

Formation of Future Vocal Ensemble Leaders' Readiness for Creative Interaction with a Music Group

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Abstract: *The article is devoted to the pressing issue of developing future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective. The purpose of the study is to highlight the results of an experimental investigation concerning the organizational and methodological foundations of forming the readiness of future vocal ensemble leaders for creative collaboration with a musical ensemble. The scientific methods employed in the study include a combination of theoretical methods: the study and analysis of philosophical, psychological-pedagogical, and music-pedagogical literature on the research problem, as well as information resources from the Internet; the study and generalization of the performance and pedagogical experience of prominent artists; modeling and forecasting. Empirical methods included: the study and synthesis of experiences in organizing vocal ensemble activities, pedagogical observation, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, testing, ranking, the method of unfinished sentences, pedagogical experimentation, and mathematical processing of results. As a result of modeling the process of forming future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with ensemble participants, the following organizational-pedagogical conditions were determined. The study employed the paired comparison method, the results of which were used to construct a comparative assessment scale in both control and experimental groups. The effectiveness of the applied methodological innovations was assessed using a series of tests that compared results at the ascertaining and formative stages of the research. The authors assert that the data from the control stage demonstrated significant positive changes in the levels of readiness formation of future specialists across all established criteria.*

Keywords: *creative interaction; system of personal qualities; psychological climate; creative musical environment; future vocal ensemble leaders; higher art education; professional training.*

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Introduction (problem statement)

The modernization of higher music education in Ukraine, despite martial law, is accompanied by the implementation of a humanistic paradigm. The humanistic goal of education is aimed at revealing personal potential and developing experience in creative interaction through activity. According to the national program "Education" (Ukraine in the 21st Century) and UNESCO documents (the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the Road Map for Arts Education), the humanization of education – which is expressed in the affirmation of the individual as the highest social value, the fullest possible disclosure of their abilities, and the satisfaction of diverse educational needs – is the main principle of arts education.

At the present stage, we can observe a process of revival of vocal ensemble art. However, in order to engage children and youth in this type of art, it is necessary that such engagement be based on the creative interaction between the ensemble leader and the members of the collective. The leader of the vocal ensemble, who possesses a specific set of personal and professional qualities, acts as the main organizer of this creative interaction. In this regard, the humanization of professional music education primarily involves a strong emphasis on developing the creative abilities of future specialists in arts education – particularly future vocal ensemble leaders – as well as enhancing their best personal qualities.

In the context of humanistic ideas, the main objective of music education is to nurture a creative personality with a refined musical taste, capable of realizing their potential through music. This process is manifested primarily in the establishment of subject-subject relationships, which implies addressing the inner world of learners, taking into account their individual abilities and interests within the framework of music education. In this connection, new demands arise for the training of competitive specialists in arts education – vocal ensemble leaders – with specific requirements articulated in the structure of their readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective.

The article outlines the solution to the problem of developing readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective through the following aspects: an analysis of the theoretical foundations of developing future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective; the definition of the concept of "readiness of a vocal ensemble leader for creative interaction with a musical collective" and its structure; the development of criteria for forming future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness

for creative interaction with a musical collective; the substantiation of the organizational and methodological foundations for developing students' – future vocal ensemble leaders' – readiness for creative interaction with the collective; and the experimental verification of the effectiveness of the organizational and methodological foundations for developing future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective, as evidenced by the formation of a certain system of personal qualities, professional knowledge, and skills of the vocal ensemble leader.

Literature review

The problem of professional development of specialists and the formation of their professionalism within the context of modern humanistic approaches has been actively explored in Ukraine. Over the past decades, research has been conducted that reveals: issues of the formation and development of students' readiness for pedagogical activity (Brychok, 2007; Ohiyenko, 2013); the formation of psychological readiness for professional activity (Ball & Papucha, 2007; Molyako, 2013); and readiness for music-pedagogical activity (Grebenyuk, 2000; Labintseva, 2007; Oleksiuk & Tusheva, 2020; Cherkasov, 2019).

Processes currently taking place in modern education directly concern the issue of effective pedagogical interaction, as pedagogical interaction serves as a means of implementing methods into the educational process (Makarenko, 1953). At the present stage, its theoretical aspects have been substantiated in the works of both Ukrainian (Bekh, 2018; Velytchenko, 2005) and foreign scholars (Davies et al., 2013; Morris, 2010; Jackson & Sinclair, 2006; Parker & Thomson, 2019). The issues of developing readiness for creative interaction in music education have been considered in recent studies (Andreiko et al., 2019; Draghanchuk, 2016; Drozhzhyna, 2007), including in the field of vocal ensemble art (Grebeniuk, 2000; Vyshnevskya, 2014; Zaverukha & Cherneta, 2022; Lanina, 2020; Savchenko, 2022; Savchenko-Shlapak, 2019; Svitailo, 2021).

However, despite existing scientific achievements regarding the formation of future arts education specialists' readiness for professional activity in higher education institutions, the issue of developing future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective has not been adequately addressed in the scientific literature.

An analysis of the theory and practice of organizing a creative musical environment, particularly in working with a vocal ensemble, indicates that recently contradictions have emerged between: the training of specialists in the field of arts education for social practice; global integration processes that

require creative professionals with a high level of readiness for partnership interaction, and the insufficient attention of society to this need; the necessity of introducing modern technologies, including interaction technologies, into the process of ensuring the functioning of vocal ensembles, and the predominance of traditional methods in conducting rehearsals; the requirements for the content of readiness of vocal ensemble leaders for creative interaction and the lack of a clearly defined system of professional knowledge, skills, and personal qualities necessary for the practical implementation of interaction technologies. These contradictions objectively emerge as the dominant problem of the study, which lies in developing the readiness of future vocal ensemble leaders for creative interaction with a musical collective, in a way that maximally ensures the realization of creative interaction within the vocal ensemble for the benefit of revealing the potential of each participant and the ensemble as a whole. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to present the results of an experimental investigation of the formation of future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective.

Methodology

The scientific foundation of the study is based on a set of approaches: competence-based, activity-based, dialogic, axiological, cultural, personal, poly-subjective (dialogic), facilitative, and creative approaches to organizing the pedagogical process. These approaches allowed for the definition of the essence of the key concepts of the study: "readiness for creative activity," "psychological readiness," and "creative interaction," as well as for the substantiation of structural components and assessment criteria for the formation of future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective. The methodology combined theoretical methods for studying the current state of professional training of future vocal ensemble leaders; the study and generalization of the performance-pedagogical experience of prominent artists; modeling and forecasting – to visualize all interconnected elements of the process of forming future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective. Empirical methods (the study and generalization of experience in organizing vocal ensembles, pedagogical observation, interviews, questionnaires, testing, surveys, ranking, the method of unfinished sentences, pedagogical experiment, mathematical processing of results, and their graphical interpretation) were used to determine the level of readiness formation among future vocal ensemble leaders for creative interaction with a musical collective. To verify the effectiveness of the formation of future vocal ensemble leaders'

readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective, the research was conducted over the period 2019–2023 at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University, and Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University. The study involved 187 participants of vocal ensembles. The experimental group (45 participants) and the control group (39 participants) consisted of 2nd–4th year students of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University who were members of vocal ensembles. The participants included both male and female students aged 17 to 20. Their prior musical experience before entering the university varied: most had studied at art schools; about 25% of the students practiced music independently or with a private tutor; and approximately 5% of the vocal ensemble members had no previous musical training at all. The experiment included three stages: ascertaining, formative, and control. At the ascertaining stage, a set of diagnostic methods was selected, in particular: The Subjective Assessment Map of Psychological Climate (SAPC) (Schwartz, 1992) – for diagnosing the psychological climate in the vocal ensemble; The Questionnaire for Identifying Mental States of Vocal Ensemble Participants – to study the impact of vocal-ensemble activity on participants' mental states; The Questionnaire for Studying the Semantic Space of the Vocal Ensemble Leader – to diagnose professionally significant personal qualities of a modern vocal ensemble leader; The Method of Unfinished Sentences – to study opinions on organizational-pedagogical conditions conducive to creative interaction in the vocal ensemble; A test titled "Job Satisfaction in a Vocal Ensemble" (Savchenko-Shlapak, 2019) was developed to determine ensemble members' attitudes towards various aspects of ensemble activity. These diagnostic tools serve as a means of identifying the organizational and pedagogical conditions that enhance the effectiveness of the methodology for developing the readiness of future leaders of vocal ensembles for creative interaction with the members of the group, namely:

- the formation of a specific system of personal qualities, professional knowledge, and skills of the vocal ensemble leader;
- the establishment of subject–subject (interpersonal and equal) relationships within the vocal ensemble;
- the implementation of a methodology for creative interaction among all members of the vocal ensemble in the process of working on a musical piece;
- the creation of a favorable psychological climate within the creative musical environment.

These methods, together with pedagogical research techniques such as observation and interviews, enabled a comprehensive study.

At the formative stage of the experiment, methods and techniques of dialogic communication were applied, including: methods of influencing the collective of singers; joint modeling of the sound of a musical work; methods of collective discussion of the character of sound; harmonic analysis; methods of musical improvisation, musical exercises, microteaching; and studying the degree of participants' satisfaction with aspects of vocal ensemble activity.

The process of forming future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective was modeled. The structural-component model is presented as a system of interconnected elements (goal, musical environment, theoretical and methodological blocks). The theoretical block includes: methodological approaches, principles, structural components of readiness, criteria. The methodological block includes: methodology for readiness formation – organizational stages, methods and techniques, levels of readiness formation. The expected result is the formation of future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective. To substantiate the reliability of the formative experiment results, a statistical method – arithmetic mean – was applied.

Results and discussion

Based on the proposed structural-component model, an experiment was conducted with the aim of testing the identified potential for improving the formation of future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective (Andreiko et al., 2019). During the three stages of the experiment (ascertaining, formative, control), special attention was paid to identifying psycho-pedagogical conditions that enhance the effectiveness of this process.

At the ascertaining stage, research was conducted aimed at testing criteria and studying psycho-pedagogical conditions conducive to the formation of a vocal ensemble leader's readiness for creative interaction with a musical collective. Diagnostic tools were developed for this purpose, including: A modified Subjective Assessment Map of Psychological Climate for diagnosing the psychological climate in the vocal ensemble; The Questionnaire for Identifying Mental States of Vocal Ensemble Participants (Savchenko-Shlapak, 2019) to study the impact of ensemble activity on participants' mental states; The Questionnaire for Studying the Semantic Space of the Vocal Ensemble Leader (Schwartz, 1992) to diagnose professionally significant personal qualities of modern vocal ensemble leaders; The Method of Unfinished Sentences (Sachs & Levy, 1950) to study opinions on conditions favorable for creating creative interaction in the ensemble; The Job Satisfaction in a Vocal Ensemble methodology (Savchenko, 2019) to

determine ensemble members' attitudes towards various aspects of ensemble activity. A scientific analysis of readiness indicators allowed the identification of the following criteria:

1. Motivational-value criterion with indicators: possession of a complex of personal qualities of a vocal ensemble leader; inclination towards organizational activities; motivation to engage ensemble members in creative interaction.
2. Cognitive-informational criterion with indicators: willingness to create comfortable conditions for creative interaction; level of communicative skills of the vocal ensemble leader.
3. Creative-activity criterion with indicators: application of unconventional approaches in selecting original vocal-ensemble repertoire; degree of interest in selecting original and appropriate repertoire for the ensemble.
4. Constructive-creative criterion with indicators: ability to encourage the ensemble to participate in concert performances; level of mastery of various psycho-technological methods of interaction with ensemble members.

To verify the readiness criteria and study the identified conditions for ensuring creative interaction, the following research methods were used: observation, questionnaire surveys, testing, ascertaining pedagogical experiment, and a technological map with key parameters and diagnostic tools developed by the authors of this article (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Technological research map

No.	Parameters	Research methods and techniques
1.	The system of personal qualities of a vocal ensemble leader that contribute to organizing creative interaction in the vocal ensemble.	Conversation; observation; theoretical analysis of literature on the issue of the skills of a modern vocal ensemble leader capable of organizing creative interaction in a vocal ensemble; "Questionnaire on the study of the semantic space of the VEL (Vocal Ensemble Leader)"; incomplete sentence technique.
2.	The nature of the psychological climate in the vocal ensemble.	Conversation; observation; technique "Subjective evaluation Map of the psychological climate"; study of the influence of vocal ensemble rehearsals on the mental state of ensemble members.
3.	The degree of satisfaction of vocal ensemble participants with various aspects of vocal-ensemble life.	Conversation; observation; technique "Satisfaction with work in the vocal ensemble".

The selected diagnostic techniques, combined with pedagogical research methods – such as observation, interviews, and others – enabled the implementation of a comprehensive study.

Following the ascertaining stage of the experiment, several conclusions were drawn. In the process of developing readiness for creative interaction within a vocal ensemble, the ensemble leader plays a key role. In addition to possessing the necessary knowledge and skills, the leader must exhibit a system of significant personal qualities. Participants from both the experimental (EG) and control groups (CG) identified the following as the most important traits: the ability to create a favorable psychological climate (average score: 11.7), love for music (12.0), musicality (11.9), and the ability to foster a creative atmosphere (11.9), among others. This made it possible for the authors of the article to supplement the structure of professionally significant qualities, abilities, and psychophysiological characteristics of the vocal ensemble leader with new attributes. (see **Table 2**).

Table 2. Structure of professionally significant qualities, abilities, and psycho-physiological characteristics of a vocal ensemble leader

Direction	Abilities			Psychophysiological nature	Professionally significant qualities	
	general	special			pedagogical	musical
		pedagogical	musical			
Humanistic musical-pedagogical; high level of general musical culture	Creative; intellectual; emotional and volitional, etc.	Didactic; constructive; perceptive; gnostic (ability to acquire and apply knowledge); communicative; organizational; improvisational; expressive; ability to resist "emotional burnout syndrome" (psychological resilience).	Emotional-perceptive (sense of harmony); auditory-reproductive (musical ear); sense of meter and rhythm; motor (conducting gestures).	Strong type of nervous system, sanguine or choleric temperament; well-developed musical memory; developed imagination; extraversion; behavioral flexibility; sensitivity, etc.	Artistry; facilitation; theatricality; ability to create a favorable psychological climate; ability to create a creative atmosphere; ability to energize others; self-control; ability to lead others (leadership qualities); politeness; kindness; emotionality, etc.	Love for music; musicality; sense of musical form and ensemble; intonational sensitivity; vocal-timbre culture; good musical taste, etc.

In both the EG and CG, the psychological climate level ranged from "unstable positive" (SAPC coefficient of 4.5 in the CG) to "unstable negative" (SAPC coefficient of 4.3 in the EG), indicating a low level on the developed scale. This significantly influenced the participants' satisfaction with ensemble activity across various criteria.

A considerable number of ensemble participants in both the EG (33.3%) and CG (25.6%) reported that rehearsal workloads were excessive, leading to rapid fatigue. Furthermore, 15.5% of the EG and 36.9% of the CG participants expressed dissatisfaction with the ensemble leader's organization of creative interaction within the group, though they considered this work essential and insufficiently implemented at the time. The Method of Unfinished Sentences (Sachs & Levy, 1950) was employed to investigate students' views on conditions conducive to establishing creative interaction in a vocal ensemble. The results indicated that key factors in ensuring creative collaboration included: a well-formed set of personal qualities of the ensemble leader (92%), engaging and relevant repertoire (98.7%), and opportunities for performance, such as concerts and masterclasses (see **Table 3**).

Table 3. Criteria and levels of organizing creative interaction in a vocal ensemble (Savchenko, 2022)

No.	Criteria	Levels		
		High (Creative)	Medium (Reproductive)	Low (Intuitive)
1.	Motivational and value-Based	The vocal ensemble leader actively seeks creative interaction, takes into account the opinions of ensemble members regarding the character and musical interpretation of the piece.	The vocal ensemble leader attempts to organize creative interaction, tries to consider the opinions of the ensemble members regarding the character of the piece, but does not always achieve results.	The vocal ensemble leader does not strive for creative interaction and does not consider the opinions of ensemble members regarding the character and musical interpretation of the piece.
2.	Cognitive and informational	Ensemble members are united, feel emotionally uplifted after rehearsals; provide psychological support to each other; feel personal encouragement and interest from the leader.	Ensemble members generally feel friendly towards one another; after rehearsals, they may experience mixed emotions – from uplift to fatigue; some members provide	Ensemble members are disconnected, often feel tired after rehearsals; do not provide psychological support to one another; do not feel personal interest from the ensemble leader.

			psychological support to each other.	
3.	Creative and activity-based	The leader considers the interests and opinions of ensemble members when choosing repertoire.	The leader suggests repertoire, partially considering the interests and opinions of the choir members.	The leader solely determines the repertoire without considering the interests and opinions of the ensemble members.
4.	Constructive and creative	Concert activity is conducted regularly, evoking a sense of satisfaction and unity among ensemble members.	Concert activity is conducted, but its organization is not always at a high level.	Concert activity is rare, and concert organization is weak.

The results of the experimental study confirmed the validity of the conditions we identified and the feasibility of their implementation during the formative stage of the experiment.

The primary aim of the formative stage was to implement the psychological and pedagogical conditions for fostering the readiness of future vocal ensemble leaders to engage in creative interaction with a musical collective. These conditions focused on: the development of professionally significant personal qualities in future vocal ensemble leaders; the cultivation of a dialogical communication style; the implementation of a structured algorithm for collaborative work on a musical piece; and the establishment of a favorable psychological climate within the ensemble. The formative stage of the experiment was conducted through vocal ensemble classes with 2nd to 4th year students at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University.

In selecting the ensemble repertoire, a culturological approach was applied. This involved the inclusion of outstanding works from both Ukrainian and international classical and contemporary vocal ensemble music. Students became familiar with pedagogical repertoire through the following academic courses: Pop Vocal Ensemble (Years 3–4), Conducting: Arranging and Score Reading for Vocal Ensembles, Conducting: Conducting Techniques (Years 2–4), Chamber Ensemble (Years 2–4), and Methods of Working with Vocal Ensembles (Year 3). These disciplines are part of the educational program "025.00.02 Solo Singing" within specialty 025 Music Art, Bachelor's level, full-time form of study at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University. The mastery of pedagogical repertoire by future ensemble leaders, taking into account the age characteristics and musical preparedness of ensemble participants, contributed significantly to the establishment of creative interpersonal interaction.

To implement the outlined conditions: development of personal qualities, professional knowledge and skills of ensemble leaders; establishment of subject-subject relations within the ensemble; application of a creative interaction methodology during the rehearsal process; and creation of a favorable psychological climate in a creative musical environment – a comprehensive program was developed for the formative stage.

At Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, students of the Solo Singing program enhance their professional competencies through vocal ensemble production (continuous) and concert (continuous) practice. These are carried out during the 4th year in primary art education institutions with children's vocal ensembles.

The implementation of the first and second conditions – development of personal and professional competencies of the ensemble leader and the

formation of dialogic subject-subject relationships within the ensemble – required:

- studying a model of the "ideal" vocal ensemble leader and reflecting on one's own personal traits, knowledge, and skills;
- developing a professional activity style based on dialogical communication and oriented toward organizing collective creative activity within the ensemble;
- exploring the best practices of experienced educators and colleagues in organizing creative interaction with vocal ensembles.

The implementation of the third condition – application of a methodology for creative interaction during ensemble work – required:

- the use of competence-based, activity-based, dialogic, axiological, culturological, personal, poly-subjective, facilitative, and creative approaches in collaboratively selecting repertoire that matches the interests, abilities, and satisfaction of the ensemble members;
- employing rehearsal techniques such as group discussions on the musical character, musical improvisation, microteaching, and diverse rehearsal formats (sectional, full ensemble, soloist-led) to foster cooperation and self-expression among participants.

Creative workshops were also organized, enabling students from different ensembles to give masterclasses, exchange experiences, and share original techniques for working on musical pieces collaboratively. One notable result of such collaboration was the creation of a music video for Eric Whitacre's piece "Sing Gently", produced in cooperation with the vocal ensemble of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University in November 2020.

The fourth condition – establishing a favorable psychological climate within the musical environment – required the following:

- the ability of the vocal ensemble leader to alleviate the tension of intensive rehearsals, organize singers into micro-groups based on compatibility and the "more experienced–less experienced" principle to promote mutual learning and improve the overall level of performance skills, as well as manage and resolve potential conflicts;
- the organization of the ensemble's concert activities to encourage shared experiences of "success moments", strengthen group cohesion, and provide emotional satisfaction from collective creativity through events, celebrations, and concerts aimed at unifying the singers.

This condition was implemented by drawing on students' knowledge gained during the course Music Pedagogy and Music Psychology (Year 2), particularly regarding communicative behavior and interpersonal interaction

in a musical ensemble setting. The content and structure of the classes during the formative stage were based on selected psychological (actualization, visualization, sensitivity) and pedagogical (unity of emotion and awareness; unity of artistic and technical aspects; unity of collective musical development and personal individuality) principles. These principles led to the use of various pedagogical methods such as exercises, musical improvisation, microteaching, and integrating educational activities with concert performance.

A facilitative approach was prioritized—defined as a pedagogical interaction strategy where the primary goal of the ensemble leader is to create conditions conducive to the creative self-development of each ensemble member and the realization of their inner potential (Omelchenko & Shulyk, 2018). The approach included:

- fostering interest in the repertoire and performance activities through encouragement and support;
- satisfying singers' aesthetic and creative needs during repertoire selection;
- taking into account individual characteristics and performance capabilities of each ensemble member;
- timely regulation of ensemble members' emotional states;
- preventing fatigue and negative emotional responses;
- creating a supportive musical environment that promotes individual expression and encourages articulation of personal perspectives during the creative process.

When organizing creative interaction, the specific characteristics of the vocal ensemble were considered, including:

- the singers' willingness to participate in creative interpretation;
- their level of professional engagement, which the ensemble leader was expected to direct and coordinate effectively.

Rehearsal planning was recognized as a key factor in influencing ensemble performance. At the same time, the spontaneous nature of vocal performance required the leader to respond quickly to unpredictable situations that might arise during rehearsals or performances. These adjustments, whether pre-planned or spontaneous, were delivered directly through the leader's verbal and musical interactions with the ensemble, based on dialogic strategies.

In the process of working on a musical piece, the following algorithm was applied:

- working with the literary text;

- analyzing expressive musical means;
- exploring thematic material;
- studying tonal and modal characteristics;
- conducting harmonic analysis;
- describing musical texture;
- identifying features of musical presentation;
- examining specific aspects of intonation.

Rehearsals were organized using a variety of formats – sectionals, full ensemble rehearsals, and work with soloists. This variability enriched the rehearsal process and reduced fatigue among ensemble members, promoting sustained creative engagement. The analysis of musical works during rehearsals was guided by a series of specific questions (to be listed). The following key questions were used to guide the analysis of musical works during the rehearsal process:

1. What ideas and messages does the composer convey (through poetic text, if present, and musical devices used to express certain meanings or depict specific images)?
2. Which artistic means (dynamics, agogics, timbre, articulation, phrasing, etc.) can best embody and vividly communicate this meaning in real sound?
3. What non-verbal and emotionally expressive tools (logical connection between phrases, approach to climax, etc.) can realize the performer's artistic image?
4. What vocal, rhythmic, intonational, ensemble, and other technical challenges may arise for the vocal ensemble leader in the process of achieving the ideal artistic concept?

Throughout this process, active dialogic communication was encouraged to involve all ensemble members in expressing their ideas. The microteaching method was employed, allowing singers to temporarily assume the role of ensemble leader and demonstrate their vision of the work and its interpretive character.

In working on a musical piece, students discussed expressive musical elements, tonal and modal features, textural characteristics, and specific aspects of intonation.

The first part of each session focused on vocal warm-ups and vocal training, including exercises with soloists, sectionals, and full ensemble rehearsals. During familiarization with a new piece, students analyzed artistic features and technical challenges to be addressed throughout the learning process. The priority at this stage was to engage ensemble members with the

new material, foster dialogic interaction, and actively involve them in the creative process.

The work plan for musical pieces consisted of core rehearsal tasks and a multi-stage system leading to full mastery of the composition. Each session was enriched with creative challenges, offering varied and imaginative ways to approach them.

In the early stages of learning a piece, pedagogical and technical processes predominated, while at the creative generation stage, artistic expression took center stage. Creative debates emerged around the character of sound, and the microteaching method was once again used, with individual members leading and sharing their interpretation.

The final stage involved vocal polishing – reinforcing the vocal and ensemble skills developed during the previous stages. The leader's sensitivity to this phase was shaped by their practical experience with vocal ensembles. Ensemble sessions required emotional engagement, energetic leadership, and responsiveness to each participant's reactions. The ensemble leader often needed to ease rehearsal stress. The guiding principle was "first among equals" – emphasizing shared purpose between the leader and students, with mutual investment in achieving high-quality results.

The rehearsal environment was grounded in a dialogical communication strategy, which played a methodological role by encouraging singers' initiative, increasing their motivation, and raising awareness of their musical actions. Facilitative communication was also employed – targeted interaction in which pedagogical support guided students' professional and personal self-development. Thus, the effectiveness of creative interaction with the ensemble depends on the following preconditions:

- the leader's authoritativeness, rooted in both professional and personal traits;
- the ability to manage the ensemble through subject-subject interaction;
- the ability to inspire the ensemble and create a creative, collaborative atmosphere.

The specific nature of the vocal ensemble leader's work lies in their flexible use of both pre-planned and spontaneous interactions. Planning involves preparing verbal and musical actions in advance, such as researching information about composers and identifying interpretive benchmarks for the performance.

The interaction between vocal ensemble members and the conductor, regardless of the ensemble's functional focus, is carried out through a combination of vocal and non-verbal actions. Through non-verbal cues

(posture, physical engagement during performance, expressive facial expressions, eye contact), singers consciously express the degree of:

- attentiveness to the conductor's instructions;
- focus and interest in fulfilling them;
- engagement and emotional investment in the activity;
- desire to achieve the highest artistic results.

In this way, singers demonstrate reciprocal engagement with the conductor's guidance, which forms the foundational basis for creative interaction. Notably, leading singers play an important role in the ensemble: through their confident vocal actions aligned with the conductor's expectations, they serve as a reliable support for both the ensemble and its leader.

The success of the ensemble's creative activity also depends significantly on the physical arrangement of its members during rehearsals and performances. When positioning singers, their vocal qualities must be considered – adjacent voices should blend well in timbre and volume. In assigning parts within vocal sections, both vocal-ensemble skills and musicianship were taken into account. To address discrepancies in skill levels, a mentorship model was introduced: less experienced students were paired with more skilled peers and seated nearby during rehearsals. This created favorable conditions for the development of ensemble mastery among novice singers.

Summarizing the above, creative interaction between the ensemble leader and the vocal collective can be conceptualized as a dynamic facilitative process. The vocal ensemble leader acts as a facilitator, initiator, and leader of artistic collaboration. Their professional actions include dialogue, conducting (via hand and head gestures), and vocal demonstration. Ensemble members are creative partners and active participants in the process. Their actions involve singing, non-verbal behavior, and dialogic engagement. As a result: vocal-ensemble skills are improved; interaction skills are developed; participants' spiritual culture is enhanced; future leaders acquire professional competencies in organizing artistic interaction; artistic interpretations of musical works are achieved.

Student reflections, classroom observations, and practical outcomes indicated that the activities stimulated interest in collaborative creativity and a growing need for self-expression. Students discovered new dimensions of themselves and others that had not been previously emphasized in the educational process. In professional communication, they became more receptive to the creative expressions of others, more attuned to each other's

feelings and relationships, and more confident in verbal, physical, gestural, and expressive movement.

Psychological atmosphere was also critical, including the following factors:

- creation of comfortable rehearsal conditions;
- friendly relationships among ensemble members;
- respectful attitude from the ensemble leader toward each participant;
- opportunity for each singer to express personal opinions during work on a musical piece;
- establishment of a shared emotional mood during performance;
- organization of informal social gatherings among ensemble members.

Rehearsal activities were closely integrated with concert performance experiences. To foster a positive psychological climate within the ensemble, a variety of concert activities were organized: performances during university interludes, participation in the musical performance "Qui Reus Est" based on Lina Kostenko's novel *Marusya Churai*, ensemble participation in volunteer initiatives, and the production of music videos. These efforts fostered satisfaction through shared creative engagement, enhanced the overall positive atmosphere within the ensemble, and strengthened group cohesion.

Creative work required students to develop skills in distributed teamwork, improvisation, and expressive performance. While mastering these skills, ensemble members simultaneously acquired new pedagogical strategies, deepened their understanding of ensemble performance, and broadened their artistic interests.

The methodology for developing readiness for creative interaction in a vocal ensemble was implemented across three core areas: development of the personal qualities of the vocal ensemble leader; implementation of an algorithm for joint creative work on a musical piece; establishment of a favorable psychological climate among ensemble members.

The methodology consisted of three stages: the organizational-research (adaptive) stage, the developmental (accumulation) stage, and the constructive-reflective (generation) stage. Each stage included specific objectives supported by a set of methods and techniques.

The first stage emphasized motivational and stimulating pedagogical tools, including: methods of emotional engagement (creating situations of emotional novelty, moral reflection, success, gameplay, discussions, dialogue); methods of developing responsibility (clarifying the personal and social importance of ensemble work, jointly developing rules and reward systems). At this stage, interaction was characterized by asymmetry: the ensemble leader

acted as the primary subject, and students were positioned as objects. The level of interaction was reproductive.

The second stage focused on the accumulation and initial application of skills through collective creative projects. It involved productive creative methods such as heuristic techniques for developing imagination and the creation of problem-based situations. Roles began to shift: the conductor assumed the role of organizer, and students became co-participants, acting increasingly as subjects in the interaction. The level of interaction was interpretive – still reproductive, but with elements of situational creativity.

The third stage, the constructive-reflective (generation) phase, marked the transition to a creative level of interaction. It involved analyzing the achievements of both the collective and individual participants, and initiating new independent group projects. Methods included collective analysis (e.g., group discussion), presentation of creative outcomes, and project-based learning. The leader's role shifted to consultant and manager, while students took on the role of co-creators.

At the control stage, the effectiveness of the training methodology was assessed through repeated diagnostics, which measured the psychological climate within the ensemble and the participants' satisfaction with various aspects of ensemble activity. The reliability of the experimental results was ensured through the use of the statistical *t*-criterion based on Student's *t*-distribution. The results of the final assessment, obtained using methods of statistical and comparative analysis, confirmed a positive dynamic in the levels of formation of readiness among future leaders of vocal ensembles for creative interaction with the musical group. The obtained data demonstrated that during the formative stage of the experiment, the highest increase in the indicators of a high level of readiness for creative interaction with the ensemble was observed in the experimental group.

For this purpose, Student's *t*-criterion was applied using the following formula:

$$t = \frac{x_1 - x_2}{\sqrt{m_1^2 + m_2^2}},$$

where x_1 and x_2 are the arithmetic mean values of the variables in the experimental and control groups; m_1 and m_2 are the mean errors, which are calculated according to the formula:

$$m = \frac{\sigma}{N}$$

where σ is the standard deviation, calculated by the formula:

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(x_1 - x)^2}{N}}$$

where N is the number of participants in the study.

A comparative analysis of the experimental and control groups demonstrated significant positive dynamics (see **Table 4**).

Table 4. Dynamics of Forming Future Vocal Ensemble Leaders' Readiness for Creative Interaction with a Musical Collective (Savchenko, 2022)

Level	Experimental group (45 subjects)					Control group (39 subjects)				
	Start		End		Change (%)	Start		End		Change (%)
	Pers.	%	Pers.	%		Pers.	%	Pers.	%	
Motivational and value-based criterion										
High	1	2,22	16	35,56	+33,33	2	5,13	3	7,69	+2,56
Medium	28	62,22	25	57,56	-6,67	25	64,10	28	71,79	+7,69
Low	16	35,56	4	8,89	-26,67	12	30,77	8	20,51	-10,26
Cognitive and informational criterion										
High	5	11,11	13	28,89	+17,78	5	12,82	8	20,51	+7,69
Medium	33	73,33	26	57,78	-15,56	20	51,28	20	51,28	0,00
Low	7	15,56	6	13,33	-2,22	14	35,90	11	28,21	-7,69
Creative and activity-based criterion										
High	5	11,11	12	26,67	+15,56	9	23,08	10	25,64	+2,56
Medium	25	55,56	28	62,22	+6,67	22	56,41	24	61,54	+5,13
Low	15	33,33	5	11,11	-22,22	8	20,51	5	12,82	-7,69
Constructive and creative criterion										
High	12	26,66	25	55,56	+28,89	15	38,46	17	43,59	+5,13
Medium	25	55,56	15	33,33	-22,22	17	43,59	17	43,59	0,00
Low	8	17,78	5	11,11	-6,67	7	17,95	5	12,82	-5,13

As the comparative analysis of the research data demonstrates, there was a substantial improvement in the motivational-volitional criterion within the experimental group. Specifically, the percentage of students demonstrating a high level of development increased from 2.22% to 25.56%, showing a growth dynamic of +23.34%. In the control group, there was also some improvement (from 5.13% to 7.69%, +2.56%), attributed to the natural development of the group and enhanced competence of its leader, though the dynamic was more modest. More significant changes occurred in the cognitive-informational criterion. In the experimental group, the percentage of students at a high level rose from 11.11% to 28.89% (+17.78%), while in the control group, it increased from 12.82% to 20.51% (+7.69%). Positive dynamics were also observed in the creative-activity criterion: experimental group: from 11.11% to 26.67% (+15.56%); control group: from 23.08% to 25.64% (+2.56%)

The number of students fully satisfied with concert activity also grew considerably. According to the constructive-creative criterion, the percentage of ensemble members at a high level increased from 26.66% to 55.56% in the experimental group (+28.89%), and from 38.46% to 43.59% in the control group (+5.13%).

These results confirm the effectiveness of the implemented methods and justify further development in the identified directions. The activities conducted not only increased participants' satisfaction with various aspects of ensemble work, but also significantly boosted their overall interest in the creative process. Importantly, students became more involved in repertoire selection, which had previously been the sole responsibility of the ensemble leader.

Students in the experimental group demonstrated greater confidence in articulating their perspectives on the interpretation of musical works. This contributed to the development of their professional competence. A series of extracurricular and informal activities – including celebrations and music video production – strengthened interpersonal relationships, improved the psychological comfort of the group, and enhanced the overall ensemble microclimate. Collectively, these factors led to improvements in ensemble sound quality and an elevated level of musical culture.

The experimental work showed that developing readiness for creative interaction within the vocal ensemble contributed to the acquisition of essential social skills, such as:

- initiative;
- responsibility;
- the ability to adjust behavior based on others' perspectives.

These outcomes promoted the growth of humanistic communication, stimulating reflective awareness, self-control, mutual evaluation, and emotional responsiveness within educational interaction.

Empathy, developed during creative collaboration, facilitated emotional growth, psychological comfort during learning, and satisfaction with ensemble participation. The process also considered the fact that graduates of art faculties become subjects of both artistic and pedagogical activity. Therefore, the professional training of future music educators must reflect both artistic and pedagogical components, requiring not only understanding of artistic processes but also pedagogical, didactic, and psychological awareness, as well as skills for organizing creative collaboration. The training process fulfilled key objectives in developing ensemble performance competence, including:

- awareness and "embodied" understanding of psychophysiological processes involved in singing;
- enhancement of musicality (vocal and auditory) necessary for performance and realization of internal potential;
- acquisition of ensemble collaboration experience as a core professional skill;
- mastery of a broad and diverse vocal repertoire, including classical and contemporary works, which expanded musical horizons, deepened spiritual values, and cultivated artistic taste and humanistic understanding;
- comprehension of didactic principles and leadership techniques in managing a vocal ensemble through creative collaboration – essential for the future profession of ensemble director;
- insight into interpersonal dynamics within the ensemble and mastery of creative interaction in the process of rehearsing and performing music;
- accumulation of concert experience as a form of public demonstration of artistic and professional development.

The conducted experimental work allows us to conclude the appropriateness of the proposed criteria and psycho-pedagogical conditions, as well as the possibility of obtaining practical results in developing future vocal ensemble leaders' readiness for creative interaction within an ensemble through their integrated implementation.

Conclusions

The relevance and importance of solving the problem of forming the readiness of future vocal ensemble leaders for creative interaction with a musical collective have been substantiated. It has been established that creative interaction is a special form of engagement between the ensemble leader and the members of the musical collective, which is based on long-term non-verbal and verbal personal contact between the leader and the singers. The essence of the key concepts of the study has been clarified. Based on a scientific understanding of these terms, the readiness of a vocal ensemble leader for creative interaction with a musical collective is regarded as a personally and professionally integrated quality, which reflects the development of motivational attitudes, knowledge, methodological competence, and constructive-creative attributes, and is realized through subject-subject relations and a dialogical style of pedagogical communication.

The structure of readiness for the creative interaction of a vocal ensemble leader with performers has been defined. It consists of four components: motivational – as a system of professional orientation and other personal qualities and capabilities of the leader; cognitive – as a body of professional knowledge; activity-based – as a system of professional skills and action strategies; creative – as a system of leadership techniques and the ability to carry out specific professional tasks.

It has been found that the leading role in ensuring readiness for creative interaction within a musical collective belongs to the vocal ensemble leader. At the same time, creative interaction in vocal-ensemble activity is based on a specific relationship between the leader and ensemble participants – a dialogical communication strategy. This interaction spans a considerable time period and involves significant organizational, educational, and pedagogical work on the part of the ensemble leader, aimed at a strategic goal: the professional development of the singing collective as a whole and the personal growth of each singer in the ensemble.

The specifics of readiness for creative interaction with a student collective are defined as a two-sided subject-subject relationship, characterized by high activity on the part of both the leader and the students, forming a combined subject. The interaction evolves dynamically from engaging students in productive activity through awareness of the personal and societal significance of ensemble singing, and the development of shared expectations and incentives, to the execution of diverse tasks using accumulated knowledge and skills under the guidance of the leader, ultimately reaching a new level of interaction marked by independent, collectively-created artistic outputs.

Criteria and indicators for readiness in the rehearsal process have been defined, including:

1) **Motivational-value:** possession of a set of essential personal qualities by the ensemble leader; inclination toward organizational activity; motivation to foster creative interaction among ensemble participants. 2) **Cognitive-informational:** desire to create comfortable conditions for interaction; level of development of communicative skills. 3) **Creative-activity-based:** use of non-standard approaches in selecting original repertoire; engagement with finding effective and fitting material. 4) **Constructive-creative:** ability to inspire the ensemble to perform publicly; ability to apply various psycho-technological methods for interaction.

Based on theoretical research and professional experience, a model of the readiness formation process was developed, reflecting the realities of training within higher education institutions. This structural-component model includes goal-setting, the creative musical environment, and theoretical-methodological blocks. The theoretical block contains methodological approaches, principles, structural components, and assessment criteria; the methodological block includes methods and techniques, stages, pedagogical conditions, and levels of readiness formation.

The following organizational-pedagogical conditions have been substantiated: 1. development of a specific system of personal qualities, knowledge, and skills of the ensemble leader; 2. establishment of subject-subject relationships in the ensemble; 3. implementation of a methodology for creative collaboration in the rehearsal process; 4. creation of a favorable psychological climate in the musical environment.

The expected outcome is the readiness of future vocal ensemble leaders for creative interaction with a musical collective.

The proposed model should be regarded as a tool for organizing a music education system that prepares competent artist-educators.

Pedagogical leadership of the readiness formation process must consider methodological approaches (competency-based, activity-based, axiological, culturological, personal, poly-subjective/dialogical, facilitative, and creative); psychological principles (actualization, visualization, sensitivity); pedagogical principles (unity of emotion and cognition, unity of artistic and technical elements, unity of collective development and individual identity); and organizational, pedagogical, sociological, and communicative regularities of ensemble activity.

The methodology of readiness formation consists of three stages: organizational-research; developmental; constructive-reflective. It incorporates dialogical methods and techniques such as: algorithms for

working on musical pieces, systems of sequenced actions, methods of influencing the collective, co-modeling of sound, group discussions, harmonic analysis, improvisational methods. Readiness levels include: high (creative); medium (reproductive); low (intuitive).

The effectiveness of the model was evaluated through a pedagogical experiment conducted in three stages: diagnostic, formative, and control.

During the diagnostic stage, criteria and pedagogical conditions for readiness formation were examined using a system of pedagogical and authorial methods. Findings showed insufficient attention was given in education to developing ensemble leaders' readiness for interaction, which correlated with low satisfaction among students regarding key aspects such as leadership, repertoire, psychological climate, and concert activity.

The control stage confirmed the success of the intervention: the experimental group showed marked positive change compared to the control group, validating the proposed conditions and criteria. Additionally, the system of professionally significant qualities of the modern ensemble leader was clarified, including: ability to foster a supportive atmosphere, to energize others, and to establish a creative environment. Practical readiness for creative interaction was acquired by students through integrated practice programs during their 3rd and 4th years, including ensemble, pedagogical, and concert-based placements. Future directions include: supplementing the "Music Pedagogy and Psychology" course with modules on the mechanisms of creative interaction; defining the requirements for leaders of creative collectives in primary arts education; systematizing educational specifics in work with children's and youth vocal ensembles; disseminating the model through seminars and workshops with educators and ensemble directors across artistic disciplines.

Statement on the Use of AI Tools | *This article was translated from Ukrainian to English with the assistance of an artificial intelligence language model (ChatGPT by OpenAI) under human supervision. The author has reviewed and verified the accuracy and integrity of the translation.*

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