

Singing makes happy **From „Street Choir“ to the „Choir of Grumpy Persons“**

Everyone who sings knows that singing creates a positive and comfortable feeling. Singing in a community is like a warm shower after a stressful working day. For many years I also sang in a choir and finally made my hobby my job. Even if I am not singing in a choir any longer I am still fascinated by the phenomenon that singing is not only fun but also keeps fit and stabilises one's health if practised regularly.

Currently science is interested more than ever in the impact of singing on people's body and mind. But even without scientific analysis and research we realize that we feel exhilarated when singing. Singing makes vocal chords vibrate. This vibration confers to the bones and fills the resonating cavities of our bodies with sounds. Our whole system literally starts vibrating. Active choral members often told me that they return home after a rehearsal in a „completely elated“ mood.

But the experience of singing implies much more. Singing in a community supports the feeling of togetherness and strengthens people's self-confidence and self-respect. The long-term documentation about the „Street Choir“ by ZDFneo clearly showed how the behaviour of the choir members changed during the project and finally had a positive impact on their lives. In cooperation with ZDFneo the pianist Stefan Schmidt united in 2009 street children, homeless persons, drug addicts and other people with difficult backgrounds in one choir. Due to this work the singers become more self-confident and are able to handle their lives in a different way. Their work, the weekly mutual rehearsal, shows that people possess a lot of power and that the energy set free through singing can be seen as a kind of means for self-help. These people had luck.

The fact that singing indeed creates feelings of joy became visible during another choir project. In 2013 the „Choir of Grumpy Persons“ was founded. A bunch of truly depressed singers under the scientific guidance by the musicologist Gunter Kreutz came together in order to achieve an improved, measurable well-being due to the effects of music. For this reason for a long time saliva samples were taken before and after the rehearsals. The analysis showed that regular singing led to an accumulation of oxytocin in the singers' bodies. This hormone has a stress reducing effect, is effective against anxiety and finally leads to a kind of well-being. If this hormone is increasingly being released in the body we feel happy. After singing for six months in the choir the singers confirmed that they felt more fit and stronger and their mind underwent a change. This project was accompanied by Anke Engelke and her show „So was wie Glück, eine Reise mit Anke Engelke“ (ARD, 18.11.2013; 58:33 minutes).

Thanks to singing I very often experienced happy moments myself - e.g. when enthusiasm and delight of award-winning choirs lead to high spirits such as during the award ceremony at the World Choir Games. At such an occasion the emotions of cheering singers confer to all attendees in the music hall. It is always a touching moment of exorbitant joy.

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