

**METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' MUSICAL
AND CREATIVE THINKING IN CHORAL CONDUCTING
CLASSES**

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Abstract. The article examines pedagogical and methodological opportunities for developing students' musical and creative thinking in choral conducting classes. It argues that the professional training of future choral conductors should not be limited to mastering conducting patterns, technical gestures and score-reading skills. Students should also develop the ability to analyse musical works independently, understand their artistic content, generate alternative interpretative solutions and communicate them through conducting gestures. The study employs theoretical analysis of pedagogical and music education literature, comparison, generalisation and pedagogical modelling. Based on the analysis, a four-stage methodological model is proposed, consisting of motivational-diagnostic, analytical-interpretative, creative-practical and reflective-evaluative stages. Problem-based tasks, alternative interpretation, modelling of musical images, micro-conducting, peer analysis, video reflection and creative portfolios are considered effective tools for stimulating creative thinking in choral conducting education.

Key words: choral conducting, musical creative thinking, musical interpretation, conducting skills, choral music, creativity, reflection, professional competence.

Modern higher music education should not be limited to equipping future specialists with theoretical and practical knowledge; it should also create conditions for developing their ability to think independently, analyze musical

processes, make creative decisions, and continuously improve their professional activity. This is especially important in the field of choral conducting, since a choral conductor performs a range of functions, including analyzing musical works, understanding their artistic content, managing the performance process, and communicating effectively with a choir.[1;2]

In the process of teaching choral conducting, technical skills such as conducting patterns, upbeat gestures, fermatas, tempo, dynamics, hand coordination, and the indication of different meters occupy an important place[6]. However, limiting the educational process only to the acquisition of technical movements may reduce students' ability to understand a musical work in depth and interpret it independently. Therefore, alongside technical training, special attention should be paid to the development of musical and creative thinking in conducting classes.

Musical and creative thinking is manifested in a student's ability to analyze a choral score, understand the artistic idea and dramatic development of a work, imagine its musical image, compare different performance variants, and select the most artistically appropriate solution. This process requires students not merely to reproduce a ready-made model, but to approach the musical text consciously and creatively[8].

In choral conducting classes, it is important for students not to limit themselves to the question "How should this be conducted?", but also to reflect on questions such as "Why should it be conducted in this particular way?", "What artistic meaning does this gesture express?", and "How else can this musical phrase be interpreted?" Such reflection enhances students' creative activity[3]. As a result, conducting gestures become not simply technical means, but tools for expressing musical imagery and interpretative ideas.

The aim of the study is to identify pedagogical methods and forms of instruction that contribute to the development of students' musical and

creative thinking in choral conducting classes and to systematize them methodologically[5].

The present study is theoretical and methodological in nature. The research employed methods of theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, generalization, and pedagogical modelling. Theoretical analysis was used to examine the content of choral conducting education and the possibilities for developing students' creative activity. Comparative analysis helped identify the distinctive features of traditional and creative approaches. Generalization made it possible to systematize effective methodological techniques, while pedagogical modelling was used to determine the main directions for developing musical and creative thinking[9].

In choral conducting, musical and creative thinking can be represented through the following main components:

Musical-analytical component — analysis of the form, rhythm, dynamics, texture, and dramatic development of a choral score;

Imaginative component — understanding the character and musical image of a work through inner hearing and imagination;

Interpretative component — developing performance solutions related to tempo, dynamics, phrasing, articulation, and culmination;

Conducting-communicative component — conveying a formed musical idea to the choir through conducting gestures, facial expressions, and other expressive means;

Reflective component — evaluating one's own performance activity, identifying existing shortcomings, and determining ways of improving them.

Thus, a choral conductor's musical and creative thinking is formed through the interaction of analysis, musical imagination, interpretation, practical performance, and reflection. This approach contributes to integrating students' technical skills with artistic thinking and to developing their independent performing position[4].

As a result of the theoretical and methodological analysis, it was determined that the development of students' musical and creative thinking in choral conducting classes can be effectively organized through four interconnected stages: motivational-analytical, interpretative-creative, practical-communicative, and reflective-evaluative. These stages cover a holistic process ranging from understanding a choral work to developing an independent interpretative decision and analyzing one's own activity[8].

1. Motivational-Analytical Stage

The main purpose of this stage is to develop students' active, analytical, and research-oriented attitudes toward choral works. During the lesson, the teacher does not limit the process to providing a ready-made interpretation, but uses problem-based tasks that encourage students to think independently about the musical text[1].

Students analyze such aspects as the artistic idea of the work, its dramatic development, primary and secondary climaxes, leading choral parts, and the artistic functions of dynamics and tempo. Questions such as "Why?", "How?", and "Which option is more appropriate?" help students understand the internal relationships between musical phenomena[2].

At this stage, problem-based analysis, comparative listening, independent work with the score, and creative question-based tasks are used as the main methods. As a result, students move from simply reading the musical notation to understanding its semantic and dramatic essence[6].

2. Interpretative-Creative Stage

At this stage, the results of theoretical analysis are transformed into a specific performance concept. Students interpret the artistic meaning of such elements as tempo, dynamics, phrasing, articulation, and climax in a choral score and develop independent interpretative decisions on this basis[7].

The method of alternative interpretation plays an important role at this stage. The same musical fragment is performed in several versions using

different tempos, dynamics, or phrasing. Students compare these versions and justify the solution that best corresponds to the genre, style, and artistic content of the work.

The method of “one phrase — several interpretations” also contributes to the development of divergent thinking. Students propose several performance solutions for one musical situation, compare them, and select the most appropriate option. As a result, their ability to make independent musical decisions and think artistically is developed[9].

3. Practical-Communicative Stage

At this stage, the student’s developed musical idea is transferred into practical conducting activity. The main task is to convey the musical image to the choir through conducting gestures, facial expressions, body posture, and the character of movement.

The “from musical image to gesture” method can be effectively applied here. Students first identify the character of the work and then select the appropriate amplitude and speed of hand movements, conducting point, palm position, body posture, and facial expressions. This process helps students understand conducting gestures not as mechanical techniques, but as expressive means of musical content[8].

The micro-conducting method may also be used, in which a student conducts a short rehearsal with a small group or choir. In this process, the student tests an interpretative idea in practice, communicates with performers, and gains experience in managing the rehearsal process. After the activity, group analysis and peer feedback are carried out.

This stage contributes to the simultaneous development of students’ musical, communicative, and pedagogical competencies.

4. Reflective-Evaluative Stage

The purpose of the reflective-evaluative stage is to develop students' ability to analyze their own conducting activity, identify shortcomings, and determine ways to improve their future professional practice.

For this purpose, video reflection, self-assessment, and peer assessment methods can be used. A student's conducting or rehearsal process is recorded on video and later analyzed in terms of the correspondence of gestures to the musical character, the accuracy of the upbeat, the expression of dynamics and phrasing, the coordination of hand functions, facial expressions, and the presence of unnecessary movements[5].

It is also advisable for students to maintain a creative portfolio. The portfolio may include score analyses, rehearsal plans, individual interpretative decisions, conclusions from video analysis, teacher recommendations, and self-assessment results.

Thus, the proposed methodology is organized according to the sequence of “analysis — interpretation — practical performance — reflection” and is aimed at transforming students' musical knowledge into independent creative activity. This approach contributes to the integrated development of musical and creative thinking, interpretative independence, and professional reflection in choral conducting classes[3].

The proposed methodological system can be summarized as follows:

Stage	Objective	Main Methods	Expected Result
		Problem-based	
Motivational-analytical	Identifying the musical problem	questions, score analysis, comparison	Independent musical thinking
Interpretative-creative	Developing a performance concept	Alternative interpretation, creative tasks	Imaginative and interpretative thinking

Stage	Objective	Main Methods	Expected Result
Practical-communicative	Implementing the musical idea with the choir	Micro-conducting, “from image to gesture” method, rehearsal practice	Professional-creative and communicative activity
Reflective-evaluative	Improving one’s own performance activity	Video reflection, peer assessment, portfolio	Self-analysis and professional development

The reviewed scientific literature shows that the training of choral conductors should not be limited to mastering technical movements alone. In a conductor’s professional activity, musical hearing, interpretation, communication, rehearsal management, and pedagogical skills are closely interconnected. The study by D. Jansson and his co-authors also emphasizes the interrelationship of choral conducting competencies and the importance of practical experience[6].

In developing students’ musical and creative thinking, it is important to maintain a balance between mastering a given model and creating an independent interpretation. Therefore, it is advisable to use the sequence of “demonstration — explanation — creation of an independent version — comparison — reflection” in conducting classes.

A creative approach does not mean freely altering the musical text; rather, it involves finding an artistically justified solution within the framework of the composer’s idea, genre, style, and dramatic development. In addition, integration with such disciplines as harmony, solfeggio, vocal studies, and choir class contributes to transforming students’ musical knowledge into an integrated performance competence[8].

Conclusion

The development of students' musical and creative thinking in choral conducting classes is an important factor in improving the professional training of future specialists. Students should acquire not only conducting techniques, but also the ability to analyze choral scores, understand musical imagery, make independent interpretative decisions, and express them through conducting means.

The use of problem-based tasks, alternative interpretation, micro-conducting, peer analysis, and reflective methods contributes to the development of students' independent and creative thinking. Therefore, organizing choral conducting classes through the integration of theoretical knowledge, practical performance, and reflection can be considered an effective methodological approach.

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