

**DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v8i4.2339**

**Citation:** Savchenko, R., & Savchenko, Y. (2019). Choral Conducting Competence as a Pedagogical System. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 8(4), 382-390. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v8i4.2339>

## **Choral Conducting Competence as a Pedagogical System**

**Regina Savchenko<sup>1</sup>, Yulia Savchenko<sup>2</sup>**

### **Abstract**

This article discusses the essence and structure of the choral-conductor competence of students of higher educational institutions of musical-pedagogical profile. The criteria for the quality of student preparation for the effective implementation of his/her practical activities are indicated. The purpose of the article is to substantiate the practical need for the formation of a choral-conductor competence of a future musician teacher. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set: to consider the conducting and choral competence as a pedagogical system; to highlight the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personality traits necessary in mastering the conducting profession; to identify ways to enhance the needs of the choirmaster conductor in creative activities in working with the team; to reveal and analyze certain aspects and components of the professional training of choirmaster conductors in social relations, to find a dynamic view of a person's future, new dimensions of his/her self-realization; substantiate conclusions and promising areas for further consideration of the chosen problem. The main methods used in the study are comparative, analytical, systemic, and structural. Conclusions: The notions about the possibilities of conducting choir training in musical and pedagogical training of students are expanded: awareness of its potential in the educational process; consideration of the choral-conductor competence of future specialists as an integral system of musical and pedagogical education. On the basis of scientific research, new guidelines in the preparation of a competent specialist were identified, the concept of "choral-conductor competence" was specified, indicators of the specifics of its activity were determined, and the potential of its professional capabilities was identified. The solution to this problem depends on the choral-conductor installation of the future specialist, that is, his/her readiness to organize and manage the process of collective performance of a vocal-choral work.

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. in pedagogical sciences, professor at the National Pedagogical University named after M. P. Dragomanova, Kiev, Ukraine. E-mail: [sarina\\_30@ukr.net](mailto:sarina_30@ukr.net)

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer at the Kiev University named after Boris Grinchenko, Kiev, Ukraine. E-mail: [yo.savchenko@kubg.edu.ua](mailto:yo.savchenko@kubg.edu.ua)

**Keywords:** Choral-conduct competence, personal qualities of a choirmaster conductor; conductor and choral installation; readiness of the choirmaster conductor.

## **Introduction**

The professional standard of a teacher, including a conductor-choirmaster, sets participation in the development and implementation of a program for an educational organization in order to create a safe and comfortable educational environment (Vasiliev, 1991). In the process of conducting choir training in a higher educational institution of a musical pedagogical profile, a student acquires knowledge, abilities, and skills that contribute to future practical activities. The formation of his personal qualities, such as the ability to manage a team, establish creative contact with singing performers, be able to plan rehearsal and concert activities, and also be able to turn creative activities into concrete results.

Analysis of recent studies and publications of domestic and foreign scholars testify the development of many problems of conducting and choral training of future specialists, like theoretical and methodological foundations of conducting and choral education in higher educational institutions (Smirnova, 2004; Zhang, 2016); psychological and pedagogical conditions for the formation of professional competence by means of conducting choral disciplines and the training of the choir leader in the system of higher musical and pedagogical education (Biryukova, 2007; Pukhalsky, 2016); problems of the formation of creative self-realization of students in the process of studying choral-conductor disciplines (Grechanik, 2007); a psychological analysis of the problems of performance and creative interaction of the conductor with the musical collective (Erzhemsky, 1988); methods for the formation of professional and personal qualities of students in the process of studying choral-conductor disciplines (Kovalenko, 2008); the state of formation of the student's conducting choral competence in the process of teaching practice (Chincheva, 2018); the problems of the formation of special competencies in the choir conducting class as the basis for the professionalism of the future musician (Rastrigina, 2012; Svitaylo, 2011) as well as the students' independent work skills in the choir conducting class (Rastruba, 2010); the role of interdisciplinary connections of vocal and choral disciplines in the training of a music teacher (Tararak, 2008) as well as the use of music and pedagogical technologies in conducting and choral training and the image of a modern music teacher (Tsyuryak, 2011). On the other hand, the conducting and choral competence of future specialists as an integrated system was not the subject of researches in musical and pedagogical education.

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this article is to substantiate the practical need for the formation of a choral-conductor competence of a future teacher-musician. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set:

- considering the choral-conductor competence as a pedagogical system: highlight the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personality traits necessary in mastering the conducting profession;

- identifying ways to solve the problem of enhancing the needs of the choirmaster conductor in artistic and creative activities with a singing team;
- Revealing and analyzing certain aspects and components of the professional training of future conductors choirmaster in social relations to find a dynamic look at the future of a person, new dimensions of his self-realization;
- substantiating the conclusions and promising areas for further consideration of the selected problem.

The main methods used in the study are comparative and analytical. The theoretical basis of the study are: the theory of personality development in activities and communication; the theory of creative pedagogical activity (Melik-Pashaev (2005); the modern theory of learning, according to which it is creative activity in the unity of its mental and emotional components that is one of the effective means of developing a set of abilities (both general and special) and mastering relevant knowledge and skills (Slastenin & Isaev, 1997).

## **Results**

### ***Choral-conductor competence as a pedagogical system***

Conducting art consists in the ability to manage a team, establish creative contact with performers, be able to plan rehearsal and concert activities, as well as turn an artistic activity into a concrete result, the creative side of which is manifested in the form of artistic interpretation. An important role is played by the feedback - the conductor's perception of the results of his management. Successful creative activities of the conductor largely depend on the ability to carry out the planned artistic plan so that with rationally spent energy a maximum or close result is achieved. The above fully applies to the choral conductor. In this regard, the choral-conductor competence of a specialist will free his consciousness from constant control over the movements of the conductor-choir apparatus and will direct his thinking to the adoption of necessary performing decisions. The aforesaid allows us to say that the problem of the formation of the choral-conductor competence of a teacher-musician, who we consider in this article, is relevant.

In modern conditions, in the process of conducting and choral training of future musician teachers, special attention is paid to intellectual, moral, and cultural development, professional growth, and creative independence. For successful activity, the choral conductor needs to be a mobile, dynamic, competitive person, able to anticipate, plan, organize, coordinate, and control the creative process. The choral-conductor preparation of the future leader of the vocal ensemble is a multi-component pedagogical system, including: the theory of choral performance; methodology of working with the choir; practical and conducting activities; independent work of students and their self-education.

The reflection and generalization of centuries-old performing practice is the discipline of "choral studies", the purpose of which is to equip students with knowledge of the theoretical foundations of choral art and the skills necessary for independent choirmastering. Mastering the methodology of working with a children's choir allows students to prepare for organizing and conducting vocal and

choral work with children in extracurricular music classes, and also contributes to the development of analytical skills that allow the future choirmaster to select a musical repertoire, taking into account the age and specific characteristics of children. Practical classes on conducting contribute to the development of musical abilities of students, necessary for performing and learning vocal and choral works; the formation of elements of manual technique and finding conductor gestures necessary to convey the figurative expressiveness of works. The choir class integrates all the subjects of the conducting-choral cycle, contributing to the formation of auditory and vocal-choral skills among students, mastery of organizational work with the choir and the acquisition of practical skills in concert and performing activities.

An important role in the conducting and choral preparation of a specialist is played by the choirmaster practice aimed at the formation of the pedagogical activity of students with a children's singing team. In the process of this practice, the student is given the opportunity to combine the theoretical knowledge gained in the study of conducting choir disciplines with practical skills in organizing and conducting various types of vocal choral work with children. The knowledge and skills acquired during choirmaster practice are systematized and embodied in the ways, methods of communication, and management of children's vocal and choral groups of various types. So, the choral-conductor training of the future specialist is based on intersubject communications of the disciplines of the choral-conductor cycle. Their interconnection in mastering the conducting profession is aimed at enhancing the analytical, associative and creative abilities of students, at developing their conducting and choral competence, at the formation of a socially active personality with high creative potential, fundamental knowledge, and integrated musical thinking.

***Ways to solve the problem of enhancing the needs of the choirmaster conductor in artistic and creative activities***

In the process of conducting choir training, it is important not only the acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills but also the development of various abilities and qualities of the student's personality. Scientists propose the following classification of special conducting abilities: *reference*: musical data; creative imagination; fantasy; *leading*: strong will; the ability to expressively convey gestures and facial expressions of musical content; *auxiliary*: emotional mobility, vulnerability; pronounced temperament; concentrated and differentiated attention; speed reaction; sensorimotor and physical data; *some character traits*: authority, exactingness, poise, self-control, sociability, and others; singing voice (Vasiliev, 1991, p. 89). The presence of the considered abilities should be supported by pedagogical abilities.

Important professional qualities that make up the personality structure of a teacher-musician include didactic, organizational, perceptual, expressive, communicative, academic, and personal abilities, the ability of emotional and volitional influence on a student (suggestive abilities), pedagogical imagination (prognostic abilities), a high degree of distribution and switching attention, love for children, desire and inclination to communicate with them (Slastenin, 1997, p. 74).

Researchers also note the gnostic and constructive abilities that a teacher needs to succeed (Kodzaspriova, 2000, p. 321-322). Students' analytical abilities also play an important role in conducting choral training, which contribute to: understanding the essence of the work; a deeper understanding of the conductor about the artistic content of the literary text; an expressive presentation of all stages of work on the choral score from the formation of the performing plan to the concert use knowledge of the work; anticipation of difficulties that may arise in working with the vocal and choral collective; opportunities to correctly outline ways to overcome them; logical expression of opinions and judgments during rehearsal work. Note that analytical skills allow the future music teacher to correctly select the vocal and choral repertoire, taking into account the age and specific characteristics of the audience, since the conductor is an intermediary between the author of the work and the subject who perceives.

The result of the conducting and choral training of a future specialist is the education of an interpreter who has deep specialized knowledge, developed a musical ear, impeccable rhythm, musical memory, a sense of form and style, and artistic taste. As a teacher of a choir collective, the future conductor should be a well-educated person, sensitive psychologist, teacher, know the specifics of voices and instruments, be able to read choral scores, speak a special professional language, which contributes to the future successful creative activity.

The listed labor functions, knowledge, and skills of the future teacher-musician are formed in the process of conducting and choral training, which is at the same time professional. The professional competence of the teacher is a unity of theoretical and practical readiness for the implementation of pedagogical activities and characterizes his professionalism (Goncharenko, 1997, p. 40). Thus, we consider the choral-conductor competence of a teacher-musician as an integrative dynamically developing neoplasm in the personality structure of a future specialist, which is a combination of professional and psychological-pedagogical knowledge, organizational skills and readiness act independently in working with a vocal-choral collective of any type.

Choral-conductor competency is manifested in the ability to plan fragments of training in the vocal and choral performance of students, in the possession of techniques and methods for learning children's repertoire by students of different ages, selection criteria for a song repertoire, modeling of choral sounds, ways of communication and pedagogical impact, development of vocal-choral students' skills, and most importantly - the development of a creative personality through performing vocal and choral activities.

Any type of performing activity requires physical, muscle freedom, knowledge of the mechanism of its performing, voice or conductor apparatus. All the more difficult is the task of training a conductor-choirmaster who owns modern teaching technologies, a set of pedagogical, creative, as well as managerial methods and techniques. A huge amount of modern technologies comes to the aid of the choirmaster, he can use audio-video recordings, presentations, phonograms while learning the children's repertoire. The use of bright and creative techniques, such as dramatization games, theater techniques, the method of plastic intonation, and others in musical lessons. It requires a

review of the content of student preparation in the class of choral conducting in the direction of filling the educational content with a complex of creative tasks.

The following requirements are imposed on the student's performance of the children's repertoire: singing in compliance with the rules of breathing, sound formation, diction, intonation; performing piano (or other instrumental) accompaniment, in an ensemble between voice and accompaniment; the use of facial expressions in accordance with the content of the song; transposing voices in unaccompanied songs; the use of work gestures when learning school songs; comprehensive analysis of the school-song repertoire in terms of accessibility of musical material, age-related features, aesthetic value, including musical-theoretical, vocal-choral and executive analysis.

The first lessons in the class of choral conducting are traditionally held in the form of a heuristic conversation on the history of conducting, the importance of manual technique, facial expressions, the development of the personal-volitional sphere and the role of this important component for the professional development of the future musician teacher. The difficulty lies in the fact that individual lessons do not quite correspond to the real situation in the class: instead of a children's group, the work of a concertmaster, instead of a choral sound, the timbre of the instrument. One of the main elements used by the teacher is a working gesture, but usually, not enough attention is paid to him when working in a conducting class.

The work gesture for many students is associated with simple timing. However, a working gesture is a capacious expression of all its components: breathing, pace, metro rhythm, melody directions, semantic stress, stroke, character of a work, that is, a combination of conducting techniques specifically for a given work. Mimicry, movement of the head and body join the entire complex. At the same time, both hands should be fluent in a working gesture. All work gestures come down to showing the head entry and withdrawal, the general direction of the phrase, semantic stress. A significant place is occupied by gestures, which clearly convey the rhythmic and intonational construction of the melody. The most common are individual gestures, with the help of which each sound of the melody is shown in space. The rhythmic side is usually conveyed by matching gestures at the same height. But the most effective gestures are those that combine pitch and rhythm.

The unity of visual and auditory visibility contributes to the activation of musical and auditory representations of students, focuses on the features of the melody, helps to overcome intonational and rhythmic difficulties. The auxiliary tools in the process of learning a vocal-choral work include various schematic images of a melody - recording a melody with a ladder, dots of various depth and intensity of writing, which may reflect expressive elements of phrasing. It is also useful to observe the expressiveness of the gesture in everyday life, to draw impressions from other forms of art, for example, paintings or sculptures where artistic means convey emotions in poses, faces, and movements. You can turn to act, where also the movements of the body and hands play a significant role in transmitting a reliable image.

We list the gestures that are used in conducting. These are gestures supplementing the language and gleaned from life practice: a gesture of invitation, a gesture of denial, rejection, a gesture of

“attention”, “tension”, “tenacity”. The definitions themselves are very arbitrary, but clearly characterize the physiology of the gesture. Other groups of gestures can be distinguished - movements that are based on labor actions, for example, a blow that is different in strength and scope. Also, these are movements of stretching, stroking sounds and the like. To develop expressiveness of a working gesture, plastic intonation is used in the form of a warm-up, showing any children's work with plastic movements. For emotionality and expressiveness, you can start with the recitation of the poetic text of a children's song, then demonstrate it in the form of plastic intonation, perform the work as a theatrical action with the distribution of roles, thinking out the stage play, and a portrait of the characters of the children's song. Such tasks are aimed at the freedom of students' creative expression, as well as the acquisition by them of practical skills in working with the children's repertoire and directorial skills. The inclusion of a set of creative tasks develops the student's emotional expressiveness, stage freedom, creative imagination, and forms the volitional qualities necessary for the future leader of the vocal-choral collective.

### ***Aspects and components of the conducting-choral competence of the future musician teacher***

In the process of training a future specialist, it is important to form a choral-conductor installation in him, which allows us to justify the consistent, focused nature of the flow of creative activity, acting as a mechanism for its stabilization and allowing to maintain its focus in continuously changing situations. In psychology, the term “attitude” refers to the willingness, predisposition of the subject to perceive future events and actions in a certain direction, which ensures a stable, focused nature of the course of activity, serves as the basis for appropriate selective human activity (Goncharenko, 1997). A choral-conductor installation is a set of professionally significant personal qualities of a student, which is formed in the period preceding creative activity and ensures a stable, focused nature of its course. For the successful creative activity of the choirmaster conductor, it is necessary to perform various, interrelated, roles:

- the role of decision-making in the organization of concert activities, which contributes to the professional growth of the vocal-choral collective;
- informational role. To make managerial decisions, the activities of the choral conductor are inextricably linked with the collection and analysis of information on the development of domestic and foreign vocal and choral art, using modern information technologies and communication tools, as well as clearly formulating and communicating information to performers;
- interpersonal roles. The conductor must be a leader, whose ideas people will want to follow.

The conductor-choirmaster forms relationships both inside and outside the team, so he should have such personal characteristics as: a high sense of duty and dedication; honesty in relationships with people and trust in them; ability to express one's thoughts and convince; respect for performers; the ability to quickly restore their physical and mental strength and the like.

The content of the choral-conductor installation is formed in connection with the student's need for artistic and creative activity, gives impulses to activity, introduces a tendency towards transition to activity in the installation, which determines one of the main features of the installation - dynamism.

The choral-conductor installation is formed in the process of his independent work on the vocal-choral work. The preparatory work begins with an artistic analysis of the work, which examines the work of the author (s) of the vocal choral work, analyzes the figurative and ideological content of the literary text, characterizes the means of musical expressiveness used by the composer in the implementation of his plan, highlights the vocal choral difficulties that may arise in the process of working on the work and sets out a possible performing interpretation of the work.

### **Conclusions**

1. Enhanced understanding of the possibilities of conducting choral studies in musical and pedagogical training of students: awareness of its potential in the educational process; consideration of the choral-conductor competence of future specialists as an integral system of musical and pedagogical education.
2. Based on scientific research, new guidelines have been identified in the preparation of a competent specialist. The concept of "choral-conductor competence" is specified in relation to the future teacher-musician, the indicators of the specificity of his activity and the potential of his professional capabilities are determined.
3. In the process of training, the future teacher-musician acquires the knowledge, skills, and abilities that contribute to successful creative activity, which depends on the choral-conductor installation, that is, his readiness to organize and manage the process of vocal-choral performance. The result of choral-conductor competence is the education of a musician-interpreter who is capable of preparatory cognitive activity of thinking, which makes it possible to most effectively solve various vocal-choral tasks and contributes to successful creative activity.
4. The training of future choirmaster conductors, including children's vocal and choral groups, involves the phased development of the preparedness of a competent specialist, the main criteria of which are: professionally-oriented creative thinking, professionally-pedagogical orientation of activities taking into account the psychological characteristics of the collective members, professional independence and professional identity.

### *Prospects for further research*

The above material does not pretend to be an exhaustive disclosure of the problem and can serve as the basis for further study of the pedagogical conditions for the formation of the choral-conductor competence of the future teacher-musician, providing training for a new type of specialist.

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