even more likely when people practice music!

Even if the therapeutic benefits seem obvious and are scientifically proved in any musical practice, we won't speak about art therapy in general, or music therapy especially. In fact, music therapy is part of a specific treatment protocol, for which music is a complementary of other therapies and patient care. In this case, the music activity is no longer a matter of cultural actors but of the therapeutic team.

In this scientific context, it seems all the more essential that music practice has to be accessible to all. As a cultural actor, we have a role to play in order to promote, support, and sustain the musical practices with everyone.

Quantitative approach

It is very difficult to accurately determine the number of "prevented people" in the world, in Europe or even in a country, as that concept covers different situations and different definitions. It is also difficult, if not impossible, to estimate quantitatively the offer developed by cultural structures towards these groups.

Nevertheless, it is possible to estimate figures about disability: the Organization of the United Nations identifies disability statistics from various surveys. Regarding the estimated number of people with disabilities, it appears that approximately 10% of the world's population (650 million people) live with disabilities; they also constitute the largest minority in the world. According to the World Health Organization, this figure is increasing, because of the population growth, the medical advances and the aging process. In countries where life expectancy is over 70 years old, each person will spend on average 8 years or 11.5% of his life living with a disability!

Challenges

As a cultural actor, no matter what we are (artist, choir manager, singing teacher, responsible for cultural structure or network, involved musician...) we must address and take into account all public audiences, included public called "prevented". This raises the question of accessibility of musical practices: are they accessible to all? Why? How?

How to build a suitable offer? How to identify the public?

Despite the multiple readings of our actions (social, medical, health, education...) we will ask ourselves how to be vigilant and not to lose sight of the fact that they also have a cultural or artistic interest of which we are the guarantors.