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## **“Swooping in to save the day?”: Investigating the effects on musical identity of a choral collaboration between amateur and professional singers**

By

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### **Abstract**

*Choral singing by amateur musicians forms a significant part of the Western Art Music tradition in the United Kingdom. Professional singers conventionally inhabit a different performance sphere to their amateur counterparts, with substantially different motivations for making music. There is a hierarchical relationship between amateur and professional musicians based on perceived differences in musical ability, training, and competence. If they are called upon to rehearse and perform side-by-side, the effects on the musical identity of the amateurs in particular may be disruptive. I conducted a case study of a choir established to combine amateur and professional singers and promote a collaborative ethos in which I distributed online questionnaires to 66 amateur choir members, and interviewed seven members of the amateur group and three of the professional ensemble members. Thematic analysis of the data revealed findings that fell into four main categories: enjoyment, sense of belonging, musical competence, and musical life stories. The study indicated that the impact on the amateur singer identity of the arrival of an ensemble of professionals at a late stage in the rehearsal process contradicts the inclusive intentions behind the choir’s founding.*

**Keywords:** amateur, professional, choir, singing, identity

It's inspiring, you learn, it's a joy to listen to them [...] you kind of feel like you sing better when they're around. (Anna)

[I] feel like they've come in as a group to help out all these helpless amateurs, [...] they come and go as a group and don't have any interest in us. (Rachel)

Our singing voices are closely tied to our sense of who we are (Clarke, Dibben, & Pitts, 2010; Faulkner & Davidson, 2004; Oakland, MacDonald, & Flowers, 2012; Potter, 2000) and membership in choirs can therefore contribute significantly to musical identity both at the individual (Durrant & Himonides, 1998) and group levels (Bartolome, 2012; Kreutz & Brunger, 2012). As members of a choir that combines amateur and professional singers, Anna and Rachel expressed contrasting views about the possibilities of singing together. Professional singers may be seen as role models who inspire confidence and improve the aesthetic experience of performer and audience. Alternatively, they may represent a socially and musically separate group, arriving only to rescue the performance. This article investigates whether amateur/professional collaboration is ultimately affirming or damaging to the amateur chorister's musical identity.

Amateur and professional musicians in the British Western Art Music context commonly encounter one another in strictly demarcated situations. In performance contexts relationships can often be defined hierarchically: for example, performer-audience, or amateur choir-professional soloist. Economic factors and physical positions may identify the differing status of each group (Small, 1998). Professional musicians also encounter amateurs through outreach work (Everitt, 1997; Gregory, 2005; Winterson, 1994, 1996), or one-to-one teaching. Again, status and a shared understanding of what is expected in each role clearly define relationships and behaviours in these situations (Strauss, 1959).

The majority of secular choristers in Britain hold an unpaid, amateur status, even when performing to professional standards in prestigious venues with paid soloists and orchestras (Smith, 2006). When professional choral singers do perform alongside amateurs, it is normally as “ringers” (Smith & Sataloff, 2006, p. 6) arriving on the day of the concert to strengthen the sound or compensate for lack of numbers. I am the co-founder of a chamber choir which, unusually, regularly combines amateur and professional singers, with the intention of going beyond the amateur-professional relationships outlined above. As I acted as the choir’s manager and participated in rehearsals and performances, I became interested in how the presence of the professional ensemble affected the individual and collective musical identity of the amateurs. I carried out the following study as part of wider doctoral research into the impacts of amateur/professional collaborations on musical identity.

Here, I consider identity from a symbolic interactionist perspective, influenced by the work of Mead (1913), and Strauss (1959). According to Strauss, our conception of identity is formulated on the basis of how others perceive us, following conventions appropriate to specific situations. There is no solidity in our identity; who we are depends on where we are and how we perceive that we are or should be in those circumstances. This is consistent with Goffman’s (1959) concept of performance; we present a version of ourselves that suits the circumstances, and expect the same from others. Inconsistencies in performance challenge our own identity and perception of that of others. Musical identity, specifically, is divided by MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2002) into “identities in music” and “music in identities” (p. 2). The latter refers how music is used to develop other aspects of personal identity, while the former refers to the social or cultural roles which individuals may hold in musical scenarios. These may include self-

identification as a non-musician (Lamont, 2002; Ruddock & Leong, 2005), often developing at an early age as a result of negative musical experiences.

### **Amateur and professional musicians in Western Art Music**

Finnegan's (1989) portrait of the breadth and depth of amateur music-making in Milton Keynes, Pitts' (2005) exploration of amateur musical participation, and Cottrell's (2004) investigation of the professional music scene in London give the research context for this study. The genre of Western Art Music, in which the elevated status granted to the professional musician implies the role of the non-musician (Pitts, 2002) who may in reality be just as active in making music, situated this study. An obvious assumption is that professional musicians are those who, having passed through a rigorous classical training (Green, 2002), gain careers where they are paid for their musical activities; all other classical music-makers are amateurs. However, as both Finnegan (1989) and Green (2002) described, the reality is a context specific continuum. Finnegan also identified that far from being a casual hobby, amateur music-making involves significant levels of structure and organization, often hidden from view. The attitudes of those who participate reflect what Stebbins (2007) defined as "serious leisure" (p. 1).

Finnegan (1989), Pitts (2005, 2002), Cottrell (2004), and Green (2002) all referred to overlaps between the amateur and professional worlds. Both Finnegan (1989) and Cottrell (2004) presented this overlap as a perceived divide in quality, where amateur is synonymous with lower standard. Pitts (2005, 2002) alluded to the value placed on amateur musicians by proximity to professionals and the development of a close audience-performer relationship through long-term attendance at a music festival, and Green stated that there is much to be learned from watching experienced players from a distance. Nowhere though is there an investigation of what happens when amateurs and professionals rehearse and perform the same score side by side. This study

therefore addressed that issue and sought to explore the impact that this experience has on the musical identity of the amateur members as well as the broader implications for amateur-professional collaborations and interactions.

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- How are the individual and collective musical identities of the amateur participants affected by the participation of the professional ensemble members?
- Does collaborative music-making reinforce or challenge existing perceptions of hierarchical relationships between amateurs and professionals?

### **Methods**

The choir used in this study comprises 30 to 40 unauditioned amateur singers (the amateurs), who rehearse weekly, and an ensemble of 8 to 12 paid professionals (the ensemble), which participates in performances having attended rehearsals in the preceding week and on the day. The two groups stand together for rehearsal and performance, with the ensemble stepping forward to perform some works separately.

I chose to investigate the participants' experiences through a qualitative case study (Stake, 2005), with some supporting quantitative data. From a social constructionist perspective, the most effective way to gain insight into the singers' perceptions of self and others is to attempt to access their individual perspective on lived experience. A combination of questionnaires and interviews achieved this ideal. I prioritized the views of the amateur choir members as it was their perspective as the lower status musicians that was of most interest and circulated an online questionnaire to current and lapsed amateur choir members (n=66). Responses totalled 26; 58% from current and 42% from lapsed members. A second questionnaire giving contextual quantitative data was distributed to both current and lapsed members (n = 88; the higher number

reflects the growing membership of the choir); I received 36 responses. Membership of the professional ensemble is more fluid, however, a core group exists to whom I circulated a brief email questionnaire giving contextual data (n=7, 2 male, 5 female). I identified interview subjects using opportunity sampling, via invitations at rehearsals and email. I interviewed the following choristers using unstructured interviewing following a method similar to grounding (Barbour & Shostak, 2011): two founding members of the amateur choir (Nick and Anna), two who joined within the last year (Katherine and Rachel), and one who last sang in the choir two years ago (Yvonne). The gender bias towards female participants reflects the membership of the choir, which at the time of the study had a much higher proportion of female than male members. Interviews began by quoting the interviewee's response to the survey question "Please comment in any way you would like to on the following areas of singing with [the choir]," (including the ensemble), and asking them to expand on their answer. I also interviewed three ensemble singers (Hannah, Isobel, and Emily), again using an unstructured approach and opening with the question "What do you think about the ensemble?" I analysed the data using a thematic, inductive approach (Saldaña, 2009). Names have been changed to protect the identities of the interviewees.

My position with the choir is that of a "deep insider" (Edwards, 2002, p. 71). All researchers must confront issues of reflexivity (Le Gallais, 2008) but the position of the insider is particularly challenging; I needed to re-position and separate myself (Smetherham, 1978) to become researcher rather than participant. Hodkinson (2005), discussing his experience of researching the Goth music scene from the inside, talked about a transition from "insider" to "insider researcher," which allowed him to continue to engage with the object of his study—participating "as an enthusiast as well as a researcher" (p. 136). Kanuha (2000) though proposed

that these two roles are incompatible: “The insider is no longer just another native when endowed with the credentials to study natives” (p. 444). My institutional role as the choir’s manager presented further challenges; when the initial motivation to conduct the research comes from a deep personal connection to an institution, the researcher is heavily implicated in the process, finding that they are examining themselves as much as their participants and blurring the boundaries with autoethnography. In doing so, I encountered some of the issues identified by Mercer (2007), who stated that significant factors may be taken for granted, or preconceptions may intervene; participants may be unwilling to share opinions for fear of judgement or the possibility that their views might be communicated back to the management. During the process it became clear that a considerable challenge was presented by the interviewees’ perception of me as an expert. This manifested itself principally as a desire to elicit my opinions about the choir and its genesis. Although wary of sharing these as part of the recorded interview, I discussed the points they had raised after the recording finished, as I wanted it to be a reciprocal process where I was not the only beneficiary. Although my status as an insider researcher had an inevitable effect on the data collected, my positive relationship with the participants had a similar impact on the quality of their insights and willingness to open up to me as a researcher.

### **Findings and Discussion**

I will discuss the findings from the data with relation to how the socio-musical identity of the amateurs is constructed over time and in a specific context, and then challenged by the ensemble’s arrival. The amateur singers construct an “identity in music” (Hargreaves, et al 2002, p. 1) based on their enjoyment of musical participation (Pitts, 2005), their sense of belonging to the choir (Durrant & Himonides, 1998; Bartolome, 2012), their voice (Oakland, MacDonald, & Flowers, 2013), and their perceived musical competence (Taylor, 2011). Their personal musical

history forms the context for this identity. The arrival of the ensemble members may fundamentally challenge this sense of self, and self within the group (Davidson & Good, 2002).

Four central themes emerged from the data: enjoyment, sense of belonging, musical competence, and musical life stories.

### **Enjoyment**

Amateur questionnaire respondents referred to the rehearsals as “focused,” “challenging but enjoyable,” and “always up-lifting,” with one participant stating that she “really look[s] forward to them.” The enjoyment expressed by amateur members contrasted with their perceptions of the ensemble, for whom making music has a significant economic element:

I slightly feel for some of the professional musicians in a way because I think—because it is their job ... does that detract a little bit from the pure joy of music because it is work? Do they take it so for granted or do they get the same buzz, I think they must do... But] to some extent maybe they're thinking this is all in a day's work. (Anna, Amateur)

It looks a little bit like a paid gig, so 'I don't need to get to know any of these people, I don't need to socialize because I'm just here for a hundred quid and then I'm off and I won't see them again.' (Rachel, Amateur)

Enjoyment arises, amongst other factors, from the satisfaction gained from “getting the music right.” The aspiration towards an accurate representation of the score is inherent to the Western Art Music tradition, and is an important motivation for musical participation. 23% of questionnaire respondents cited good quality singing, high standards, and being “serious when it comes to sounding good” as reasons for joining the choir. Interviewees from both groups refer to the desire to achieve this outcome in performance. One perception is that the role of the ensemble is to help the amateurs to achieve a higher level of accuracy:

...maybe for the professionals there's a kind of minimum acceptable performance level that might be slightly different from an amateur's minimum acceptable performance level, and so I guess our job is to try and make sure that they reach our minimum acceptable performance level rather than theirs. (Emily, Ensemble)

This places a responsibility on the ensemble members to “get it right,” which may or may not be met: “...sometimes they [ensemble members] turn up and they actually don’t know it and that can be a bit annoying” (Nick, Amateur).

### **Sense of belonging**

Interactions with others in musical activities often relationally determine musical identity. The group dynamics arising from regular rehearsals generate a particular kind of group identity (Kreutz & Brunger, 2012). Social dynamics can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of rehearsals (Biasutti, 2013). In this choir, friendly relationships between members appeared important: 38% of responses to the question, “Why did you choose to join?” cited social reasons such as the warm and friendly atmosphere. During the weekly rehearsals, members form and strengthen these relationships particularly during the half-time break. For the amateurs, not being able to socialize in this way with the ensemble is significant:

...in the amateur side, we break every time, we have tea, we chat, and it’s nice and it sort of helps, I think, create that feeling of team whereas the ensemble just descend upon us, sing, and then go off again. (Katherine, Amateur)

In the ensemble everyone knows one another and they kind of hang out together and they’re very separate, and so I think about the concert we did [when] we all broke for dinner in the little hall, and ... with one exception [the ensemble] all sat together and chatted and clearly had things in common and then the other women in our choir sort of went off and did their own thing and it just, it feels like ringers turning out to help out... I happened to be sitting on the floor with one person [from the ensemble] ... I think if we hadn’t been it would have been the ensemble and the amateurs in kind of a throwback to high school where you have the cool kids and the not so cool kids so ones who are good and ones who are not good. (Rachel, Amateur)

The statement that “everyone knows one another” is indicative of the type of musical networks referred to by Cottrell (2004) and Bennett (2008), which act as an important route into paid work for singers. The ensemble members, who perceive the ensemble as a “cool bunch” that they look forward to seeing at the choir’s events, also made reference to this network. This indicates a sense of collective professional identity, in contrast to the group identity formed amongst the amateur choristers by their regular attendance at rehearsals. Furthermore, both

amateur and professional interviewees mentioned that they did not know the names of members of the other group, which highlights further the difference between them. However, the two amateur interviewees who have been in the choir since its inception spoke very positively about the ongoing relationships they had formed with ensemble members.

Beyond the fact of not knowing each others' names, the arrival of the ensemble presents a more profound challenge to the individual identity. Familiarity with our environment, according to Strauss (1959), gives us the ability to negotiate interactions with the selection of the appropriate *I*, and the ability to understand the behavioral motives of others. Unfamiliar environments present challenges to our concept of ourselves and of the other and lead us to ask "Who am I in this situation?" (Strauss, 1959). The arrival of unfamiliar singers (the ensemble) changes the environment and therefore the individual's sense of place in the group. "It's like if somebody showed up without having come to any rehearsals and was standing next to you and singing and it's like 'who's she?'" (Katherine, Amateur). The presence of the ensemble is perceived by both groups to interrupt the dynamic of the choir established through regular rehearsal:

I think it creates a strange dynamic because we don't rehearse with them. (Rachel, Amateur)

...because it's going to be a group of people who turn up for a couple of rehearsals at most...and that's the fundamental of what might breed resentment. (Emily, Ensemble)

Despite the intention to create an inclusive environment where amateurs and professionals can make music collaboratively, some amateurs refer to a perception that the ensemble members are inherently different as singers. To some extent, their presence serves to

reinforce Pitts (2005), who referred to the exclusion of active music-makers from an inner circle of experts:

When I see them performing a group, you know, a professional group, I just think they're incredible...the calibre is raised, and you do kind of think wow, what are these people doing with us again? (Anna, Amateur)

I don't feel intimidated by singing with them but I think some people might ...and whether people feel like we're not good enough if we're don't have professionals... I haven't heard anyone express that but there are people who are easily offended, their confidence is easily undermined, they might say 'we couldn't do that piece of music, it sounds so much better with the ensemble.' (Rachel, Amateur)

### **Musical Competence**

The placing of professional singers on a higher plane is symptomatic of a wider tendency to mystify music. Cottrell (2004) observed a parallel between the powerful emotions that music can evoke in us and the perception that those who engender them through their musical performance are a social other endowed with mysterious powers, a view echoed by some amateur singers—"they sing extremely well, I'm just in awe of it really" (Nick, Amateur). The singing voice itself also emphasises differences between the groups; members regard this highly personal attribute as a marker of separation between the two groups, due to the training undergone by professional singers and the consequentially larger, more developed vocal sound that they produce.

Implied in this mystification is the question of talent. Arguments from the psychology of music suggest that given a normal neurobiological makeup, all humans have the potential for musical development, and the level to which this is achieved is dependent on the educational and social environment (Welch, 2006). There is though a contrasting and commonly held belief that some people are more inherently talented (Hallam, 2010), expressed by Anna as follows:

Some of them are incredibly naturally talented and so they are born with a gift and ... on the one hand they've worked incredibly hard but they are also naturally blessed if you want to put it like that because some of them, they have perfect pitch or whatever that may be. (Anna, Amateur)

This view reflects the literature: Gagné (1985) proposed a model of giftedness manifested by talent (demonstrable skill in a particular area), whilst Sloboda and Howe (1991) argued for the importance of practice in developing musical ability. Kingsbury (2001), on the other hand, suggested that talent was entirely dependent on the context, which seems particularly pertinent here. We present the ensemble members to the amateurs as professionals, despite the fact that they may self-identify otherwise (as semi-professional, or even in one case as an amateur singer); this would appear to define them automatically as more talented.

The amateur-professional collaboration in the choir may offer an opportunity for greater understanding of these mysterious powers. According to one amateur interviewee, an awareness of the processes that go into musical learning at a professional level can achieve this demystification:

When you're in the choir and they come into rehearsals and whatever and you can sort of see how because they're professional and they short-circuit all those processes that we're all labouring with, and they short-circuit them in such a kind of incredible way, it's intuitive I suppose isn't it, they've been doing it for so long, and they've been doing it so much, you get a little glimpse of the process that's involved. (Anna, Amateur)

Another view of the different perceived levels of musical competence is that ensemble members can act as role models as described by Burland and Davison (2002). One ensemble member described her role thus:

To bring people on and show them that what we do, although it may seem ridiculously fantastic to them, is something that they can aspire to, I mean maybe not that they're all going to drop their jobs and go straight to music college, but certainly to expect better from themselves, and you don't expect better from yourself if you don't see what better looks like. (Emily, Ensemble)

Choirs can provide contexts for peer learning (Bonshor, 2014), like that described by Green (2002). There is a difficulty though with a peer learning model in this combined amateur-professional situation. It may serve more to highlight difference and reinforce the idea of a musical gift than to give a realistic aspirational model:

It depends whether you want the ensemble to be aspirational but potentially inaccessible, or whether you want it to be aspirational and something that's achievable over time. (Emily, Ensemble)

Attendance at weekly rehearsals develops the amateurs' sense of their musical competence. The singers have wide-ranging levels of confidence in their own ability, based on previous experiences but reinforced by their regular participation in the choir. They are aware of who the better singers in the group may be and how the group members relate to one another. This relational identity is challenged by juxtaposition with another type of musician:

When you've been singing for a long time and then you're suddenly standing against someone who really can sing and they're much better than you it doesn't feel that brilliant. (Nick, Amateur)

This changed circumstance challenges Nick's sense of himself as a confident member of the choir; as the only regular tenor in the group he sings by himself each week, a fact commented on by himself and other interviewees. The arrival of someone who "really can sing" disrupts his secure identity as the tenor section; suddenly he has to sing with others who are, in his view, automatically able to sing "better" than him.

...it's a bit galling when three tenors turn up for a big concert and you're not as good as they are, that can be a bit wearing. (Nick, Amateur)

The arrival of this new group of singers can also challenge the sense of musical achievement gained from the rehearsal process (Finnegan, 1989), leaving the amateur group feeling that their individual efforts were less valid.

...some people felt like it diminished what they did, and if they'd been rehearsing all term for something and the more professional singers [...] came in, that that took away from what they did. I've never felt like that but I can see why some people might. (Yvonne, Amateur)

An ensemble member noted the need to respect the work that the amateurs have put into learning the music:

I think it's very important that when they've been working on something that you don't kind of slam in and say 'here I am!' (Hannah, Ensemble)

Despite this awareness on the part of the professional ensemble, amateur choir members might still find their arrival undermining. Bonshor (2014) found in his research into the choral confidence amongst amateur singers that the role of the leader was fundamental with choir members identifying as either leaders or followers. Katherine, who described herself as a confident musician in comparison to others in the group, spoke of her desire to sing solo parts and confirm her role as a musical leader within the choir. Her sense of who she is as a singer was tested by the arrival of the ensemble, which she described as “descending on us” and “swooping in.” The arrival of professional singers, who are ascribed a leadership role, rather than attaining it through the mutual learning and awareness described by Bonshor (2014) and Einarsdottir (2014), challenges her position as a leader. Ensemble members also commented on this leadership role:

...it can be really hard singing with amateur singers, not from a personal perspective but purely from a musical one—actually if you’re the person that’s in time and on the right note the feeling that you’re dragging a group of people with you who aren’t quite is immensely tiring and is much more tiring than singing with a group of professionals. (Emily, Ensemble)

### **Musical Life Stories**

Taylor’s (2011) *Rivers of Experience* study of older amateur keyboard players details the multiple connections between self, experience and music occurring across the lifespan.

Reference was made by amateur singers to the idea that given different musical opportunities, their singing careers might have taken a very different path.

I yearn after what might have been – OK so I know that my voice has got much better since having singing lessons, and then I suddenly think what would have happened if I’d had singing lessons when I was 20, or 15, and I don’t know about anybody else but I come from a background where there was never any music because my father left when I was eight... so there was no chance of any kind of music but I always loved music when I got to experience music, later – but there was no chance of learning an instrument or even of singing – I used to sing in church choirs as a kid but never got taught how to sing, just joined in with all the other trebles and I know that I’ve got musicality, I know I have, I can sing a song with ease, bring it to life, but I haven’t got the skills I now need to sing well so you - I look on that as lost opportunity. (Nick, Amateur)

By contrast, another amateur referred to this regretful comparison with a possible outcome in terms of life choices:

I think in a way the fact that they're younger makes it easier for me, in that it's like well it's they're at that part of their life where they can do this sort of thing so it's kind of the natural order of the things - and I'm at a different point and I've made different choices. (Katherine, Amateur)

The idea of aspiration towards a future self versus regretful contemplation of a lost opportunity is helpful in considering the relationship between amateur and professional musicians in the context of the choir. An amateur singer can gain increased confidence in their existing musical identity from singing with the professionals by achieving a pleasing aesthetic result in performance. The reverse of this scenario is that the professional appears as an unreachable better singer and a lost possible self, leading to a more negative self-concept on the part of the amateur.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The study revealed that the arrival of the professional ensemble at a relatively late stage in the rehearsal process had significant effects upon the individual and collective musical identities of the amateur singers. In some ways, these effects were positive. The professional ensemble provided the amateur singers with support to “get the music right,” achieving a higher performance standard which reinforced the enjoyment they experienced from participating in the choir. Singing together also offered opportunities to learn from the professionals. However, the presence of the ensemble also fundamentally challenged the collective identity of the choir, established through the rehearsal process and subsequent relational musical positionality of the members. The arrival of singers perceived to be better seemed to undermine the achievement of the amateur singers, and to challenge their musical self-confidence. Amateur singers' perceptions that the professional ensemble was socially and musically different also reinforced hierarchical differences between the two groups.

If the overall effect of this musical scenario were to reinforce status relationships based on hierarchy of difference, and to challenge the musical identity and sense of achievement

established by regular participation in musical experiences by amateur musicians, then one would have to argue that it is fundamentally flawed as a model. The emotional significance of the human voice is particularly relevant. There is an extent to which this musical scenario is asking two groups of musicians to perform alongside another whose basic vocal instrument is so different as to be incomparable, due to the advanced levels of vocal training achieved by the ensemble members. However, if by collaborating musically, rewarding standards of performance can be achieved, then perhaps there is something to be gained from this type of collaboration. If the conductor considers the choir as a place of education, where amateur singers can learn by collaborating with professionals, and professionals can reconnect with the amateur relationship with musical participation, then it has a pedagogical role to fulfil. If though this role becomes a rescue situation, where heroic ensemble members arrive to “save the day” (and save the performance), the work undergone by the amateurs to learn the repertoire is undermined and devalued.

The implications of the study are twofold: the potential for change within this choir specifically in order to address the issues identified, and the wider implications of the findings. In terms of the choir, change has been effected already: amateur members are given more information about the professional ensemble and we provide name badges. Amateur singers are being given more opportunities for solo roles and concerts now include items for the amateur group to perform without the ensemble. In terms of the implications of the study for other musical situations, it is interesting to consider what the status of amateur-professional performance collaborations can realistically be. The fundamental difference in motivation behind participating—that the professionals are there making music for money as part of a career in which every performance is subject to judgement, whilst the amateurs are participating primarily

“for the love of it” (Booth, 2000, p. 1)—must have implications for the musical behaviour of both groups in this context. A key factor in this is the attendance of the professionals at rehearsals; as identified in the study, rehearsals serve both social and musical purposes, and without the regular socio-musical contact engendered by them, it is difficult for the two groups to exist as one entity. The issues raised by this piece of research go to the heart of what it is to perceive oneself as an amateur singer, and how relationships between different types of musicians can challenge identity formation.

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