

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING STUDENTS' MUSICAL LISTENING AND PERCEPTION ABILITIES IN VOCAL TRAINING

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Abstract

This article examines the challenges of developing musical listening and perception abilities in students during vocal training. The significance of analyzing sounds, understanding musical images, and performing them in the classroom is analyzed within the educational process. Using pedagogical approaches, emphasis is placed on the interrelation of the main components of musical listening, including intonation, timbre, rhythm, internal hearing, and auditory perception.

Keywords

vocal training, musical listening, internal hearing, pedagogical approach, student, auditory perception, professional skill.

In the pedagogical process of vocal performance, technical aspects – voice production, breathing, articulation, musical listening, and perception abilities – play a critical role. From a pedagogical perspective, it is essential for students to learn not only to listen to their voice but also to comprehend it internally and develop “internal hearing,” thereby gaining control over their performance through their future professional skills and mastery. Therefore, identifying pedagogical approaches to develop musical listening and perception is an important scientific and practical task in vocal training.

Vocal art is one of the oldest art forms practiced by humans. Before inventing numerous musical instruments, humans mastered their natural instrument – the voice. The voice served as a means for expressing emotions and thoughts. Singing has long been highly valued, and the enchanting power of the human voice made it, in the eyes of people, a channel for the will of gods and a mediator between higher powers and humanity. Moreover, vocal art has always reflected the spiritual needs of humanity and evolved alongside it. Vocal pedagogy in its classical form has existed for over four centuries. It emerged in Italy concurrently with the development of the opera genre. This new genre aimed to convey the rich spectrum of human emotions, requiring opera performers to master their voices perfectly.

Music pedagogy is a purposeful educational process aimed at developing the professional and personal qualities in students necessary for successful future professional activity. The teacher themselves must possess the qualities required to carry out this process effectively, as these qualities allow the cultivation of professionally competent and skilled students. Above all, a teacher must be a bright, exceptional individual – not merely a specialist with certain professional skills, but someone passionate about their work, continually striving for self-improvement, and capable of nurturing a true artist.

The success of vocal training largely depends on the level of students' musical listening and perception abilities. Students who cannot accurately perceive music, discern intonational differences, or perceive timbre, rhythm, and dynamics cannot master vocal technique effectively. Therefore, the vocal teacher's role is not only to teach voice technique but also to gradually develop students' musical listening and perceptual culture. A vocal pedagogue is simultaneously a performer, psychologist, physiologist, and aesthetic educator, who must approach each student based on their individual vocal potential, psychophysiological state, and level of reflection. As Russian scholar G.P. Stulova emphasizes: "A teacher must adapt their methodology according to the student's level of hearing and psychophysiological characteristics."

The main competencies of a teacher in developing musical listening include:

- Accurately analyzing the intonation of heard sounds;
- Quickly identifying voice flaws and selecting appropriate exercises;
- Stimulating the student's internal hearing ability;
- Linking the listening process to active perception and understanding.

An artist is a unique professional whose work demands continuous self-improvement; for a true artist, the concept of "free time" does not exist. The entirety of their nature and life is devoted exclusively to art. An artist on stage can be compared to an orator, striving to convince the audience of the validity of their ideas. Such a position requires a specific work regimen and strict discipline.

For a student, the first source of inspiration is their teacher. The teacher not only imparts knowledge and develops skills but also nurtures a positive attitude toward the profession and cultivates creative activity. A teacher must be able to instill in their student the desire: "I want to be like my mentor." As director Zavadskiy's words, cited by G. Tsipin, aptly convey: "The true Teacher is not the one who gave you lessons, but the one from whom you learned by yourself."

In their work, a music pedagogue primarily employs two methods: demonstration and explanation. Each method has its advantages. The teacher's task is to integrate these approaches effectively to achieve the best pedagogical outcome.

Demonstration is especially valuable, as it can replace lengthy explanations that, in some cases, may overcomplicate rather than clarify a concept [1]. During the lesson, the teacher must systematically work in several areas:

Development of intonation hearing: At this stage, students learn to distinguish pitch, intervals, and chords accurately. Rhythmic and metric hearing: Maintaining rhythm is essential in vocal training. Exercises using a metronome, rhythmic word pronunciation, and clapping enhance students' perception of musical rhythm. Development of timbre and resonance hearing: Students' auditory sensitivity is strengthened by exposing them to singing in different timbres. In the Russian vocal school, this process is referred to as "timbre differentiation." Internal hearing: The student first hears the music internally and then expresses it vocally. L. S. Dmitriyeva emphasizes: "Internal intonation forms the basis of a vocalist's musical thinking." This method enhances the student's musical memory, emotional sensitivity, and independent interpretive thinking.

One of the key factors for success in vocal art is the student's ability to hear, perceive, and express music through internal auditory sensation. Hearing is a cognitive process that allows the human mind to determine the structure, pitch, rhythm, and intonation of musical sounds. Therefore, developing students' skills in accurate listening and profound musical perception is a crucial pedagogical task in vocal training. The vocal teacher works along two main directions in this process: first, developing the student's musical hearing ability; second, cultivating musical perception – the ability to analyze, feel, and creatively express the sounds heard. A student must not only accurately hear and reproduce notes but also understand the character and emotional content of the sound.

Musical hearing is the ability to perceive, imagine, and comprehend musical impressions. Organized and developed musical hearing is a complex, integral ability that ensures holistic perception and intonation of a musical work (its structure and form) as an expression of a specific musical content. There are several types of musical hearing, which the pedagogue must understand. Based on the method and nature of music perception, musical hearing is distinguished as either absolute or relative. Relative hearing is the ability to perceive and reproduce the relationships between pitches and intervals within a given key. In contrast, the less common absolute hearing is the ability to identify the pitch of musical sounds without any reference tone and reproduce them accurately in intonation.

Absolute hearing manifests in the capacity to quickly and directly recognize, memorize, and reproduce pitches. This type of hearing helps musicians perceive the direction and structure of music more precisely. Musicians with absolute hearing can quickly identify the tonality of a piece and easily track tonal changes,

such as modulations, which is particularly important in conducting. However, developing absolute hearing in a classroom setting is nearly impossible. Often, what is considered absolute hearing is actually the ability to memorize specific sounds, such as particular notes on string instruments. Absolute hearing does not always manifest immediately – it is a natural talent. Skills learned through training and practice, sometimes referred to as “absolute hearing,” are not true absolute hearing.

Individuals with absolute hearing should further develop their abilities. Listening should not be limited to pitch recognition but directed toward understanding the content of music. Therefore, in some cases, relative hearing, when supported by preparation and knowledge, can be more effective than absolute hearing. Musical hearing is a central component of musical ability, and without its adequate development, engaging in musical activity becomes challenging. Musical hearing includes the following types:

- Melodic hearing
- Pitch recognition
- Polyphonic hearing
- Harmonic hearing
- Inner hearing (musical imagination)
- Timbre-dynamic hearing

Melodic hearing is the ability to perceive music as a melody rather than a sequence of isolated notes. Musicologists consider melodic hearing a primary form of musicality, through which a person’s musical sensitivity and emotional response are expressed. The sense of tonality involves emotionally perceiving the relationships between pitches, which forms the foundation for developing melodic hearing. The first step in developing melodic hearing is to establish basic concepts during solfeggio lessons. At the initial stage, students should learn to understand the melody line and movement and perceive ascending and descending directions. Developing the sense of tonality involves not only memorizing pitch relationships but also experiencing them intonationally. Memorizing melodies should not rely solely on mechanical repetition; students must learn consciously and understand the musical content. A student with developed musical perception can:

- Quickly detect tonal changes;
- Distinguish subtle semitone shifts;
- Achieve intonational accuracy;
- Consciously apply musical expression tools such as dynamics, tempo, articulation, legato, and others.

During this process, the teacher must serve as a model, demonstrating artistic taste, musical knowledge, and psychological sensitivity. Especially when working with young vocalists, their natural auditory sensitivity is highly active, making the selection of appropriate methodology critical. Intonational accuracy is a fundamental aspect of vocal technique. If a student cannot accurately hear musical sounds, their breathing, articulation, and register transitions are affected. Therefore, in every lesson, exercises in hearing and perception should be given as much attention as vocal exercises. Musical hearing manifests in musically and professionally significant qualities and skills. These include the ability to perform from sheet music, play by ear, transpose music from notation or by listening, improvise, and other related abilities. Among the professionally important qualities are: quickly and accurately recognizing notes visually, responding with rapid and precise sensorimotor reactions to visually perceived musical text, accurately orienting on the keyboard, forming auditory-motor (internal) representations of music and executing corresponding performance actions (clarity, expressiveness, and precision), and perceiving and understanding music quickly and accurately.

This raises the question: how can one assess musical ability itself, rather than the qualities that result from both innate talent and acquired skills? Effectively, this can be done using methods based on the ability to distinguish rhythms, melodies, intervals, and chords by ear (for individuals without formal musical training). For musicians, methods are employed that involve differentiating dynamic and articulatory (stroke) features of a musical score through combined visual-auditory perception. For non-musicians, an audio recording presents two rhythmic or melodic patterns, chord sequences, or interval sequences. The tasks are structured from the simplest, sharply distinct examples to barely perceptible differences. The participant must determine whether the two sequences are identical or different. In this way, the musical ability itself is assessed, rather than its outward manifestation. For instance, how accurately a child sings a song reflects the manifestation of this ability. For students of a music school, their capacity to read music or reproduce melodies by ear serves as the evaluative measure.

In conclusion, the natural foundation of musical hearing lies in the differential sensitivity of the auditory analyzer.

Musical hearing as an ability manifests in musical skills and professionally significant qualities, which in turn determine the effectiveness of musical activity. The psychological assessment of musical hearing can be conducted based on the principle of comparing individual elements of a musical score (rhythm, melody, intervals, etc.) – either by ear (for non-musicians) or through visual-auditory perception (for musicians) [3]. In summary, in vocal training, a student's musical

hearing and perception constitute a technical, professional, and creative process. Developing this ability depends on the teacher's high level of mastery, patience, and modern pedagogical approach. Only when the student's auditory perception is fully developed can they control their voice consciously, artistically, and expressively.

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