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Choir conducting: human resources management and organization of the work

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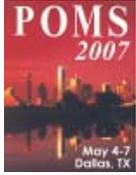
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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the practice of the choir conducting, starting from the concepts of organization of the work and competences management. The main aspects discussed in this study are: the creativity, dimensions and levels of the work in a choir; competences, abilities and the formation of a choir conducting; motivation; leadership, problems solution and human resources management. The methodological approach is based on a bibliographical revision with an exploratory character, relating to the literature to the practice of the choir conducting. Thus, this study aims at giving subsides for the work of the choir conductor and for the improvement in the comprehension and development of the direction and organization in vocal groups. It concludes that the practice of these concepts can improve the quality of the activities developed by the choirs.

Keywords: human resources management, organization of the work, competences management, leadership, motivation, choir conducting.
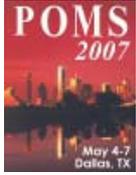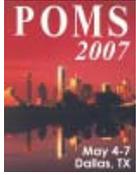
1. Introduction

Choir is a kind of social and cultural organization that has a lot of goals, from personal motivation, musical education and recreational opportunities to the popularization of a message or a repertoire or even an institution. In a broad sense, the formation and the performance of choir regents should involve the musical, organizational and administrative principles for understanding the choir in its several facets, comprising knowledge of several areas. In this sense, the study of work organization techniques and competences, and human resources management of a specific vocal group allows the development of more pleasant inter-personal relationships inside the group and, consequently, provides a larger effectiveness for the activities of the group.

Corroborating with the statement of Lüdke and André (1986), that the investigation of a problematics appears in a particular occasion, where the the researcher's thought and action are conjugated in an effort to compose the knowledge of real aspects that can later be used in the solution of daily subjects, the present research constitutes in the search for the best practices in terms of work organization, inter-personal relationships and leadership of the coir conductor in order to generate subsidies and proposals for solving daily problems that emerge in the work with a choir.

The study is thus based on an exploratory research, relating motivation, leadership, work organization concepts and competences/human resource management. The utilization of those concepts is therefore justified, as a choir is essentially constituted of its human resources

(singers) and develops its activities seeking the materialization of its projects (presentation of specific repertoires and organization of concerts). The research has a qualitative character in terms of the nature of the data and the sources of information used in that investigation, starting from a literature revision that allows the development of the themes approached.

2. Work Organization in choirs

The choir constitutes a significant tool for establishing a dense net of socio-cultural configurations, starting from the valorization of the individual participation in the process of constructing ideals and common objectives, culminating with the materialization of the group activities. In that sense, the participants of a choir are eagerly devoted to study and undergo a rigorous discipline, aiming at the result viewed by the group, configuring a *group charisma*:

> [...] the dominant groups, with a high strength superiority, confer a characteristic group charisma on themselves, as collectivities, and also on all those integrating such groups, such as families and individuals. All the ones inserted in these groups participate in that charisma. However, there is a price to be paid. The participation in the superiority of a group and in its singular group charisma is, so to speak, the reward for the submission to the specific group norms . That price has to be individually paid by each of its members, by subjecting his/her conduct to specific affection control patterns . (Elias and Scotson, 2000, p. 26-7).
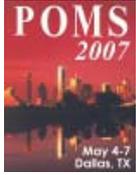
According to Maximiano (2004, p. 27), organizations are deliberately social groups guided for the accomplishment of goals, which, in general, are translated into the supply of products and services. In this sense, people are the main resource of the organizations, adding other material resources (facilities, space, pieces of furniture, equipment etc.) and immaterial ones (time and knowledge). It should be pointed out that all organizations can be dismembered into processes. In the peculiar case of the formation of a choir, the processes are: planning, organization, leadership, execution and control.

In general terms, all kinds of organization have to seek their own core competences. In this specific case, it is important to point out the managerial abilities (acquired or worked by means of experiences and of study). The essence of the organization leader's work is to take decisions. The main leader's roles involve: enterprising, controlling disturbances, managing resources and negotiating (Maximiniano, 2004, p. 40).

Concerning the choir conducting activities, those perspectives are pertinent and real: a choir conductor acts as a starting point of the organization, of its group and also as the manager of all the activities, which include improvements in the work organization. He also tries to identify the possibilities and opportunities for a consistent invigoration of the group; the choir conductor is the controller of disturbances and acts in a punctual way when confronted with unexpected problems, crises and conflicts. The choir conductor administers time, programs, monitors and assistants (when these exist) work and, at times, authorizes decisions demanded by other people; and, finally, the choir conductor also has to establish contracts or presentations with companies or individuals that are not part of the routine of rehearsals and concerts.
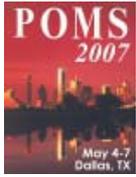
3. Creativity, dimensions and levels of performance of a choir

Creativity also consists in a fundamental aspect in human organizations in general, and even more in the choir, where the group motivation is also tied to the personal accomplishment of the singers, by means of fostering creativity and providing a favorable atmosphere for the choir activity development (Wechsler, 1993). For De Masi (2003, p. 677-678): "A creative group bases its fecundity on the competence and on the motivation of its members, on the charismatic leadership capable of indicating and sharing an innovative mission in a harmonious and enthusiastic atmosphere". Creativity, therefore, it is constituted as an ability to be worked on in all kinds of social organization, being a strategic factor of great relevance for the administration of human resources.

Therefore, a choir can be understood in several dimensions (Mathias, 1986):

- Psychological dimension: determined by the trinomial emotion (result of the sensitization), will (inner motivation that leads to overcoming individual and social obstacles) and reason (constituted by the analysis and selection of harmonic elements forming inner strength).

- Politicy dimension: determined by the need of organizing the group, with the definition of each element's functions, of means for their development and of goals aiming at the common welfare.
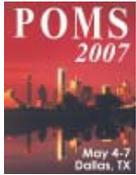
- Mystical dimension: determined by the existence "of the unit, harmony, beauty, immanent to the deepest side in each of us, it will naturally lead to the existence of the Unit, Harmony, Beauty that you/they transcend your/their inner space". (Mathias, 1986, p. 15)

It is worth pointing out that those dimensions are shared by the different levels of action of the choir. Thus, such dimensions can act at political, social, community, social and personal levels, generating opportunities for social inclusion and integration of communities, allowing the accomplishment of the group's musical goals and increasing the motivation and the quality of each individual's life.

Such levels of action of a choir can be visualized in the illustration below: it proposes the representation of the gradual action produced by the choir, from the personal to the macro (political) level.
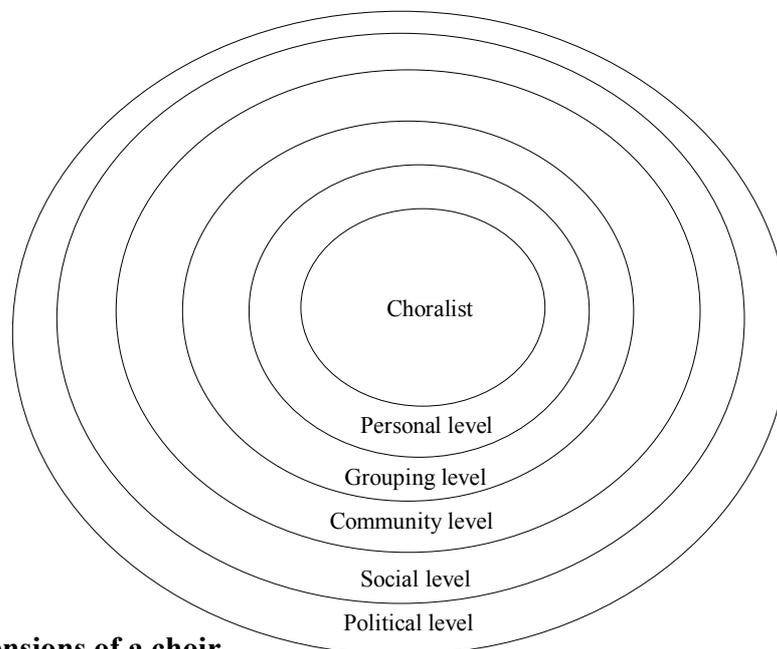


Figure 1 - Dimensions of a choir

Source: Mathias (1986).
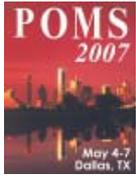
4. Competences, abilities and the formation of choir conducting

The term competence can be understood as a group of knowledge, abilities and attitudes that allow an individual to carry out several activities. A specific competence can be stimulated by formal and informal education (family), by professional experience and by the socio-cultural configurations net which the person belongs to. Maximiniano (2004) classifies four referring main categories to the competences: intellectual, inter-personal, techniques and intra-personal.

The intellectual competences are present in the elaboration of concepts, analyses, planning and also in the definition of strategies and decision-taking. Two specific intellectual competences are the ability to think rationally (analysis of the scenario) and the conceptual ability (abstract thought: intuition, imagination and creativity). The competences linked to the leadership of a group and its interfaces in contact with other people are part of the inter-personal competences (understanding of the singularity and individuals' diversity, of the motivation process, of the leadership principles and of communication).

Formal education and professional praxis are the two great trends belonging to the technical competences. Concerning the intra-personal competences several abilities can be found, such as: self-knowledge, self-motivation, solemnity-analysis, self-control:

> Understanding one's own position, of its requirements and its impact on the organization; capacity to understand, to analyze and to control one's own behavior, particularly emotions; capacity to understand and to analyze another person's behavior,
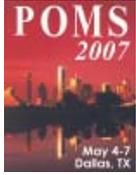
particularly another person's emotions; capacity to learn from the person's own experience and from another person's experience; capacity to analyze, to understand and to develop one's own potentialities and to overcome one's own vulnerabilities (Maximiniano, 2004, p. 42).

All these elaborations can be discussed in relation to the formation of the conductor, which consist in the appropriate welding of natural and conquered abilities. Whereas natural abilities are linked with the individual's formation in his/her family atmosphere and with his/her socio-economic position, the acquired "qualifications derive from learning by studying. They demand effort, they are rational, generally logic and are justified through practice" (Oliveira and Oliveira, 2005).

According to Rocha (2005), the main essential personal assets concerning conducting are leadership, musical talent and physical aptitude. On the other hand, the indispensable acquired conductor's assets are constituted by musical formation, intellectual formation (which includes administrative, psychological, political, pedagogical, philosophical and other concepts) and in the physical formation deriving from healthy habits and regular sports practice. In the conception of Zander (2003, p. 29): "besides knowing the tradition of choir practice, the authenticity in the interpretation of its different styles, it is necessary, without judging these, to see that they are not only historically valid, but that they are also alive in our present time".

The indispensable musical knowledge for choir conducting, combined with a series of abilities and competences concerning not only the technical musical background, but also the
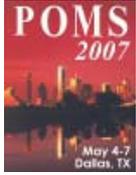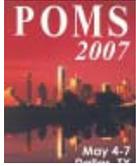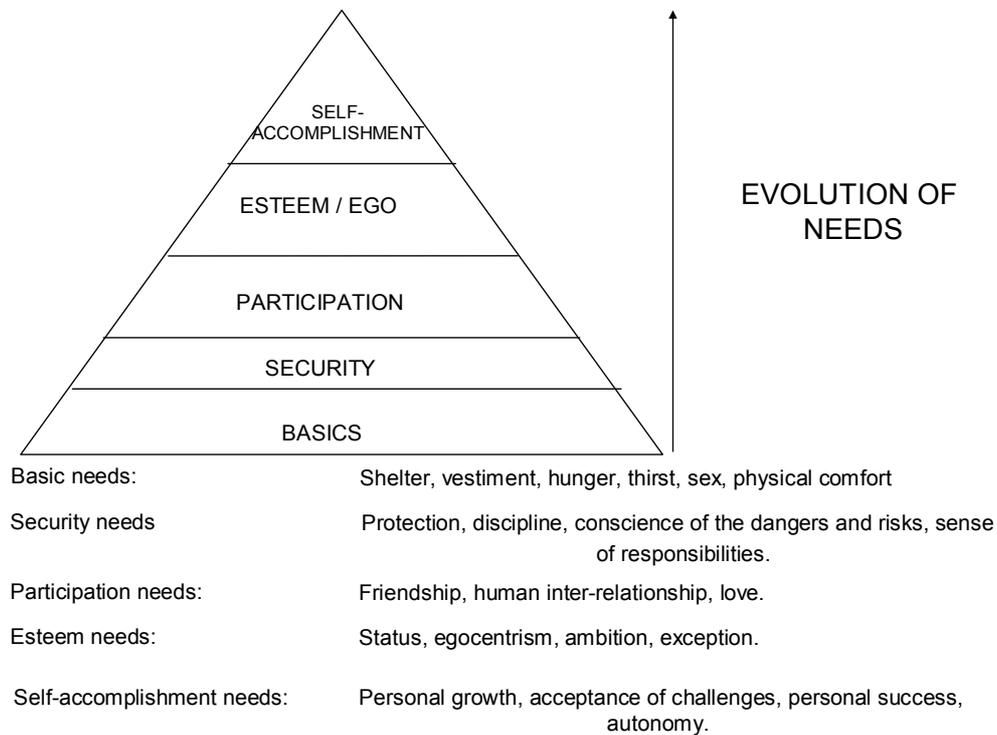
management and conduction of a group of people that seek motivation, learning and coexistence in a social group, allows an approach to the different aspects of the group, making musical learning, vocal development, integration and social inclusion occur (Fucci Amato, 2005). The role played by a conductor in the conduction of its musical group involves capacity to lead the group and to motivate each of its participants, leading them to a really rewarding musical exparience from a personal and communitarian point of view.

5. Motivation

Motivation is a continuous process in which factors of different natures act on the individual, starting from the materialization of his/her desires. For Maslow (apud Maximiano, 2004), motivation happens from meeting the individual's needs (basic ones, such as safety, participation, self-esteem and self-accomplishment), as shown in the figure below:

EVOLUTION OF NEEDS

Basic needs:	Shelter, vestiment, hunger, thirst, sex, physical comfort
Security needs	Protection, discipline, conscience of the dangers and risks, sense of responsibilities.
Participation needs:	Friendship, human inter-relationship, love.
Esteem needs:	Status, egocentrism, ambition, exception.
Self-accomplishment needs:	Personal growth, acceptance of challenges, personal success, autonomy.

Figure 2 - A. Maslow's "hierarchical scale of needs"

Source: Maximiano (2004).

From the analysis of the outline above, choir singing can be included in a scenario of quality of life and social balance. Thus, after meeting the basic and safety needs of a given population, the participation in activities that promote an increase in self-esteem and of the sense of self-accomplishment constitutes a significant aspect in the individual's formation. In that
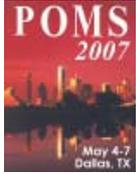
perspective, choir singing helps a person's personal growth and, from this, this person's motivation.

It is worth stressing that motivation derives from the choir conductor leadership. That leadership can be translated into authority bases, which can apply to a choir conductor in three levels (Maximiano, 2004): charisma, technical authority (musical and educational competence for conducting) and political authority (conduction of the group by the establishment of goals and good relationship between the conductor and the choir). In the original conception, the bases of authority are: tradition (habits), charisma (the person), formal authority (organization), technical competence (know-how) and policies (inter-personal relationships), according to Maximiano (2004). Nevertheless, it is believed that tradition and formal authority are more specific characteristics of the organizations, not very applicable to the choir. Therefore, conductors should:

> take on the role of facilitators of the team work that they coordinate, motivating the emergence of new talents, firmly administering conflicts that may come up during the execution of the work and, above all, being concerned about really motivating each member of the team (Aguiar, Escrivão Filho and Rozenfeld, 1998, p. 2)

Another concept worth mentioning is that by Herzberg (apud Maximiano, 2004). According to that author, there are two categories of decisive factors for human motivation, in a work organization: the first, called "extrinsic or hygienic" factors, refer to aspects such as: wage corresponding to the task and the professional function, the organization human resources
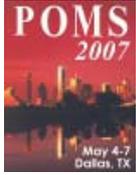
policies, work supervision style , inter-personal relationships (among colleagues) and the work environmental hygiene and safety conditions. The presence of such factors in the managerial practice would just constitute basic conditions to minimize the state of collaborators' dissatisfaction. So as to provide a favorable organizational atmosphere to attain the organization goals, it would be necessary to incorporate those called "intrinsic or motivational factors". Such factors are intimately related to the nature of the work in itself and can foster a feeling of responsibility, improved perception and individual self-accomplishment.

6. Leadership, problem solving and people management

In a broad sense, leadership can be understood as an important component for the development of any work involving human resources, being essential for the development of the activities of a group and for attaining the longed results. The leader's role has a more and more important function in society and in the quest for its sustainable development, since the great leaders decisively influence the political, economic, sporting and cultural spheres at the most different levels, from a local to a world sphere (Rattner, 1999).

Concerning human resources management, leadership exercises a significant role in the organization and conduction of group work, driving its actions and inducing its behavior (Maximiano, 2004). This ability is thus fundamental for the conduction of a choir, since most participants come from quite heterogeneous groups and may have different levels of musical knowledge, intellectual formation, professional performance, besides the fact that the singers
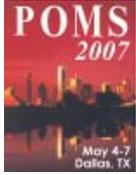
belong to different social classes. Concerning the choir conductor importance, this is stressed by the fact that several authors consider it a crucial point for the conduction of the group (McElheram, 1966; Zander, 2003; Rocha, 2004; Oliveira and Oliveira, 2005).
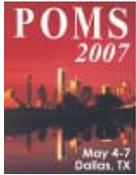
Human resources management is of fundamental importance for understanding the leader's performance. Douglas Mc.Gregor (apud Chiavenato, 2003), one of the most famous theoreticians of the "Human Relationships School", elaborated a theory on the movement of human relationships that can be adapted to the conception of the choir conductor and his/her relationship with the singers. The illustration below is adapted from Mc.Gregor's theory on choir conducting.

'X' Theory	'Y' Theory
• People are lazy • People avoid the exigent wort in • choir • People need to be controlled and driven. • The external discipline is demanded • People avoid the responsability • People are naive and without initiative	• People are diligent • The work is as natural as to play or to rest • People are auto-motivated • People are auto-disciplined • People look for and accept responsibility • People are creative and competent

Figure 3 - Mc.Gregor's theory applied to the choir

Source: Adapted from Chiavenato (2003).

The concepts presented are commonly idealized by the choir conductors, who form their leadership styles from the ideas they have regarding the choir and its members. The option for a

participative management, based in the so-called Mc.Gregor's 'Y Theory', can be understood as the model of human resources management (singers) more adapted in the sense of maintaining the motivation at high levels and of making high levels of performance of the choir possible.

Thus, leadership can be understood as a process of human resources management, founded on an authority basis, structured on tradition, charisma, formal authority, technical competence and on political relationships, as synthesized in the illustration that follows.
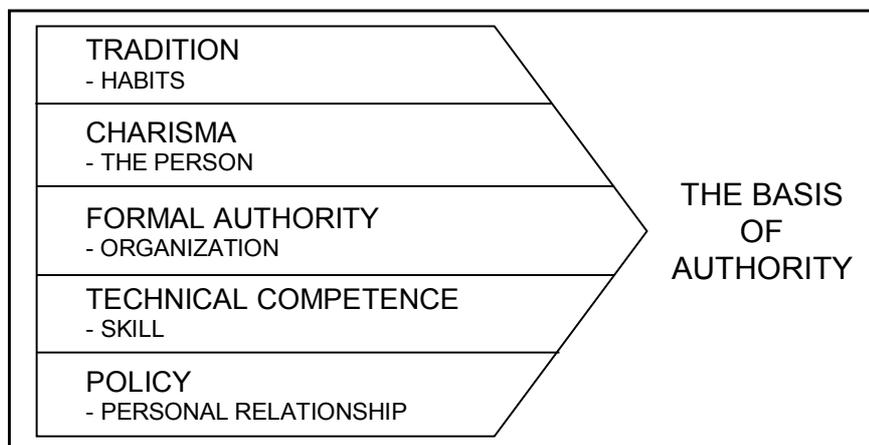
Figure 4 - The bases of authority

Source: Maximiano (2004, p. 276).

The choice of the leader is a stage of great relevance for the group and could be autocratic, democratic or liberal. The leader may also act in agreement with those principles, and thus generate different results in the work developed by the group. In that way, when the leader is imposed onto the group, he also imposes his ideas (autocratic leadership); in the case of democratic leadership, the group chooses its leader and takes commonly agreed decisions;
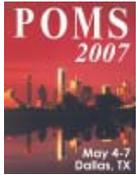
finally, when the group does not have a leader and makes consensual decisions, leadership is liberal, or there is an absence of leadership (Maximiano, 2004, p. 276).

Therefore, the performance of the conductor can also be classified according to the leadership attitudes, as synthesized in the figure below:

AUTHORITARY CONDUCTOR X INOVATIVE CONDUCTOR	
CENTRALIZING	FACILITATOR
DISTANT OF THE GROUP	INTEGRAL PART OF THE TEAM
CONTROLS THE BEHAVIOR OF PEOPLE	SNAKE RESULTS INSIDE OF THE GOALS OF THE TEAM
DEFRAUDS INFORMATION COMINGS OF TOP	SHARE INFORMATION
ALWAYS SEEKS THE ACCUSED BY THE MISTAKES	STIMULATES THE TEAM TO REACH IT GOALS
DOESN´T VALUE THE EDUCATION OF THE GROUP	VALUES THE EDUCATION OF THE GROUP
IMPOSES HIS/HER IDEAS	SUPPORT THE GOOD IDEAS
DICTATES THE PATTERNS FOR EVERYBODY	LOOK AT THE CONSENSUS OF THE GROUP

Figure 5 – Leadership styles in choir conducting

Source: the authors, based on Amato Neto (2005).

Based on the figure above, it can be understood that, while the authoritarian regent only aims at his accomplishment, imposing goals on the choir and not allowing suggestions in the artistic production process, the innovative regent aims at maintaining the organization of the group, listening to the ideas of its members and integrating the group without doing excessive use
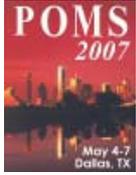
of his authority. Leadership thus comes in a bi-dimensional vision, emphasizing either people (human resources) or tasks (products), as in Maximiano (2004).

Bergamini (1994, p. 179) also points out that:

> It is undoubted that different leadership styles are rooted and, therefore, they derive from the individual differences in personality. It is known that that personality is an integral part of each one's personality , including not only intellectual characteristics, but also emotional ones, experiences had, expectations and motivations. Although one cannot be sure whether all intrinsic and extrinsic variables capable of determining this or that behavioral orientation, it is possible to observe the different leaders' apparent behavior.

Another important aspect of great relevance in a leader's performance is *situational leadership*. That concept postulates that different situations demand different forms of performance, using different types of knowledge and different characteristics on the part of the leader (Bergamini, 1988). For Rocha (2004), problem solving in a choir can be summarized in three stages, according to that approach:

- <u>Acknowledgement of the conflict and of its sources</u>: the conductor should verify whether the conflict is being provoked by swollen egos, by differences in quality and by musical productivity among individuals or by rumors and gossips.

- <u>Reflection, definition and application of solutions to the conflicts</u>: the conductor should try to level the individuals and their production levels, besides clarifying rumors, provinding complete information on the fact.
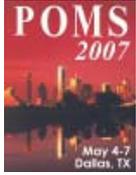
- <u>Preventive action</u>: the conductor should develop strong communication with the group, undertaking researches on the degree of satisfaction of the singers and aiming to accomplish a participative management of the processes in which a consensus prevails.

Dealing with sensitive aspects, such as as the resolution of personal problems within the group, situational leadership presents management styles and problems solving adapted to the different levels of maturity of those being led (singers).

As from the points made, it can be concluded that the realization of the leadership formation process may happen based on the following actions: definition of each one's responsibilities; determination of the authority levels in agreement with the responsibilities set; establishment of excellence patterns; musical and vocal education that satisfy the goals defined; information and continuous assessment of each singer's and of the group's performance; acknowledgement of the works developed and of the accomplishments; trust among the group members ; acceptance of mistakes and motivation for success; dignity and respect when dealing with people.

For Rocha (2004), the conductor should also have other abilities to lead the choir and its members, such as personal authority, self-control, clarity of goals and for expressing thoughts, planning capacity, empathy and mobilization capacity and argument power. Emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996) interferes in that perspective and plays a fundamental role in the execution of the group's projects. It should be pointed out that the abilities have different levels of relevance in function of the project phases. In the choir ambit, the preparation of a concert, for
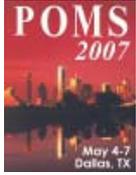
example, presents different stages and, in each of these, certain abilities are requested in greater or smaller proportion.

The development of those abilities for the choir conductor will certainly provide a great improvement in the activities of the group and this will foster new inter-personal relationships among its members, resulting in an increase in the quality of its musical production.

Finally, it is possible to say that, based on the conductor's leadership capacity, the singers will be motivated by themselves. In Bergamini's words (1994, p.195):

> One then supposes that each person has personal resources that allow maintaining this person's motivational tonus, as well as managing him/herself so as not to allow any administrative deviation to drain that important niche of productive forces. The intrinsically motivated person is self-led, and does not need something extrinsic to drive him/her. It would thus be possible to state that being intrinsically motivated, the person is his/her own leader.

7. Conclusions

The choir conductor, in the leading role of a social group and conducting an artistic work that it involves a group as diversified as a choir, should be able to establish approaches, to motivate each and every singer and lead them to an established goal. As from this process, it is possible to generate and to disseminate musical and vocal knowledge, stimulating an
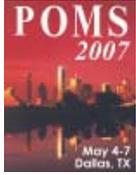
improvement in life quality within an organization or community, aiming at the group's gradual and constant growth, be it at a musical and artistic level, or at social level.

The understanding of the different levels of action of a choir and the establishment of goals and roles in the creation process and artistic (re)production is also indispensable for the efficiency of the group. It is worth stressing that such a process can only be carried out when the group pursues common objectives, therefore requiring the conductor to act as a leader that, when combining his/her authority with a participative management process, attains the results expected from the team, for whom motivation constitutes the key-element to generate interest and commitment with the activity in question.

Based on that work, it could be observed that the work organization capacity and competences management within a choir consist of abilities that can be developed by the conductor, seeing that the choir, as a social organization, involves a dense network of inter-personal relationships that should be built by a dynamic and participative policy.

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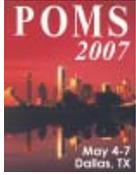
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