Singing Competition through Reality Television as a Platform in Music Industry

Mohamad Safri Bin Shaharuddin
Department of Music, Faculty of Human Ecology
43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
e-mail: msafri85@gmail.com.my


Abstract

Reality television singing competition is about a singing competition that broadcasted on television in Malaysia, where it recorded an individual or group of people to showcase their amateur talent in singing before becoming a singer. There are many reality television singing competition that held in Malaysia each year in accordance with the format of each television stations. This study explores the development of a singing competition through reality television to what extent the singing competition able to nurture the talent and musical skills of a contestant when competing in a singing competition. Therefore questioning whether the voting system with other factors such as personality, physical appearance, and commercial value affecting the talent thus making the singing competition became a popularity program.

Keywords: musical skills, reality television, singer, singing, singing competition, talent

Introduction

Music competition is an open occasion intended to distinguish and grant extraordinary soloist, musical ensembles, and musicologist. The European classical art music has long relied on the institution of music competitions to provide an opportunity where it identifies the young talented musicians thus contributes it to the establishment of their professional careers. Some competitions offer the fortunate winner a recital appearance with exposure to professional music criticism, an appearance not otherwise available to talented but unknown figures, or monetary awards that ensure voice lesson and literature coaching with prominent teachers (Miller, 2011). One of the oldest music competitions in the world is the International Naumburg Competition, in New York, which had its first competition in 1926 (Serinus, 2010).

The beginning of the first singing competition was held way back around 1790 where the Stoughton Musical Society was challenged to a contest by the choir
of the First Paris Church in nearby Dorchester. The Stoughton singers confidently picked up the challenged. America’s first singing contest was on. In the end, the Dorchester singers acknowledged their defeat towards the Stoughton singers and endorsed the taste and judgment (Landrigan, 2014). This marks the beginning of singing contest for a music competition even though it was sung in a choral style and not solo nor band during that particular time.

In recent decades the music competitions have been developed in the field of popular music singing competitions so that ordinary people can also showcase their talent in music. The music competition with the largest viewers/audiences based on the singing format is widely televised in the popular music genre, such as the Eurovision Song Contest, American Idol, and The Voice.

**The Rise of Reality Television**

Reality television programmed at present was considered as one of the most important evolution as commercial tools history of mass media. For the past decade, the reality television programmed was regularly utilized as a mainstream tool that dominating television program and this reality television format/ concept/ genre became a top television format/ concept/ genre based on ratings in the United States of America alone (Coyne, Robinson, & Nelson, 2010).

Reality television programming has been around since the first broadcasted of Candid Camera in the late 1940’s. Reality television programs can be defined as “film real people as the live out events (contrived or otherwise) in their live lives, as these events occur” (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003).

Since that it has been evolving into many types of reality television programming formats. Thus, it is important to examine and categorize the reality television program format within this genre such as romantic, talent, quiz, and game (Bailey & Barbato, 2003).

**Global Format**

The earliest talent search competition for television was called “Original Amateur Hour” (1948). It was first aired by Dumont Network, to which a year later moved over to NBC. It made a historical impact by showcasing talent from and across the United States of America for the first time. Original Amateur Hour helped create a number of stars such as Gladys Knight performed on the show at age 7 and went on to win the show 3 times, Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley who failed to make the cut when he auditioned for the show. It ran for 22 years before it was finally canceled in 1970 (Lucey, 2011).

Next in the line of national talent competitions was Star Search. Star Search switched up the formula by having multiple categories to compete in like the vocal group, male vocalist, female vocalist, model, spokesperson, and comedy just to name a few. The show saw many recent pop idols audition at a young age including Justin Timberlake, Beyonce, Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, Aaliyah, Jessica
Simpson, and Usher. It ran for 12 seasons between 1983 and 1995. The talent competition genre has evolved to become increasingly rich and complex as a result of strategic and sophisticated choices by the producers. There are a lot of singing competitions and star-making talent shows through reality television nowadays such as Eurovision Song Contest, American Idol, America’s Got Talent, The X-Factor, The Voice has gained its popularity.

Local Identities

It became a phenomenon that the reality television has dominated mainstream television program in Malaysia. Nowadays, reality television shows, particularly the singing competition show are more popular in Malaysia. Comparable to the west, in Malaysia historically share a similar trend that showcasing talents. The first Malaysian talents competitions on television were called “Bakat TV” (Television Talent) (1971). The objective of the program was to seek new talents in many categories of art such as singing, comedy, and instrumentalist. Then by the year 1973 Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) applied a similar program that was broadcasted on the radio. The program was known as “Bakat Radio” (Radio Talent) that featured singing talent competition. The only difference that in “Bakat Radio” (Radio Talent) contestant was restricted to sing traditional music repertoire such as “langgam”, “asli”, “keroncong” and to name a few. “Bakat TV” (Television Talent) together with “Bakat Radio” (Radio Talent) joint and became known as “Bintang RTM” (Radio Television Malaysia Star). It became a phenomenal show since Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) was the only broadcast station as well as service provider. Through the years the idea of talent competition has evolved where it emphasizes only singing.

Lately, programs such as “Akademi Fantasia” (Academy of Fantasia) from Astro, “Mentor Milenia 2017” from TV3, “Bintang RTM” (Radio Television Malaysia Star) from RTM, “Astro Talent Quest” from Astro and “I Wanna Sing” from 8TV (Chinese singing competition), “International Superstar” from Astro Ulagam (Tamil singing competition) had become a trend. Interestingly that these variety of talent shows were in different various languages deriving from Malaysia as a multicultural country. It shows that reality television has been the single most influential phenomenon in the Malaysian television industry in the last decade, and the success of others locally produced programs owes a lot to the launch of Akademi Fantasia in 2003 (Shamshudeen, & Morris, 2013).

Television’s singing competitions don’t make stars like they used to. Many factors are at play, including the loss of novelty as the contestant’s ages and the newer singing shows clogged the scene, the smaller audience of show viewers and the music industry’s larger woes (Keveney, 2014). Voice talents who won a singing competitions losing popularity after became an artist. This raises the questions of why such situations occurred.

The concept of the singing competition has changed over time. The fundamental difference between then and the singing competitions of today is that
there was no focus on the contestant's backstory (background of personalities), physical appearances, commercialization values or popularity votes (McRae, 2014). Even though this is a singing competition, but it sometimes runs the risk of becoming a popularity competition. One way of dealing with this apparent problem is to allocate the entire voting powers to the judges. A reason why the votes of viewers are allowed to determine the winner(s) is that it gives the viewers a sense of participation.

Today, the qualifications of the judges who make decisions regarding the art of singing appear to be in inverse ratio to the importance of the contest (Miller, 2011). Some singing competitions may be judged by persons (at times even a single person) who not only are not singers or teachers of singing, or the newspaper music and entertainment critic, or the artist management representative who neither sings nor understand what music is but who knows what a star looks like.

With sophisticated gadgets and seamless communication pattern in the evaluation of a participant in a television singing talent competitions not only includes an assessment from the judges but also from input draw viewers in and outside the studio. View of the situation singing competition during the review with respect to the assessment of competition must be made.

Conclusion

This ‘Pecah Ruyung’ paper wants to give a comprehensive overview of the study to be conducted. These include aspects of the background study, research interests and soon to include objective and research methodology. This study is important to be implemented so that existing talents can continue to be discovered, promoted and nurtured their talents in the field of Malaysian music industry.

References


**Biography**

Mohamad Safri Bin Shaharuddin is currently a postgraduate master student at Department of Music, Faculty of Human Ecology, University of Putra Malaysia.