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Children Virtual Concert in the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article aims to see a children virtual concert held by La Prima Course and Bandung Philharmonic. Both of them held an online concert in June 2020, when the world was entering new normal era due to Covid-19 pandemic. **Research methods:** The method used in writing this article is descriptive-qualitative by observing watching two virtual concert and long-distance interviews through social media. **Results and discussion:** Children virtual concert have a positive impact for children as activities at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. Other impacts were also felt by the organizers so that the organizers were enthusiastic to routinely hold virtual performances. **Implication:** Covid-19 pandemic makes virtual performance a cost-effective and attractive choice for organizers, children, and parents who concern about art.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian performing arts suffered great shocks due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many performances that are likely to involve large numbers of viewers with a close physical distance in a particular location are canceled, so the organizer must immediately turn the direction of the navigation so that the creative and entertainment process continues to run. Many artists lost their jobs due to postponement of activities involving crowds such as music concerts, dance performances, art exhibitions, and theater performances.

During this pandemic, performing arts in open spaces must be diverted. Performances that actually involve the engagement between the performer and the audience as the most ideal interaction in the fullness and the intensity of performing arts, should now be able to release the attachment due to social distancing and physical distancing. In fact, according to Sumardjo (2001: 2) performing arts is an activity outside of daily work activities. Art and work are separated. Art is a leisure activity which means activities outside of work hours to make a living. Art is a relaxing activity to relax the tension caused by hard work earning a living.

In a seminar at Indonesian Institute of the Arts Denpasar on June 18, 2020 the cultural observer, I Wayan Dibia said that the format of the performing arts must be found immediately, considering the Covid-19 pandemic had overturned a variety of habits that had prevailed in the art universe, especially in the performing arts. Performances presented by artists with the aim of providing entertainment for many people are an expression of a culture that is always up to date. Septiyan (2020: 34) revealed that the government's policy to carry out all activities at home, became a heavy test for artists. Then it is necessary to change the culture of musical performances by organizing online musical performances, with the audience present through the gadget screens in their homes.

Digital media and social media were chosen as the right step as a performance space that gave birth to changes and transformation of the performing arts. The virtual concert during the pandemic became very lively and created artists to work passionately. Lokki (1999: 1) states that creating a virtual concert experience, where visual elements (visual sense involvement) and aural (hearing sensory involvement) are produced artificially is a challenging task. Basically, it is possible to create a convincing virtual acoustic soundscape with an effective digital signal processing method. The virtual concert experience can be made even in real time, with the interaction of the listener and the virtual environment. Therefore, in organizing virtual concerts, it is certainly not only the expertise of artists in the arts that are needed, but artists also required to be able to learn technology and digital.

The use of technology during the pandemic actually gave birth to a lot of creativity. Creativity is not only found in the performing arts, but also in learning. One of the digital media in learning music is MERLOT. Hidayatullah (2020: 64; <https://jurnal.isi-dps.ac.id/index.php/jomsti/article/view/965>) states that current learning trends are beginning to change and society is increasingly leading to the digital world by utilizing social media. In line with the statement Triyanto (2005: 300) that the existence of collaboration of art and technology especially in encouraging the civilization both are in good relationships, filling, needy, give a touch, synergistically according to its proportions. If the activity faced with regards to art, technology becomes its touch, otherwise if the activity faced with regards to technology, then art becomes its touch.

The relationship between technology and art becomes a form of creativity that gives children room to become artists. That relationship can be found in a virtual concert. The virtual concert that caught the attention of the writer was a performance held by La Prima Course and Bandung Philharmonic. Both performances were initiated by the organizer, especially for children. Children perform from home using digital media.

METHODS

The author uses descriptive-qualitative methods with observations and interviews. Observation is done on two virtual performances for children through zoom meeting and also broadcast live through social media such as YouTube and Facebook. Both performances were chosen as they were held in June 2020 by La Prima Course and Bandung Philharmonic. Observation is carried out to observe the phenomenon occurring during a virtual performance.

In a virtual concert there are certainly positive and negative sides, starting from the change in the creativity and managerial process of the organizer, to the experience gained by the artists themselves (in this case the artists are children). Therefore, the author also uses an interview method to get the point of view from the organizer to the virtual concert activities through digital media. Interviews were conducted online using Whatsapp.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Virtual concerts appeared in the Covid-19 pandemic of various organizers, two of which were La Prima Course and the Bandung Philharmonic. The two organizers focus on holding virtual concert for children without charging fees and freeing performance material. Both have the same foundation, which is to fill activities at home and invite children to keep playing music, singing, and dancing. Both director of La Prima Course and the Bandung Philharmonic co-founders established music and orchestra courses as their dedication to art education, especially music for the next generation in Indonesia.

La Prima Course is a music course in Bali and Bandung. At first this music course was a studio founded in Tabanan by the late Putu Djoni, an art figure and activist in Bali, but the studio closed since he was sick. Then La Prima was reopened in Bandung by his son, I Nyoman Mahendra. Starting in 2019 La Prima reopened in Tabanan - Bali by the children of I Nyoman Mahendra.



Figure 1. La Prima 1983 on TVRI Denpasar Anniversary Day
(Source: <https://www.instagram.com/laprimacourse/>)

Chairman of La Prima, I Nyoman Mahendra held a Virtual Home Concert with the aim of training independent children in playing music, introducing concert activities using digital media, and involving family participation at home. Every Sunday afternoon the students who are members of La Prima perform their music from home. This is also a new thing for him to use digital media. Therefore this virtual concert is held as a learning facility for teachers, students and parents to utilize technology.



Figure 2. La Prima Course Bandung in 2017 at Dago Tea House Bandung with I Nyoman Mahendra as a conductor
(Source: <https://www.instagram.com/laprimacourse/>)

Bandung Philharmonic is the first professional symphony orchestra in Bandung, which was established in 2016. Bandung Philharmonic Concert Program is a symphony concert, children concert series, chamber music series, and also has an educational program. This educational program provides free instruments and orchestral music training to children who are less fortunate. Bandung Philharmonic has established an ensemble in 2019 and plans to make up to 100 ensembles for the next 10 years.



Figure 3. Bandung Philharmonic's First Concert in 2016
(Source: <https://www.instagram.com/bandungphil/>)



Figure 4. Bandung Philharmonic Education Program in 2019
(Source: <https://www.instagram.com/bandungphil/>)

Program Director of the Bandung Philharmonic Children Concert Series, Mario Hasan, stated that since the pandemic and new normal he must adapt and innovate in designing programs. During the pandemic, the place for children to perform as in schools, courses or entertainment stages becomes limited. The virtual performance was chosen by Bandung Philharmonic as a pilot project to become a meeting point for various parties.

Children's Virtual Concert

During the Covid-19 pandemic, children don't go to school but study online from home, so it was inevitable that children would become more and more closely connected with technologies such as handphone, laptop, computer, and so on. Many complaints come from parents such as children who are bored at home, a lot of learning tasks and must be done at all times, up to the deadline for the tasks to be uploaded via digital media. This is very difficult for children and parents at home.

Children who take music courses like at La Prima Course also join classes online. Teachers and students face several problems in learning music online, moreover music is a practical activity. Teachers are also required to be creative in providing materials and using social media assistance such as YouTube so that children can independently practice music at home. La Prima Course as a music course feels that concert activities need to be held so that children continue to feel happy and encouraged to practice during the pandemic. However, the limitations of the performance space cause concert activities to be done virtually.

The Virtual Home Concert was chosen by La Prima Course as a concert activity for children who take online courses. This concert was held from home. Therefore this activity is called a home concert, which uses digital zoom meeting as a virtual performance space. The Virtual Home Concert was attended by students of La Prima Course Bandung and Bali. In this virtual concert, children who learn musical instruments such as piano, violin, guitar, drums, and vocals in addition to show the results of learning music during the pandemic, can also get acquainted with one another. The distance between Bandung and Bali with two hours of flight even feels close because it is in one virtual performance.



Figure 5. Virtual Home Concert La Prima Course through zoom meeting
(Source: author's documentation)

Bandung Philharmonic Children Performance chose the theme of the show "Everyone is Special" which was broadcast live through YouTube Bandung Philharmonic. This virtual performance as a platform to show the abilities that each child has is different, and introduces to the children that their friends throughout Indonesia have different abilities so that everyone is special. The performers in this program consist of children with a maximum age of 12 years from all over Indonesia, as well as some from Melbourne-Australia.

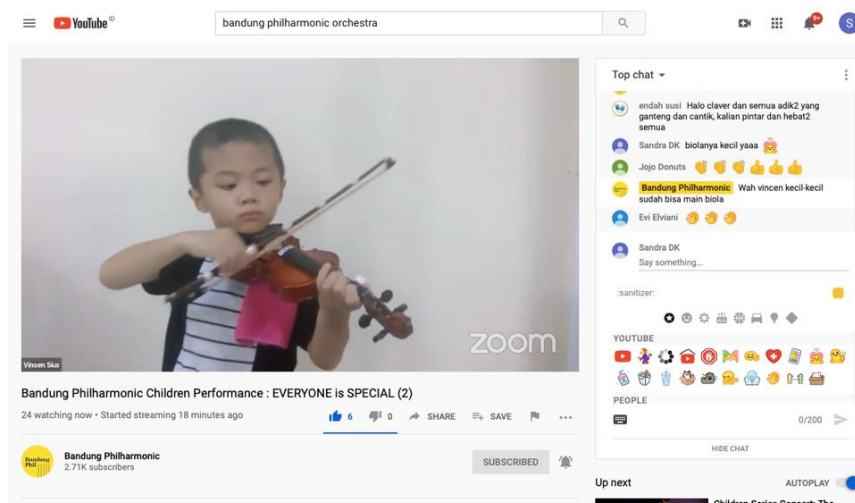


Figure 6. Bandung Philharmonic *Children Performance* through YouTube
(Source: author's documentation)

Bandung Philharmonic opens this virtual performance to a wider scope. Not limited to certain music courses, from certain schools, or from certain institutions. With the extent of this virtual concert, the author can see that each child does have different abilities. There are children who are just learning music who have dared to join in virtual performances to those who are already good at playing musical instruments at their age and also some are playing traditional music. With unconditional virtual concerts such as music competitions that have certain standards, children can freely explore, express, and appreciate art as their learning process. However they can show a quality of musical performances (Jatmika, 2020; <https://jurnal.isi-dps.ac.id/index.php/jomsti/article/view/966>) of their age.

Cooperation between Children and Parents

Providing a virtual concert experience is one of the programs to develop children's creativity in the arts. Junaidi (2014: 98) states that children's desires will vary according to what gives energy. Children's wishes which are the interests and expertise of children can be realized with the consent of the parents. Therefore, parents who provide energy to their true children can realize that parents need to be fully present to develop children's interests, talents, and creativity.

This virtual concert requires the presence of parents next to their children, such as turning the accompaniment when their children perform and directing the camera so that their children can be seen clearly when the virtual performance is in progress. Cooperation between parents and children is needed so that this virtual concert can run smoothly. In these two virtual concerts, a number of parents have been seen working together to do this and providing various equipment such as speakers, two mobile phones and laptop.

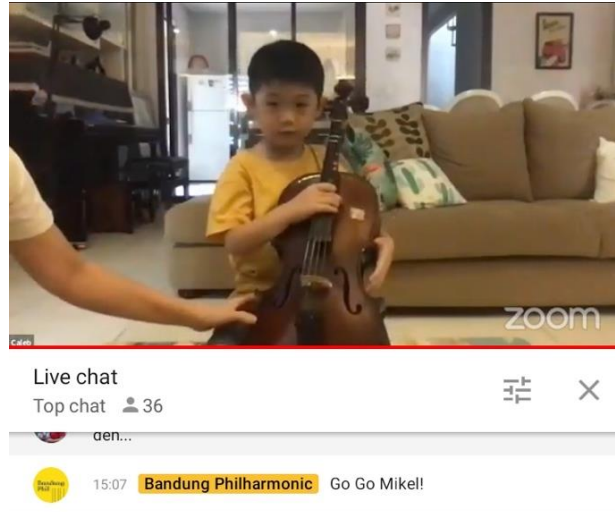


Figure 7. Parents supporting their child at Bandung Philharmonic Children Performance
(Source: author's documentation)

At the virtual concert of La Prima Course and Bandung Philharmonic, the two organizers held a group photo session at the end of each performance. In a group photo session, parents were seen accompanying the children to take pictures. This proves that parents still accompany children from the beginning until the end of the performance.

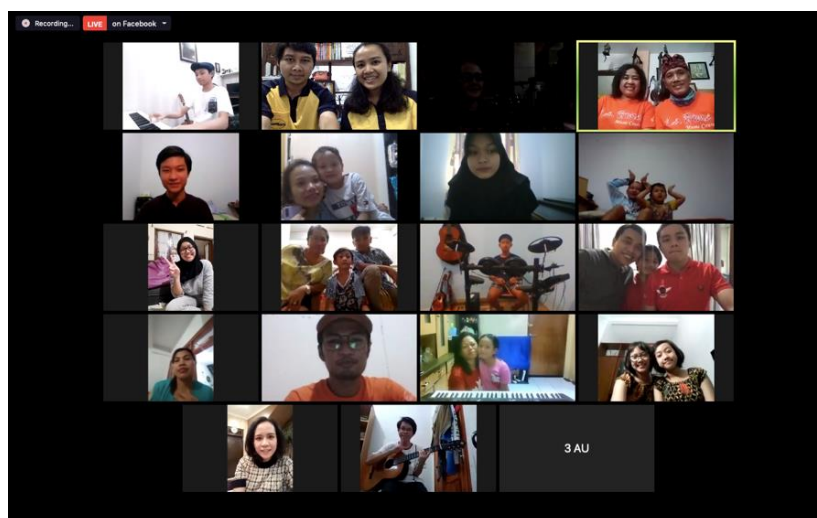


Figure 8. Group Photo Session La Prima Virtual Concert
(Source: author's documentation)

Virtual concerts for children can not only build performance space for children. In addition to the effects of the covid-19 pandemic which requires parents to work from home and children study online from home. More than that, this virtual concert can build connections between children and parents. With this collaboration between children and parents, the love relationship in the family will be more closely developed.

Impact of Virtual Concert

Virtual concerts certainly have an impact on organizers, children as artists, and parents. The Virtual Home Concert held by La Prima Course has an impact for children to interact using digital media as self-actualization, not just interacting fingers with social media. Through a virtual performance children can show their ability to play music, share with friends, and parents through digital media without fear of being wrong, stage fright, and relax because the performances are held from their homes.



Figure 9. One of the Children Perform Together with his Father and Brother at La Prima Virtual Home Concert # 2 on June 21, 2020
(Source: author's documentation)

Parents and children can work from home with art to be able to share time during work from home as well as school from home. Parental attachment and

togetherness can also be awakened with virtual performances like this. Parents feel the positive impact in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, their children can keep on concerts and practice music to prepare for this virtual concert. One representative from La Prima students stated that it was not easy to encourage children to practice music, need heavy struggle and assistance. But the investment of parents to children through music, is a very good investment.

Bandung Philharmonic Children Performance also received positive responses and high enthusiasm from the community and parents. They are happy because an online system that can easily bring them together with friends from various regions to appear in one performance even from home. Bandung Philharmonic as the organizer is very helped by current technology. Although far from each other, this famous orchestra in Bandung can still be a stage for children who have interests and talents in music and other arts.

The positive impact of this virtual concert is being able to reach as many participants and audiences as possible. In contrast to the performances before the Covid-19 pandemic, which requires the organizers to look for a concert venue and the number of audiences is limited to one region or one city. In addition, bonding between parents and children can be developed through collaboration in virtual performances. But because this is still new, of course there are many technical things that need to be improved, especially for the organizers.

The negative impact of this virtual concert is the audience that is not ideal like an offline concert. Similarly, the readiness of the organizer and parents to hold a virtual concert. The technical problems are audio settings, camera and microphone placement so that they can be heard and clearly seen during the performance (Phetorant, 2020; <https://jurnal.isi-dps.ac.id/index.php/jomsti/article/view/967>).

Indonesia as a developing country and its people are not familiar with the concept of a concert like this. The virtual concert actually developed because it was forced by the Covid-19 pandemic while overseas without pandemics they often had online concerts. Technology is indeed a western creation, while

Indonesia is only a follower and user of technology. But somehow for the benefit of children, virtual concerts like this are extraordinarily good at being able to provide education and psychological reinforcement in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic that is not yet clear when it ends.

CONCLUSION

Virtual concerts emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic as home-based activities carried out by organizers and performers. Children's virtual concerts are held by organizers who focus on children's art education. This performance provides space for children to be able to show their expertise in the arts.

The success of virtual concerts does not only come from children as artists, but also parents. Cooperation between children and parents is needed so that the show can run smoothly. In addition, because of the age of the children still need the assistance of parents when using technology and digital media.

This children virtual concert has many positive impacts on the organizer, the child as an artist, and the parent as a supporter. This positive response generated tremendous enthusiasm during the Covid-19 pandemic to continue working within its limitations. The negative impact, there are still many technical obstacles that must be addressed. In addition, it also needs the community's readiness to appreciate virtual concerts like this because new virtual concerts are booming because of the conditions in the pandemic. But with a virtual concert, children have positive activities while stay at home.

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