

From Nothing to Something: The Talent Development Journey of New Zealand Samoan Tenors, Pene and Amitai Pati

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Abstract

This paper outlines Gagné's (2008) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent 2.0 (DMGT) and its application to the talent development process of young New Zealand opera singers Darren Pene Junior (Pene) Pati, and Amitai Pati from Mangere, Auckland. Data gathered from interviews, documentaries and other media sources have been used in this analysis. Fa'aSamoa (Samoan culture) is explored in order to increase understanding of Samoan conceptions of giftedness and talented and how this fits in relation to the identification and development of Pene and Amitai's singing abilities. This analysis shows that the DMGT framework can be used effectively to show the development process of the Pati brother's gifts transforming into talents. It also provides the opportunity to begin to identify factors which may require focus and support in order to promote increased understanding to better support the development of Samoan student's gifts and talents.

Keywords: Education, Gagné, gifted and talented, Samoan, music, Opera, Pati brothers

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Brothers Amitai and Pene Pati are readying to hit the world stage with their extraordinary singing talents. Coming from humble beginnings in Mangere, Auckland, New Zealand, these two brothers are making the most of their natural talents, working hard to develop their operatic skills, and enjoying their road to success. Having both won significant operatic competitions at the New Zealand level, they are now studying, by invitation, at the prestigious Welsh International Academy of Voice. From the lens of the media, the talent development journey of the Pati brothers can be mapped out, and using Gagné's (2008) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent 2.0 (DMGT), some of the more prominent factors involved in this process can be identified. A significant part of understanding the brother's journeys is having insight into Fa'aSamoa, the Samoan way, and Samoan conceptions of giftedness and talent. This, as Bevan-Brown (2004, p178) explains, is as "no ethnic group's concept of giftedness and talent can stand alone...it is affected by the myriad of attitudes, beliefs, needs, values, customs and other concepts that are the essence of the culture itself".

Fa'aSamoa – The Samoan Way

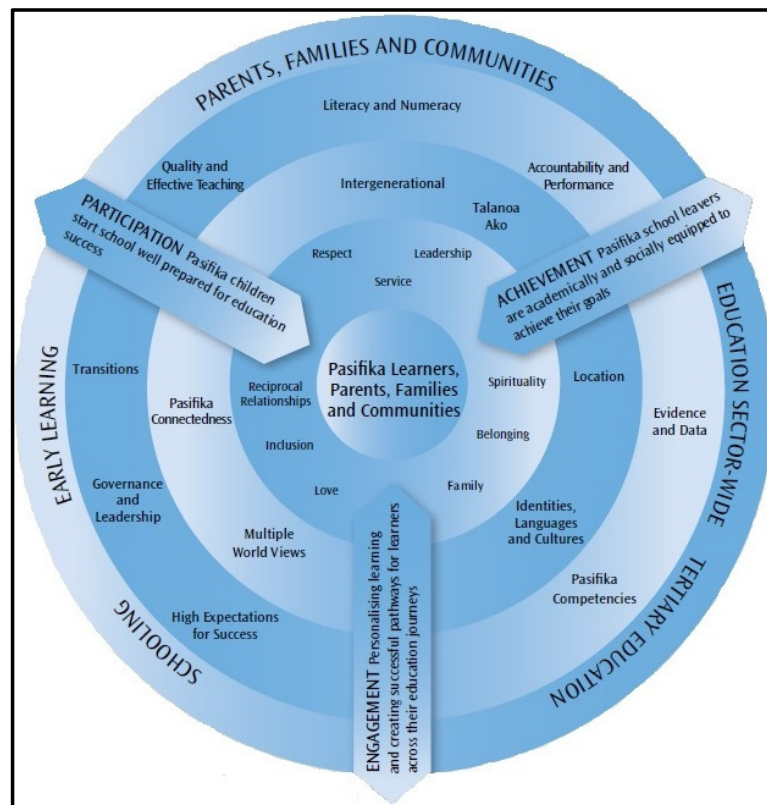
The Education Review Office (n.d.) acknowledges that “gifted and talented students represent diverse ethnic backgrounds and ages, with a multiplicity of gifts and talents. Concepts of giftedness and talent vary across cultures”. Conceptions also vary within cultures as “people with the same cultural background differ from one another across the entire spectrum of human traits and characteristics including the degree to which they identify and adhere to cultural beliefs, values and practices” (Bevan-Brown, 2009, p6). Underpinning Samoan conceptions of giftedness are the cultural values and beliefs of Fa'aSamoa.

Some of the core values of traditional Fa'aSamoa are those of aiga (family), taulala Samoa (Samoan language), gafa (genealogies), matai (chiefly system), lotu (church) and fa'alavelave (ceremonial and other family obligations). However it is important to acknowledge that “the Fa'aSamoa practiced in Samoa may differ from that in New Zealand. Not every Samoan has the same understanding of the concept. What remains constant is maintaining the family and links with the homeland” (Anae, 2012). Anae contests that aiga is the common element, and that “within the family, giving and receiving tautua (service), fa'aaloalo (respect) and alofa (love) are crucial in Samoan social relations”. These values are expressed by Moses Mackey, a New Zealand Samoan baritone who sings with Pene and Amitai in their performance group Sol3 Mio, and studies with them at the Wales International Academy of Voice. He shares that “knowing that we can sing this type of music, that we love this type of music... we can actually use it as a sort of way for us to give back to our families” (One News, 2013).

Tongati'o, (1997, p133) identifies that “for Pacific peoples, education is highly valued both generally, and as a vehicle for development and social mobility” continuing on to say that “successful Pacific peoples are perceived as those who have achieved academic success while at the same time maintaining a strong Pacific/New Zealand cultural identity”. Moses supports the notion of education as a means of social mobility with his comment that “we're in this artform...it's not well represented by Samoan and our families are from small villages in Samoa...for them when they were young...New Zealand was the big trip...they came over to New Zealand because they wanted a better life. They wanted their kids to explore the world” (One News, 2013). The opportunity and ability to operate in two worlds, that of Fa'aSamoa and the New Zealand culture, is seen to provide the chance to make new links (Fuamatu, 2008) and afford new opportunities. “Pasifika children, like all children, have the potential to go far beyond our wildest dream...they will take their aiga/family and community with them!” (Galua, 2010), thus to have the opportunity to make such links and be successful is to build the prosperity of all their people.

Tongati'o (1997, p134) notes that “it is increasingly recognised that Pacific cultural heritages can add value to an academic education” and advises that “Pacific communities must be partners in identifying, developing and managing solutions...if strategies are successful”. This notion is reflected by both the Education Review Office (n.d.) which states that “schools'

definitions and ways of identifying should reflect the beliefs, values, attitudes, and customs of the school community” and encompassed within the Pasifika Plan which is embodied in the diagram below.



Pasifika Success: Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017

Samoan Conceptions of Giftedness and Talent

Pasifika parents are often reluctant to identify their children as being gifted. It is often much more acceptable, and more often an expectation that it is the role of the teacher to do this. It is seen as vital that Samoan children are challenged and that schools identify giftedness, as this is viewed as fundamental to existence (Fuamatu, 2008). For this to occur successfully, teachers need to have sufficient cultural understanding and awareness of culturally specific conceptions of giftedness in order to be able to recognise and support the development of natural abilities.

Among Samoan conceptions of giftedness, as identified through Fuamatu’s (2008) research, gifts come from God, are innate and to be respected. These may appear at a young age, or later on in life. Giftedness is considered as having been blessed by God and by one’s parents, and as such, natural gifts are valued special abilities. It is viewed as complex, and involves multiple talents with creative artistic abilities and musical skill among those identified as notable. The boys have both been blessed with amazing natural voices and the ability to express words and emotions through song and performance, however these abilities do not

sit in isolation, as the values of alofa, tautua and fa'aaloalo mean that giftedness also entails service to others which entwines these values (Fuamatu, 2008; Crown, n.d.). Pene and Amitai demonstrate these values, with one example cited by the media being their participation in the New Zealand Opera School concert which was hosted at Wanganui Collegiate and free for the public to attend. The brother's participation was a way of offering their thanks to the public of Wanganui for their support (Ferguson, 2012).

A number of other key elements were identified through Fuamatu's research including other cultural values. For example, listening and obedience are essential components, as is having pride in the Fa'aSamoa identity. Language knowledge is prized, as is being articulate and confident. The belief is that these values are to be instilled within the home. Emphasis is placed on having roles within the community, such as participating in church and passing on cultural understanding. It is important to be able to distinguish between the Samoan and New Zealand worlds, however as well as this, is it necessary to be able to adapt and develop a unique identity to cross between these worlds effectively.

Aura and mana are spiritual gifts, and are also part of the holistic view of giftedness which encompasses physical, intellectual and spiritual traits. Characteristics of spiritual gifts include poto (wisdom), hospitality, humility and love. Humility is a characteristic which shows through strongly in the media reports about Pene and Amitai. For example, upon winning the New Zealand Aria competition, Pene had shared that "winning this award is well above my expectations. I was blown away" (University of Auckland, 2009), while Amitai's actions spoke louder than words when it was announced that he was the winner of the New Zealand Lexus Song Quest, and later in an interview with Radio New Zealand (2012) he said that it "came more as a shock". Other aspects of personality which may demonstrate giftedness are; displaying innovative thinking, have a strong sense of moral justice, resilience and enthusiasm.

It is important that giftedness is shared through service, in order to benefit society. Bevan-Brown (2004, p180) highlights that when such gifts are not shared through service, they are not passed forward through the generations and may be lost. Pene and Amitai have been sharing their own singing abilities from a very young age. Their performance for college students exemplifies their continued acts of service. Amitai and Pene stood proud as New Zealand Samoan's, spreading their sounds and their stories with students, not only sharing their values and abilities, but showing that such success is achievable, barriers can be surmounted.

O le aha I le pule o le tautua

To be a leader you must first serve

- Samoan Proverb (Galua, 2010)

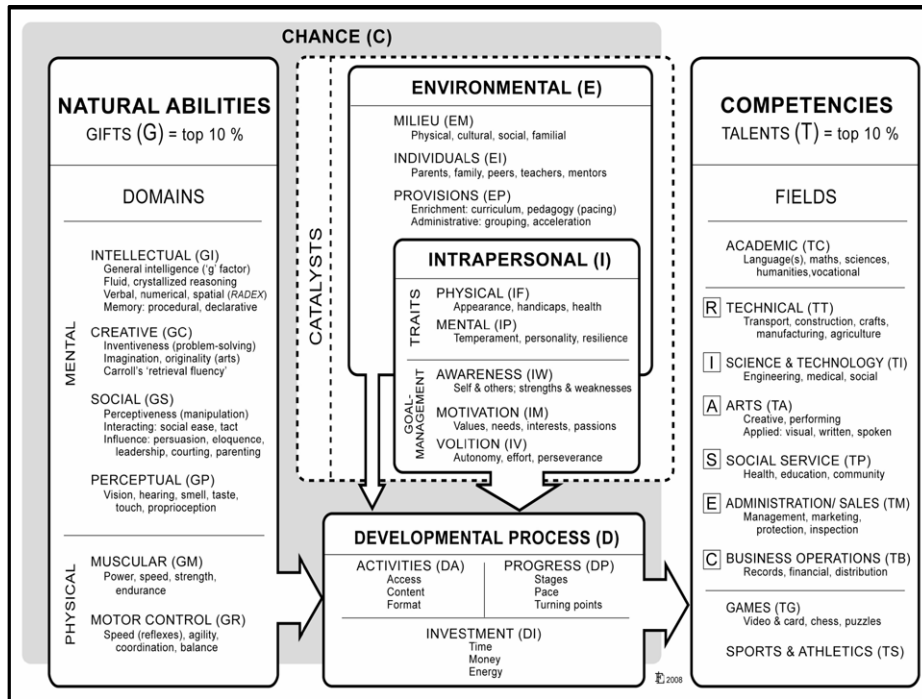
Through such service, Pene and Amitai have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. Strength in leadership is important, linking not only to service, but also to the chiefly system. It is characterised by outstanding, confident personalities who act as positive role models and mentors who are responsible and to be respected (Fuamatu, 2008). These are characteristics displayed by both Pene and Amitai, particularly when in the midst of performing.

The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent

The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (Gagné, 2008) is a talent development model which affords a framework from which to consider environmental, intrapersonal and developmental processes and the effects of these in the process of transforming natural abilities (gifts), into competencies (talents). In describing this framework, Gagné (2004, p120) clearly defines the two terms, gifts and talent. Gifts are divided into mental and physical abilities, each further separated into the subcategories of mental and physical abilities. Mental abilities are categorised as intellectual, creative, social and perceptual, while the physical abilities are grouped into muscular and motor control. It is important to note that “it is only when the level of expression becomes outstanding that the label ‘gifted’ may be used” and that this expression can be more readily seen in younger children “because environmental influences and systematic learning have exerted their moderating influence in a limited way” (Gagné, 2004, p123).

Influence is exerted on these natural abilities which may support or hinder their development. Environment, in the form of milieu, significant individuals and provisions interact with Intrapersonal characteristics which include physical and mental traits as well as the goal-management aspects of awareness, motivation and volition. These all feed into the Developmental Process and are in turn affected by the availability of activities, investment and progress. Gagné proposes that with an appropriately supportive combination of these things, the natural abilities will develop into talents in particular fields.

The final component of the DMGT is that of Chance. Gagné (2004, p129) expresses that “there is some direct degree of chance in all the causal components of the model, except the talent development process itself” and describes the role of chance as “that of a *qualifier* of any causal influence, along with direction (positive/negative) and intensity. Chance represented the degree of control that talentees had over environmental influences” (Gagné, 2008, p5). Chance is no longer considered a necessary component of the visual DMGT, but presently remains in the model.



Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent 2.0

Considering Pene and Amitai's Talent Development through the DMGT

Gagné (2004, p120) states that "giftedness designates the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expressed natural abilities (called outstanding aptitudes or gifts), in at least one ability domain, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10 per cent of age peers" and continues on to say that "...few researchers in the social sciences deny the significant contribution of hereditary factors in explaining individual differences in human characteristics, including physical and mental abilities, interests or temperament" (p123). In considering this, it is not surprising that two brothers are both heading for the international stage with their extraordinary natural operatic abilities.

The first to note these abilities was Aorere College choirmaster, Terrence Maskell. Having significant experience in working with Pasifika students and being immersed in Polynesian voices for over forty years, Terrence is well qualified to identify the unique qualities and abilities presented by the brothers and appreciate the rarity of these. Terrence identified that Pene and Amitai had a "natural God given talent" (One News, 2012), and that their singing came naturally and very easily to them. Gagné (2004, p123) states that "...the easier or faster the learning process, the greater the natural abilities". Further evidence in support of the level of their abilities is the quick ascension up the ranks as the brothers extended beyond the school choir to national level singing opportunities. In reference to Pene, it was noted that "...he rose up the ranks quickly, making the Graduate Choir of New Zealand in the fourth form and soon after, the New Zealand Youth Choir and New Zealand Secondary Schools Choir" (Waiariki Institute of Technology, 2009).

A number of other qualified experts in the field of music have also identified these qualities, including several teachers at Auckland University, performance teacher Patricia Wright and vocal studies co-coordinator Dr. Te Oti Rakena. Current tutor and world class tenor Dennis O'Neill of the Wales International Academy of Voice, stated that "there's a natural quality about it that is, well you just don't hear it...you can go for ten years or more without hearing another voice like that...a very, very, very rare thing to acquire, well not to acquire, to have been born with" (One News, 2013). However, he also commented that their voice alone is not the answer. Charm, intelligence, musicality and the fact that they are very quick all contribute significantly to their ability to sing so well. The notion of rarity is one highlighted by Sternberg and Zhang (1995, p89) whereby a "rarity criterion states that in order to be labelled as gifted, an individual must possess a high level of an attribute that is rare relative to peers. The rarity criterion is needed to supplement the excellence criterion because a person may show an abundance of a given attribute, but if a high evaluation of that attribute is not judged to be rare, the person is not viewed as gifted... Thus, one may display excellence, but unless such excellence is rare, one is not likely to be viewed as gifted." This is supported through the DMGT model by the use of the prevalence component which proposes a ten percent threshold (Gagné, 2004).

Gagné (2004, p127) identifies that "the environment exerts its positive or negative impact in many different ways". Juliet and Pene Senior, Pene and Amitai's parents, immigrated to New Zealand and made their home in Mangere, Auckland. Having come from a situation of economic hardship in Samoa, they sought to access improved opportunities for themselves and their family. Both are trained nurses and are employed, however, resources at home were limited for the family as there was an obligation for Juliet and Pene Senior to send money home to the Islands. The result of this was that they "had to make sacrifices". Juliet acknowledged that "the kids were the last people to have anything....we have to give money for the family first before we do something for you guys" (One News, 2012). In speaking about this, Pene stated "the simple things like, stuff like you didn't have lunch kinda stuff. You'd just go to school and get full on tap water". However something that Juliet and Pene Senior did afford the boys was an extraordinary opportunity, that of performing regularly at the rest home where they worked, an act of service for others, which would allow Pene and Amitai to learn and practice their cultural and familial values, and develop their confidence and skills in singing. Pene recalled "I was four when I started singing, obviously he (in reference to Amitai) was two, so he was being carried around" (One News, 2012).

Pene and Amitai Pati attended Aorere College which One News (2012) describes as being "where music is the life blood", something conceivably not surprising with the wealth of Pasifika culture in the school community. It was here that Pene was encouraged by his sister to participate in the school choir, perhaps an expectation relating to feagaiga (a covenant between siblings, where the brother must respect, serve and honour his sister (LV, 2010)), rather than a suggestion, and where his talent would first be identified and supported at

school by Terrence. Amitai soon followed in Pene's footsteps, taking inspiration from his brother. "I always looked up to him and just wanted to get up with him and sing with him. It's a huge pleasure to be doing the same thing" (Stewart, 2012).

Throughout their journey, there have been other significant individuals who have impacted on their learning and success, including teachers, mentors, role models and fellow performers. Of those, the most notable mentors are New Zealand Opera Singers Malvina Major and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, whose guidance goes beyond teaching skills, to a more holistic supporting role. Pene talks about his appreciation of "hanging out with Dame Kiri", describing her demeanour as being motherly, yet professional, firm and strict (One News, 2012). Dame Malvina plays a similar role, saying "she plans to go to Wales to see the boys working and keep an eye on them" (Argyle, 2012).

Of all those significant in their journey, it is quite possibly the brothers themselves who provide the best support for one another. Amitai shared that Pene "knows exactly what I'm going through - we're both from the same family and we both understand how our voices work. He is probably the greatest support I have" (Stewart, 2012)

As well as home and school contexts and influential people, access to provisions has also impacted on the journey of Amitai and Pene. Provisions have included admission to join in choirs at various levels, involvement in competitions, training, mentoring and opportunities to work with professionals in the field. Grouping has been a significant factor, with the chance to work with others who share similar interests and abilities. Opportunities to learn have been offered in various contexts, as a member of a group such as in the situation of choirs, as a pair with lessons at school and private tutoring, and one on one through feedback at competitions and tuition such as that offered at the Welsh International Academy of Voice. Pace seems to have been an important component. The boys have had the opportunity to rise up the ranks quickly with a fast paced approach. The allowance to work at a personal pace was also noted by a competitor in the 2012 Lexus Song Quest who remarked that through vocal development, singers were given appropriate songs allowing individuals to progress at their own pace (Lexus Song Quest, 2012).

Intrapersonal factors play a significant role in contributing to the talent development process, with traits such enjoyment of music, humour and performance, the ability to tap into personal emotions and the confidence to share this with others, all playing a part. One contestant at the Lexus Song Quest commented on participants having the opportunity to select their own songs to perform. It was felt that this was significant as it allowed each singer to reflect their own personalities through their performances, showcase their abilities and as Argyle (2012) eloquently put it, "...set themselves apart by singing from the heart". Additional to this, persistence and dedication are also key ingredients. Pene notes that "you have to put in the hard yards. There's no escaping that. You have to knuckle down and put in

the hard yards like everyone else” (One News, 2013). As well as mental traits, physical traits leading to their unique vocal strengths and sounds also play a key role, both in terms of natural abilities, and those nurtured and developed through training and practice.

As well as Traits, Goal Management appears in the DMGT as a subcategory of Intrapersonal aspects, the first component of which is Awareness. Pene and Amitai did not realise their own natural abilities and talent, and believed that everyone could sing. Pene shared that “people say ‘oh you should have a career in singing’. I’m like ‘What? I don’t get it? Why would you have a career in singing? Everyone can sing. We never saw it as a talent” (One News, 2012). Even upon entering the New Zealand Aria competition “Pene thought his chances of making the finals were slim and his chances of winning even slimmer” (Waiariki Institute of Technology, 2009). It was not until the opportunity arose to compete along-side peers of similar abilities that either truly had the opportunity to begin to realise his own level of abilities and potential. Having awareness of one’s own abilities and of one’s strengths and weaknesses is important as it allows for focused improvement. Amitai left the stage at the Lexus Song Quest aware of being able to improve however came away with no regrets. Keeping things in perspective, he commented that there are always things to fix, but that he is aware that the “most critical person is themselves” (Radio New Zealand, 2012).

Motivation is another intrapersonal trait in the DMGT. Terrence noted that he “nurtured and sometimes prodded” the boys (One News, 2012), which retrospectively Pene is grateful for. Motivation is viewed as important by both Pene and Amitai although in their interviews they each appear to have a different focus. Having set his sights on the stage at a very young age, Pene is aiming for “the very top” and has a “conquer list of the places he wants to sing” (Stewart, 2012). In sharing what drives him to achieve he said, “I want to be successful. I wanna show the world that you’re from a very poor family, very poor family in Samoa, that even us, even we can make it to the top” (One News, 2012). Pene also talked about being spurred on by the disbelief of one teacher. “My teacher told me, “You’ll never get anywhere with your music, you need maths”. That became motivation for me to do well. I’d love to see him now!” (Argyle, 2012). Amitai appears to be driven more by enjoyment. “It’s the best thing to go to work every day and do something you love” (Argyle, 2012). Pene reflects that while he feels Amitai has more musicality he needs to be more disciplined (One News, 2012), however Amitai’s focus is clearly portrayed in his comment during the lead up to the Lexus Song Quest, where he acknowledged he was feeling “slightly overwhelmed” but stated that it was important to make the most of new opportunities as it is “a way to get ourselves up to the next level” (Lexus Song Quest, 2012).

However, regardless of the motivation behind the development process specific to operatic singing both boys relish performing for pure enjoyment. Forming the band Sol3 Mio with friend Moses Mackey a baritone from Auckland’s North Shore, the group share in the delight

of writing their own songs and performing their own style of music. Pene reflects that “it’s just a bit of fun, especially in the industry we are in, which is so serious” (Stewart, 2012).

Volition also appears in the Goal-Management portion of the DMGT along-side Awareness and Motivation. Pene believes anything is possible, “we all come from struggling families, but anything is possible” (Argyle, 2012). The boys show their perseverance, over-coming economic hardship and making the most out of situations presented to them. Most recently they were fundraising in New Zealand and Samoa to attend the Wales International Academy of Voice, showing their dedication to the development of their voices and their journey toward highly successful international careers. Amitai sums it up with eloquence, “Well, I’m here now, and we did it. From nothing to something” (One News, 2012). This hard work is acknowledged by their teachers and mentors. For example, Patricia Wright stated in reference to Pene, that “he’s a very intelligent, sensitive singer and he works extremely hard” (Waiariki Institute of Technology, 2009).

Natural abilities, environmental and intrapersonal components all flow into the Developmental Process. Competitions have afforded the opportunity for an “injection of experience” as Lexus Song Quest MC Aidan Lang put it (New Zealand Lexus Song Quest, 2012), a chance to try something new, receive feedback, and have the support from others sharing the experience. “The best teacher is the stage itself”, according to the Wales International Academy of Voice (2013), and Pene’s first experience of a singing competition was at a West Auckland singing competition. This proved to be in stark contrast to his next competition participation, which was in the prestigious New Zealand Aria’s in 2009, where he won the title at age 21. He then went on to win the highly esteemed Joan Sutherland Society’s Bel Canto Award in Sydney and the Australian National Eisteddfod in 2011. Pene received a scholarship and a place at the 2013 Georg Solti Academia Summer School in Italy for winning the Bel Canto (Akoorie, 2012).

Amitai, who took up the opportunity to sing in the Auckland University Choir and performed as lead vocalist, had the occasion to be a backing vocalist for the New Zealand tours of both George Benson and Andrea Bocelli. Amitai stated that performing with George Benson was the “greatest highlight of my career” (Radio New Zealand, 2012). Amitai went on to win the 2012 New Zealand Lexus Song Quest, a launching pad for some of New Zealand’s top operatic singers. (Akoorie, 2012; Argyle, 2012). The brothers have since both received invitations to attend the Wales International Academy of Voice and are now undertaking Masters in Advanced Vocal Studies under the tutelage of Welsh tenor Dennis O’Neill.

These are both prime examples of how talent “enters into a feedback loop and influences the performers and/or influential persons in their environment...As the saying goes: ‘Success breeds success’” (Gagné, 2004, p134). Success is empowering, building self-esteem and motivation and also opening up new opportunities which may not otherwise be accessible.

Both Pene and Amitai have had significant turning points along their developmental journey. The first turning point noted through the media, was the direction given for Pene to join the Aorere College choir, which was provided by his sister. This provided the chance to have his abilities recognised by Terrence, and also set up circumstances which may have encouraged Amitai to join the choir and have his abilities recognised and nurtured too. For Pene, another significant turning point was attending his first opera. This served as the inspiration to switch genres and pursue operatic singing. The most prominent and recent turning point for both brothers however, would seem to be winning major competitions. The New Zealand Arias appear to be the most significant for Pene and the Lexus Song Quest for Amitai, with success at these two events independently launching Pene and Amitai into the international sphere of operatic performance.

But these aspects alone are not sufficient to have led to the talent development of the Pati brothers. Significant investments have been made throughout the course of their learning of which the most notable are; through the boys own energy and time in practicing and performing; the time, skills and energy of teachers and mentors; and financial investment. Terrance alone dedicated time at school and through private lessons over a ten year period to help the boys reach their potential during their school years. He acknowledged the boys efforts saying that “there has not been a need to do much work, but now they are” (One News, 2012), highlighting the need for increased investment of effort in the later stages of development. While economic hardship had the potential to prevent Pene and Amitai from pursuing chances to develop their talents and access pivotal opportunities, this does not seem to have significantly limited them. Scholarships, prizes, donations and fundraising efforts have seen that Pene and Amitai have ultimately been able to follow their dreams (Akoorie and New Zealand Herald, 2012). In saying that, to make it possible to follow their dreams has taken great effort and perseverance as well as patience and flexibility in their approach to opportunities.

I think it is fair to say that while Pene and Amitai have not reached the end of their developmental journey, they have developed their natural abilities into talent according to Gagné’s Differentiated Model of Giftedness. According to Gagné (2004, p124) “all individuals whose outstanding skill mastery places them among the top 10 per cent within their occupational field should be recognized as talented”. Prestigious competitions allow for performances to be assessed normatively “comparing them with others who have been learning for an approximately equal amount of time” (Gagné, 2004, p124). Winning these competitions and being invited to the Welsh International Academy of Voice has shown that these two remarkable singers are well within this level within the international operatic singing scene. Comments such as those made by the Lexus Song Quest director and judge exemplified this when he stated in reference to Amitai that “the winner was outstanding”, suggesting that even among the elite performers, his abilities shone (New Zealand Lexus Song

Quest, 2012). Likewise commentary on Pene's winning Aria performance showed the same qualities, "his French language, phrasing and emphasis were ideal, and his voice production seemed easy and relaxed, not tight or forced in any way. His top C was not only achieved, it had beautiful tone and a superbly controlled diminuendo – more than can be said for some famous singers who have recorded this aria" (Collier, 2012).

Chance has certainly played its part, with Pene and Amitai having no control over their genetics or the circumstances which they were born into and raised in. In other aspects of the brother's development journey, cultural practices, the opportunities presented and personal approaches all play pivotal roles in the balance of chance and choice, as well as the nature of these, supporting or inhibiting the transformation of their extraordinary natural abilities in talents.

Future Possibilities

The development journeys of Pene and Amitai Pati, as shown through the lens of the media, mirror the ideas represented in the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent. This analysis has highlighted significant aspects relating to the education of gifted and talented students, more specifically, in relation to New Zealand Samoan students in this educational group." As is stated by Education Counts (2013) "...improving achievement is likely to occur through teachers giving greater recognition to Pasifika children's culture, improving the interface and understandings between home and school, increasing bilingual provision and resources and giving more positive publicity to the achievement of those who have succeeded" (Education Counts, 2013). Developing a holistic approach which supports the spiritual, intellectual and physical well-being of students and their aiga should lead to improved outcomes. A significant part of this is building relationship with the community and developing an understanding of the conception of giftedness and talent specific to each school community. Another key aspect is affording students an appropriate learning environment, one which not only promotes learning but also invites giftedness and talent to be expressed. In turn these will enable teachers to be better able to identify exceptional talent and have a better understanding of how to support the student's to develop these.

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