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## CHOIR ENSEMBLE ISSUES IN THE PROCESS OF FORMING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF THE FUTURE TEACHER-MUSICIAN

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*The question of the special importance of a music teacher in the development of choral culture, which significantly affects the preservation of spiritual values of the younger generation, is considered. The issue of choral ensemble in the process of formation of professional qualities of students of musical specialties of pedagogical educational institutions is covered. One of the professional competencies of a music teacher is the organization and management of vocal and choral activities. It is noted, that for a successful professional activity the teacher-choirmaster needs to understand the importance of the choral ensemble in working with choirs, be able to use different types of ensemble for quality choral sound. A special place in working with the choir is occupied by the feeling of the ensemble, the ability to adjust the choral sonority in accordance with the author's intention to reveal the artistic image.*

*The essence of the concept of «choral ensemble» is defined and the main types of it are characterized. It is specified, that the choral ensemble is the artistic unity of all components of choral sound and the merging in strength and timbre of individual voices in one choral part and the balance of sound between all parts of the choir. The importance of using such concepts as partial and general, natural and artificial ensemble in the training of future music teachers is revealed. Partial ensembles include ensembles of intonation, combat, timbre, dynamic, metrorhythmic, agogic, diction-orthoepic and tessitura. It is indicated what factors influence the choice of a particular type of ensemble. A number of regularities of the ensemble, which follow from the texture of the musical work, are highlighted. The use of different types of ensemble in practice is described on the examples of choral works. A detailed analysis of all types of choral ensemble is covered in the unaccompanied choral score by L. Shukailo «Oh, on Kupala» from the cantata «Seasons»*

**Keywords:** formation of professional qualities of future music teachers, choral ensemble, types of choral ensemble

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### 1. Introduction

An urgent issue of our time is the formation of moral and ethical guidelines of our society. In our opinion, a huge source of spiritual values is embedded in the choral culture of the Ukrainian people. Increasing choral singing in the musical and cultural space will significantly affect the musical and aesthetic tastes and the overall development of the younger generation. In this context of quality, there is a need for highly qualified conductors, choirmasters, music teachers. The successful process of forming the professional qualities of the future music teacher requires a system of updating and improving the training of students of music specialties in pedagogical educational institutions. In the wide range of tasks of music teachers, the problem of vocal and choral work with students is a priority. It is important to educate gifted and creative teachers capable of self-development, ready to model the educational process during musical and practical activities with their students. Of particular importance in the formation of professional competencies of the future leader of the choir at the present stage of development of art pedagogy is the development of the ability to achieve choral sonority in the work on the

choral repertoire. Given that choral performance can not be understood in isolation from the basic elements of choral sonority, we consider it appropriate to investigate the achievement of choral ensemble in working with the choir.

### 2. Literary review

At the present stage of development of pedagogical science, all aspects of the system of music education are studied, which would qualitatively influence the formation of general and professional competencies of future professionals. In the context of our study, studying the issues of universality of choral art [1] and its cultural and educational potential [2], features of music teacher training for conducting vocal and choral work [3], revealing the importance of choral ensemble among other elements of vocal and choral sonority, as well as studying the basic principles of working with a choral ensemble [4] are valuable for students.

The vocal and choral work of the teacher-conductor involves the education and development of the singing voice, which forms the basis of vocal culture of the younger generation and is the key to the rise of vocal art in our country [5]. According to the conductor and musicologist Julia Tkach, the interaction of such ele-

ments of choral sonority as structure, ensemble, manner of sound production, dynamics, timbre of the choir is the basis of the sound ideal in the collective performance [6].

S. Kazachkov notes that the «ensemble is a way of collective expression, a means that allows many to direct their efforts to a single goal and achieve an artistic result of such an impressive force that no member of the ensemble is capable of alone. This result is not a simple sum of individual creative efforts. A new special artistic and aesthetic quality is born in the ensemble» [7].

Working on a choir ensemble is a complex creative process, as the technical and artistic aspects of working on it are interconnected: ensemble technique is determined by the artistic task, and the implementation of artistic design is impossible without the technical perfection of the ensemble, says Sbitneva O. [8].

Leonid Yatlo believes that collectivity – the main essence of choral performance is manifested in the skill of ensemble singing. «Achieve a choral ensemble - a single, harmonious on all sides of the choral sonority, perhaps with long, painstaking work of the conductor and all members of the choir», says the scientist [9].

Despite the considerable attention of scientists to the issue of choral ensemble, the problem of working on a choral ensemble, taking into account certain factors of the impact, requires deeper study. The essence of the concept of «choral ensemble» needs to be concretized, as well as the characteristics of the types of choral ensemble and ways of effective work on choral sonority.

### 3. Research aim and tasks

The aim of the article is to highlight the main types of choral ensemble in working with the choir, as well as to identify the compliance of the components of the choral ensemble in some examples of choral works.

To achieve the aim, the following objectives were set:

1. Highlight the importance of choral art in the spiritual development of the younger generation.
2. Clarify the essence of the definition of "choral ensemble" and describe the main types of choral ensemble.
3. Identify factors, influencing the choral ensemble.
4. Analyze the types of choral ensemble on the examples of choral works.

### 4. Materials and methods

To achieve the goals and objectives of the study, there were used:

- the method of studying and analyzing literature sources to actualize the research problem;
- the method of categorical analysis to clarify the concept of «choral ensemble»;
- the methods of comparison and synthesis to characterize the types of choral ensemble;
- the generalization method to identify factors, influencing the choral ensemble;
- the method of analyzing the products of conducting and creative activities to identify ways to work on choral sonority.

### 5. Research results and their discussion

Choral culture is of special importance in the formation of the spiritual culture of Ukraine. Choral music

has inexhaustible educational potential and is a universal means of spiritual growth and self-expression. «The discourse of the universal is articulated through notions of shared humanity and authentic expression», says L. Garnett [1]. Nick Strimple asserts: «When people want to express their innermost thoughts and dreams, they sing, and when they sing together, it is called choral music» [2]. Choral music is a complex system of «combination of social, artistic, organizational and vocal-choral elements» [3, 4]. Along with research on special, professional issues of choral art, researchers are faced with issues of social functioning of choral performance. «... musical practices can be simultaneously independent from and constructed within the power structures of day-to-day social relations: while the mechanisms that regulate choral behavior index overtly political axes of identity, such as class, education level and regionality, they do so with an agenda that is more focused on the transformation than on the exclusion of the individual» [1]. Thus, some elements of choral culture are synthesized with the socio-spiritual reality and can be the subject of culturology.

Yu. Puchko-Kolesnyk points to the interdependence of the functions of choral art, namely the performance of the function of performing skills (vocalization, intonation, ensemble, etc.) «at the same time are components of repertoire policy, ie. a broader activity, which, in turn, serves to form musical tastes, and further - spiritual culture» [3, 5].

Thus, one of the tasks of choral art is the organization of activities, aimed at performing the functions of performing skills. The latter is based on elements of choral sonority, which contains the system, nuances and ensemble. The ability to establish vocal and choral work with students, to have all the elements of choral sonority [6] is the key to successful professional activity. The choral ensemble is especially important for us.

The achievement of the ensemble creates a new, special artistic and aesthetic quality [7]. Let's add that there is no greater emotional shock than being in perfect harmony of all components of choral sound. We agree that the artistic idea cannot be fulfilled without the technical perfection of the ensemble [8]. This process is long and requires a lot of effort, both the leader and the choir members.

In the practice of musical performance, the term «ensemble» is widely used and applied in several senses. The concept of «ensemble» as an artistic unity, relationship, complete harmony of all components of choral sound, ie. choral ensemble, is the object of our study, which involves the study and analysis of objective scientific facts and experience of artistic practice of conductors.

The phenomenon under study comes from the French word «ensemble» («together»), corresponds to the agreement, the commonwealth of votes, their agreed set [7]. «Joint music-making should have the coherence of all components of choral sound, their artistic unity, understanding of the ideological and artistic content of the work and the ability to convey this content to the audience» [9]. An important role in this process is played by the finely trained vocal hearing of the teacher [9]. But at the same time, in our opinion, a music teacher should focus on sensation, because it is crucial in regulating choral sound. To balance the ensemble performance, the

chorister must merge with his/her part, the parts must sing in unison in the choir, and the functions of the conductor are to adjust the volume of individual singers and all parts as a whole. It is important to achieve unity through the same manner of singing choristers, balanced sound of singers in the choir. To do this, you need to follow certain principles, including the same number of singers in each party and the same timbre of their voices. After all, there are voices whose timbres have a different color and do not merge into the general timbre of the party, which can spoil the ensemble.

Choral ensemble in a broader sense of the word is a set of partial ensembles, which includes intonation, combat, timbre, dynamic, metrorhythmic, agogic, diction-orthoepic and tessitura ones. If one of these ensembles sounds imperfect, the ensemble of choral sonority of the whole choir is violated.

In choral practice, the concepts of partial and general ensemble are often used. Note that the partial ensemble also includes the ensemble of a separate choral party, which is created due to the exceptional purity of the unison ensemble. The general ensemble is called the merging and balance of all choral parts with each other in a single sound. According to S. Kazachkov, «The choral ensemble is monolithic and differentiated, depending on the style and texture, as well as the choral chord, which can be built in different types of ensemble. Styles that need to merge and balance the chord are opposed to styles where individual chord sounds are highlighted or, conversely, obscured, recede into the background» [7]. The author claims that the unison of the choral part, as well as the general choral unison are monolithic, but we believe that this monolith can be reflected in different ways depending on the predominance of individual tones. We agree with the scientist that if a party is not monolithic, then it is not a choral party.

In terms of the use of tessitura conditions distinguish between natural and artificial ensemble. The natural ensemble of the choir largely depends on the uniform use of tessitura conditions of all parties. When all the choristers sing in high or low tessitura or are in the middle registers, then it is a natural performance. An artificial type of ensemble is used when there is no such uniformity, ie, some parts sing high, others – low [10].

Another condition for working on artificial and natural ensembles follows from the interval ratio of voices, ie. the presence of ensemble and non-ensemble chords. Practice shows that the close arrangement of chords better contributes to the achievement of ensemble sound.

However, ensemble balance depends on other factors. For example, from the choir (homogeneous, incomplete mixed). If we have a homogeneous choir, it does not cause much difficulty, because its specificity implies compactness, balance of sound. Incomplete mixed choir, which combines different timbres, requires more work. According to S. Kazachkov, the unison of four heterogeneous timbre registers differs from the unison of one part, where merging should be achieved in the presence of many timbre shades, but within a homogeneous register [7].

The next factor is tessitura. A comfortable tessitura, which in most cases is considered part of the middle

register of the voice, certainly has more favorable conditions for the creation of the ensemble. Instead, a high or low score of all voices complicates ensemble coherence.

Dynamics, as another factor, influencing the choice of natural or artificial ensemble, must correspond to the nature of the sound of the parts at a certain height. L. Yatlo, researching the choral ensemble, asserts that the pitch line of each part, ie. tessitura conditions, significantly affect the achievement of the ensemble [9]. We agree that the ensemble balance on the nuance of *PP* in a high tessitura is difficult to perform by comparing the sound of this dynamic shade in a comfortable tessitura.

Metrorhythm also requires special attention in the work on the ensemble. The natural ensemble is used in a constant tempo. «The case is much more complicated with the necessary modifications of the tempo (*rubato*), as well as in conditions of frequent changes of meter and rhythm» [7].

In our opinion, an important factor in working on a natural and artificial ensemble is the texture of the choral work. It is clear, that the role of individual choral parts may be different. This is influenced by the degree of importance of the musical material they perform. Thus, the parts that perform the main musical-thematic material should sound louder than the parts that sing less significant material or create an accompanying background.

Given the texture of the musical work, there are certain patterns of the ensemble:

1). Ensemble, as a relatively complete balance in the dynamic relation of the sound of all choral parts. This type of ensemble takes place for works of homophonic and harmonic composition and especially those, in which chordal performance dominates;

2). The ensemble is a combination of different in meaning musical and thematic elements. This type of ensemble is typical for works that have a polyphonic principle of presentation, or for those, in which the value of musical material in each choral part plays a different role. In this case, the voices that pursue the main theme should stand out against the general sonority of the chorus;

3). An ensemble in sonority between a solo voice and a choir accompaniment. When performing works of this type, it is obvious, that the choir in the role of accompaniment should not sound louder than the soloists. In this case, the accompaniment should be performed one nuance quieter than the soloist [7].

A special issue in choral performance is the use of instrumental accompaniment. An important task of the conductor in performing such works is to analyze the texture of not only the choral score, but also its instrumental part.

There are works, in which the instrumental part of the score performs the main musical and thematic material. But in most cases, the instrument is endowed with the functions of accompaniment. We can distinguish the main types of the ratio of the ensemble, which combines the choral and instrumental part of the score:

– the choral part is thematically more important than the presentation of the instrumental part. For ensemble sonority, you can use the technique of full sound of the choir on the background of instrumental accompaniment, which is performed at a nuance below the choral parts;

– the choir and the instrumental part have a relatively equal meaning of the presentation of thematic material and complement each other. The difference is that the choir sings with words. This indicates the superiority of choral voices over the voices of orchestral parts. Here you can use the technique of clarity of presentation of textual material and the approximation of the dynamic sound of the orchestra to the choir;

– the choir is of secondary importance when the instrumental presentation has a more significant thematic material. The conductor can use the technique of reducing the sonority of the choir and the selection of instrumental accompaniment [10].

In Gregorio's study, *An Analysis of Two Choral Compositions with Tariq O'Regan's Strings*, we can see how an artificial ensemble is used. For example, we give a passage that begins with m. 71, «And the dizzying stars». Sopranos and violas could sing their theme in full vocal color, namely with vibrato, with appropriate and marked phrasing and with standard accent text to help with the new melodic theme against the background of repetitive textures of the continuation of the motif «Isra-fel» (solo in strings) [11]. But for the development of this section and the canon, introduced in the refrain, to create a spatial effect of «echo», the refrain proposes to remove these elements from the singing of the women's party. «As the four-part pseudo-canon emerges in m. 82, O'Regan has reduced the choir to a mezzo-piano dynamic to allow the string melody to become prominent; the chorus, even though they have the same melodic figure as previously and following, should remove vocal elements which aurally «prioritize» their sound. Even as the dynamic gets louder and the string melody ends, the audience's inability to perceive an individual text and a melodic line will be instantly changed in m. 95 as the choir suddenly sings in homophony» [4]. As you can see, the ability of the conductor to subtly feel and adjust all the nuances of the choral ensemble contributes to the perfect choral sound, which brings pleasure to performers and listeners.

Let's analyze some types of ensemble on the example of L. Shukailo's work «Oh, Kupala».

If we take into account the tessitura conditions, the general ensemble of the choir is natural, only in some places with different tessitura in parts – an artificial ensemble.

The harmonic ensemble presupposes the coherence and balance of choral parts during the performance of chords and consonances, proportionality in the sound of melodic and accompanying voices.

The diction ensemble of the choir requires clear diction and articulation in each artist of the choir, and is a challenge to achieve a general choral ensemble. Particular attention should be paid to the phrase «I chased the geese asleep», which is repeated in all parts of the choir and should sound clear. Dynamic ensemble – quite contrasting dynamics from forte to piano and whisper. It is necessary to pay attention to the part, in which the theme is held – it should sound brighter, and all other parts – quieter, but while maintaining the overall balance of sound.

Based on the textural presentation of the choral score – the texture is mixed – there are elements of undertone polyphony and harmonic texture. The parallel movement of voices in one dynamic and rhythm requires

a coordinated, merged ensemble of all parties. Branching and opposite movement of undertones requires independent intonation-dynamic performance.

Metrorhythmic ensemble becomes a great complexity, because the work has a variable size. You need to carefully monitor the change in size and stiffness of the conductor, so as not to lose the level of feeling the meter. As for the rhythm, you need to follow the dotted rhythm, pauses, lies, fermat. Can disrupt the ensemble and the simultaneous entry of voices. It is necessary, that the choir artists perform their part in the right rhythm and record the sound in time for pauses. You need to carefully follow the hands of the conductor [10].

The described conditions of correct use of different types of choral ensemble, in our opinion, are the key to successful performance of choral works.

Among the limitations of our study we consider the coverage of material on the use of methods that would improve the quality of choral sound and forms of work on the ensemble in the children's choir.

The research facilitates ongoing theoretical discussions about working on choral sound, but it also raises practical questions about the effective techniques, associated with choral ensemble. These techniques of the relationship between the ensemble among the choir and the accompaniment can be used in working with the choir. We believe that the use of these techniques depends on the experience of the choirmaster. After all, the interpretation of the performance of works is through the individual understanding of the conductor, his/her artistic vision of the transfer of images.

## 6. Conclusions

1. The study highlights the importance of choral art and the role of music teachers in the formation of spiritual culture, in particular choral education of the younger generation. The success of choral education depends on the quality training of music teachers. In our opinion, the teacher should be well acquainted with the issues of vocal and choral work, in particular, with the elements of choral sonority, in order to use the most effective means of pedagogical influence on the educational process. In vocal and choral work, ensemble sonority is important, which is consistent with other elements of choral performance.

2. The analysis of sources on the problems of research made it possible to clarify the essence of the concept of «choral ensemble» as an artistic unity of all components of choral sound, merging in strength and timbre of individual voices in one choral part and balance of sound between all parts of the choir. The study describes different types of ensemble, namely partial and general, natural and artificial. The main types of choral ensemble in working with choirs depend on many factors. The teacher-musician needs to be able to work on all types of ensemble, to know how to achieve intonation, timbre, dynamic, metrorhythmic, agogic, diction ensemble in general sonority.

3. It was found, that the work with the ensemble is influenced by a number of factors, including the composition of the choir, tessitura, dynamics, metrorhythm, texture. A number of regularities of the ensemble, which follow from the texture of the work, are determined:

balance in the sonority of the parts of the chord presentation of the work; comparison of parties by the importance of musical themes in polyphonic works; comparison of sonority between the solo voice and the choir.

4. The analysis of the choral ensemble on the examples of excerpts from choral works gives the opportunity to see a possible interpretation of the work, to understand how to identify factors, influencing the correct ensemble sound, to improve the teacher's work on choral sonority.

#### Conflicts of interest

The author declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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