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Theatrical Activity as a Way of Developing Musical-Choreographic Competence in Future Preschool and Primary School Teachers

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Abstract: The article shows how some elements of theatrical art can be used in professional training of future preschool and primary school teachers. In particular, the article addresses the problem of developing their musical-choreographic competence through various forms, types and methods of theatrical activity. The main forms of theatrical activity include practical classes and laboratory work (within such courses as "Pedagogy", "The fundamentals of pedagogical creativity", "The basics and methods of dramatic and screen arts", "Theatrical activity in preschools", "Music education methods"), as well as extracurricular forms of theatrical activity (drama clubs and studios). The following are effective types of theatrical activity in teacher training: staging, theatricalization and dramatization which allow one to use different methods of developing musical-choreographic competence (music and movement activities, theatrical games, staging of fairytales and songs, improvisation on a given topic (image), impersonation). They significantly develop musical-choreographic abilities, singing skills, stage and dance movements, performance culture in future preschool and primary school teachers.

Keywords: *Professional training; musical-choreographic competence; future preschool and primary school teachers; theatrical activity; forms; methods; staging; theatricalization; dramatization.*

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Introduction

According to Ukraine's current regulation (Ministerstvo osvity i nauky Ukrainy, 2012; Zakon Ukrainy, 2017), musical- choreographic training is an obligatory element of professional development of future preschool and primary school teachers. In particular, preschool teachers are expected to directly participate in music and dance education of children. It implies assisting music teachers and choreographers in the classroom and organizing daily musical and movement activities for preschoolers. Primary school teachers must be professionally trained to conduct music lessons or teach an integrated art course in secondary schools, as well as be able to organize basic choreographic activities.

In Ukraine, bachelor's and master's degrees in preschool and primary education presuppose only one obligatory course that acquaints students with the theory and methods of music education. At the same time, choreographic courses are available only for choreography students. It follows that one should use other means and resources to develop musical-choreographic competence in future teachers. In this regard, this article views theatre as a synthetic art, whose leading components are stage performance, music and choreography. They are also important factors in music education (Gardner, 1983).

Accordingly, the article aims to study effective forms, types and methods of theatrical activity to develop musical-choreographic competence in future preschool and primary school teachers.

This research relies on sources covering a wide range of issues. Emphasis is placed on general aspects of teacher training (Gray, 2008; Kessels, 2010; Kudelia & Samokhin, 2008; Ministerstvo osvity i nauky Ukrainy, 2012; Myronchuk, 2020; Zakon Ukrainy, 2017; Ziaziun, 2008). At the same time, one of today's challenges lies in training future teachers to use the latest information technologies to organize an effective educational process (Captijn, 2015; Myronchuk, 2020; Vasko, 2019; Vorontsov, 2021). An important factor in teacher training is also seen in using relevant approaches to education management to assure education quality (Agofure, 2013; Clandfield, 2010; Kaplan & Norton, 2006; Maksymchuk et al., 2018; Melnyk et al., 2021; Melnyk et al., 2019; Nenko et al., 2022; Sheremet, 2019).

Numerous scholars focus on musical-choreographic training in the context of developing the corresponding competence in future preschool and primary school teachers (Lobova et al., 2020; Ovcharenko et al., 2020; Rebrova et al., 2020). The effects of theatrical activity in preschools are considered by Migunova (2006) and Oliinyk (2017). Verkhovynets (1989)

highlights different types of theatrical activity in music and dance education of children. Pushkar & Parfilova (2021) analyze the ways of incorporating theatrical and movement activities in professional training of future preschool teachers.

The international discourse also pays considerable attention to the ways of using theatrical art in the educational process. Today's researchers consider the role of drama and theatre in education (Agofure, 2013), study methods of introducing theatrical art into social sciences in primary schools (Ejiofor & Ken-Aminikpo, 2016), analyze teachers' views on the use of drama in primary schools (Isyar & Akay, 2017), justify positive and negative aspects of using theatrical art in the educational process (Zaghloul, 2020).

Nevertheless, the problem of theoretical and methodical support for developing musical-choreographic competence in future preschool and primary school teachers remains rather relevant.

Theatrical activity as an element of the educational process organization

The introduction of a competency-based approach has determined the focus of teacher education on developing professional competences. According to the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (Zakon Ukrainy, 2017), competence is a dynamic combination of professional knowledge and skills, ways of thinking, attitudes, values and other personal qualities. It follows that musical-choreographic competence should be considered as a complex personal quality that involves certain knowledge, skills, abilities, ways of thinking, views, values, attitudes, experiences and behavioural reactions that enable teachers to solve creative, educational and developmental problems in music and dance education.

Theatre is a specific art that combines music and choreography. Involving students in it is an effective factor in the simultaneous development of their musical and choreographic knowledge, skills and abilities (Captijn, 2015). Therefore, theatrical activity serves as an important way of developing musical-choreographic competence in future preschool and primary school teachers.

In many scientific sources, *theatrical activity* is defined as an artistic activity associated with perceiving theatrical works and recreating the perceived ideas, impressions and feelings in the form of games. It is one of the most effective means of pedagogical influence on a child's personality development (Oliinyk, 2017).

As noted by Migunova (2006), theatrical activity, as the most common type of child's creativity, nurtures social skills and solves numerous

psycho-pedagogical problems related to art education. Besides, it promotes moral education and aesthetics and develops communication skills (verbal and non-verbal), volition, memory, imagination, initiative and speech.

Finally, theatrical activity generates positive emotions, relieves tension and resolves conflict situations through play activity.

Theatrical activity is an important element of the educational process organization in preschools and primary schools (Clandfield, 2010). According to the Basic Component of Preschool Education (Ministerstvo osvity i nauky Ukrainy, 2012), before entering school children should know the main types of theatrical art and distinguish between humane content and the collective nature of performance. Besides, they must be able to demonstrate their position, use integrated skills when "transforming" into a positive/negative dramatic character using expressive means (speech, facial expressions, gestures, movements, music, dancing, singing), interact with peers and adults during musical or theatrical entertainments and holidays (Ministerstvo osvity i nauky Ukrainy, 2012). Therefore, future preschool teachers should be effectively trained to organize theatrical activity.

Ivan Ziaziun (2008), the academician of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, is rightly considered to be the promoter of theatre pedagogy as part of teacher training. He believed that this significant innovation required methodological consideration, a synthesis of theory and applied control of the educational process and its algorithms following the fundamentals of theatrical art in general and theatre pedagogy in particular (Ziaziun, 2008).

However, it is necessary to consider both common and different elements of theatrical art and the educational process. Ziaziun (2008) draws a parallel between pedagogy as an art and a one-man theatre and suggests using Stanislavski's system (2018) to comprehend the principles of theatrical action and its patterns. This system highlights an organic nature of theatrical creativity through that of the human-creator and actor and, for the first time, addresses the problem of the conscious mastery of the sub-conscious, improvisational creativity, the manifestation of one's talent in activity.

Nowadays, psychology and pedagogy emphasize the importance and influence of theatrical activity on a child's personality development, especially at the preschool and primary school age, as well as on future teachers' readiness to ensure the effectiveness of this process. The authors of this article assume that teacher training should consider the potential of theatrical art and theatre pedagogy (including theatrical and play activities) at the intersection of two planes. First, it is vital to cultivate children's musical,

choreographic and creative qualities. Second, it is crucial to improve their aesthetic, musical, choreographic, creative and acting skills (Dewey, 1997).

The use of theatrical activity in professional training of future preschool and primary school teachers also relies on the links between acting and teaching. Oliinyk (2017) believes that every future teacher can find the means to reveal his/her pedagogical skills and creative potential in the field of theatre pedagogy. Today's interest in theatre pedagogy is explained by several socio-cultural and educational factors. First, one, who is capable of adequate cultural self-identification, should be entitled to choose one's own position (the elements of theatre pedagogy serve as an organic component of the educational process at universities and as a universal tool for developing creative and artistic abilities in future teachers). Second, one can observe the transition from increasing the number of degree programmes to searching for effective approaches to their organization (theatre pedagogy is designed to disclose the teacher's inner potential). Third, special attention is paid to pedagogical skills as an essential feature of the teacher's creativity (since a professional teacher should be able to express and transform himself/herself, co-create with colleagues and students and demonstrate empathy) (Oliinyk, 2017).

It must be noted, however, that professional training of future preschool and primary school teachers can also adhere to the five principles of acting (in an adapted form). They are as follows: 1) the principle of truth to nature (in pedagogy, it means the links between education and life); 2) the principle of ideological orientation (the doctrine of the super-mission), which plays a decisive role in the teacher's constructive activities, given that lessons, games and other activities are always directed at the super-mission solved by the teacher himself/herself; 3) the principle of action, i.e., the basis of experiences and material for creativity, which is the core of Stanislavski's system (2018) (creative experiences and material serve as the leading components of the teacher's organizational activity); 4) the principle of organic creativity (it discloses the inseparable link between the teacher's mental, physical, subjective feelings and their external objective expression; in particular, it shows how well the teacher can use psychotechnologies and control his/her body as the main tool of influence); 5) the principle of creative transformation into a dramatic character, namely, the state of stage experiences, based on which one solves tasks of all the previous principles (it is reflected in gnostic activity as a leading one for all professional activities of teachers).

Forms and methods of using theatrical activity in teacher training

Preschool and primary school teachers should be able to use different types of theatrical activity to realize their creative potential, as well as improve their musical-choreographic competence. The main forms of theatrical activity include practical classes and laboratory work within relevant courses ("Pedagogy", "The fundamentals of pedagogical creativity", "The basics and methods of dramatic and screen arts", "Theatrical activity in preschools", "Music education methods") and extracurricular theatrical activity (drama clubs and studios).

Kessels (2010) claims that the following methods of theatrical activity are the most effective: music and movement activities, folk circle dances, theatrical games, staging of fairytales and songs, improvisation on a given topic (image), impersonation. They significantly develop musical-choreographic abilities, singing skills, stage and dance movements and performance culture in future preschool and primary school teachers.

It must be noted that theatrical activity helps one better understand others (characters, actions), enriches emotional sensitivity and cultivates communication skills. To gain emotional experience of performance, teacher students create an artistic image in front of the audience and, thus, overcome self-doubt, increase self-esteem and learn to "look casual".

Besides, staging, theatricalization and dramatization are considered to be the most effective types of theatrical activity in the context of teacher training. They should be analyzed in a more detail.

The term "staging" (from the Latin *scaena* – stage) means a reworking of a literary piece (prose, poetry) either for production on stage or radio or television broadcasting. It aims to convey its ideological-artistic content through dramatic means (Pavi, 1991). Besides, this term refers to a stage production of songs and instrumental works.

In theatre studies and direction, a theatrical production of songs is often referred to as "a visible song" and is defined as a kind of a stage performance. "A visible song" teaches one to think in flexible images, orient within stage space and discover a visible expression of the work's musical-emotional structure. Making a song "visible" implies creating a small performance based on its material (Kaplan & Norton, 2006). This greatly enhances emotional impressions through the actor's eyes, facial expressions, gestures and creates a synthesis of music, vocals and acting skills.

Meanwhile, a synthesis of acting, music and lyrics cannot be perceived literally, only in the sense of creating a song-scene that acts out a certain plot through dramatic means. This is a simplified approach to the

problem of a directorial decision, even though it cannot be completely excluded. The most important condition when working on a song is to determine its textual and melodic content, genre and style correctly and accurately. In turn, this will allow introducing the means of dramatic expressiveness.

Song production is one of the most popular activities among children. It can be used in music lessons, as well as during extracurricular activities. Both purposeful and systematic use of such a technique allows one to fully realize the pedagogical potential of the song within the framework of musical-choreographic education and development. Indeed, song production is not only its expressive and competent performance but also the creation of an artistic image via various arts. The same applies to the creation of musical compositions based on instrumental musical works.

Importantly, the production of songs and instrumental works ignites future teachers' interest in musical-choreographic creativity and develops their musical-choreographic abilities, pedagogical artistry and emotional sensitivity. It teaches them to identify one's emotional state by facial expressions, gestures or intonation, put themselves in others' positions and provide adequate assistance.

The authors of this article consider theatricalization and dramatization quite effective for professional training of future preschool and primary school teachers. The difference between the two terms is explained by Pavi (1991). He notes that theatricalizing an event or a text implies interpreting them on stage by actors. At the same time, the production of discourses is the essence of theatricalization. Dramatization, on the other hand, is exclusively aimed at text structures: production of dialogues, creation of dramatic tension and conflicts between the characters, dynamics of the action. In other words, theatricalization is a stage-based reflection of the artist's view on the event through art.

Theatricalization acts as a specific type of children's activity and is one of the favourite types of future teachers' creativity (Kral, 2009). It develops one's ability to see, hear and understand the beauty of words and actions, as well as promotes self-expression and self-cognition through the recreation of various images. Finally, theatricalization reveals one's level of artistic-aesthetic perception, speech competence, musical knowledge and abilities.

Using pedagogical experience to develop musical-choreographic competence in future teachers

Vasyl Verkhovynets (1989), a prominent representative of Ukrainian

national music education, composer, conductor, choreographer, folklorist, ethnographer, teacher and father of the genre "theatricalized song" in Ukraine, advocated the idea of theatricalization in his works. The culmination of his many-year ethnographic-pedagogical research and music composing became the creation of *"Vesnianochka"*, a methodical manual on Ukrainian music and games for children.

Verkhovynets (1989) considered musical and movement activities as one of the powerful educational means of ensuring harmonious personal development. The manual includes 156 musical and movement games and songs that the teacher presents in a theatrical form. In turn, this implies using props and distributing roles among the participants. Verkhovynets (1989) complements theatrical means (movements, facial expressions, pantomime) with song accompaniment and elements of folk choreography to fully disclose an artistic image, convey the national character, as well as strengthen the emotional and aesthetic impact on children.

The main goal of the manual is the following: to educate a physically healthy, ethically stable and intellectually developed member of society. It is through games that one can cultivate all the necessary qualities in children (Verkhovynets, 1989).

As noted by Barenboim (1978), it is essential to stimulate creative imagination and improvisation in the process of individual and collective music-making through the links between music and gestures, words, dances and pantomime.

Kudelia & Samokhin (2008) also suggest using theatricalization to develop musical-choreographic competence in future preschool and primary school teachers. For instance, in the Ukrainian culture, there is the *vertep* theatre which can be seen as an effective way of preparing future teachers for such an activity. According to folk traditions, vertep used to be a puppet theatre, and later it involved travelling musicians and actors. Currently, it is associated with Christmas carolling. When acting out the nativity scene, students can join the cultural traditions of the Ukrainian people, as well as improve their expressive speech by singing carols and dancing.

Another effective type of theatrical activity is drama games which recreate the plot of a literary work and involve the use of expressive means (intonation, facial expressions, pantomime). They allow children (performers) to independently work on creating an artistic image and improvise. Such games can be organized either without spectators or in the form of concert performances (Oliinyk, 2017).

At Sumy State Pedagogical University named after A. S. Makarenko, bachelor's degree programmes in preschool and primary education correlate

with the principles of theatrical activity to effectively develop musical-choreographic competence in future teachers. In particular, such courses as "Theory and methods of music education" and "Theatrical activity in preschools" involve studying the basic provisions of music education systems worldwide; Verkhovynets's theoretical and methodical achievements in the field of theatricalization; the concepts of theatricalization and dramatization; different methods and technologies of theatrical activity in preschools and primary schools; organization and implementation of cognitive, developmental and educational aspects of pedagogical interaction in preschools and primary schools; the prominent achievements of classical and recent pedagogical research; the ways of developing learner autonomy and creativity; the expansion of learners' pedagogical and cultural worldview.

Relevant lecture courses lay theoretical foundations for developing musical-choreographic competence in future preschool and primary school teachers. For instance, the courses "Theory and methods of music education" and "Music education methods" acquaint students with the latest methods and technologies of music education, children's music folklore and forms of organizing musical activities. In addition, they contribute to developing cultural, musical-pedagogical, historical-theoretical and analytical competencies in future teachers.

The course "Theatrical activity in preschools" organically combines "musical" and "theatrical" components of theatrical games (Gray, 2008). It covers the following topics: theatre pedagogy and its role in preschool education; foreign and Ukrainian experience of organizing theatrical activity; organizational aspects of theatrical activity in preschools; organization of independent theatrical activity and development of preschoolers' creativity. These topics significantly strengthen the development of rhythmic, improvisational, compositional and design skills.

An essential component of the mentioned courses is experimental and project activity. It aims to teach future teachers to organize musical exercises and games in preschools. Upon completing the courses, students are expected to create and present mini-projects to confirm their levels of musical competence.

Conclusions

Therefore, a detailed analysis of relevant scientific sources and legal documents proves both the importance and necessity of developing musical-choreographic competence in future preschool and primary school teachers. The findings make it possible to increase the effectiveness of this process through theatrical activity. The principles and patterns of theatre pedagogy

are considered as the features of its use in the context of the problem in question.

The main forms of theatrical activity include practical classes and laboratory work (within such courses as "Pedagogy", "The fundamentals of pedagogical creativity", "The basics and methods of dramatic and screen arts", "Theatrical activity in preschools", "Music education methods"), as well as extracurricular forms of theatrical activity (drama clubs and studios).

At the same time, staging, theatricalization and dramatization are the most generalized types of theatrical activity in the context of this research. They significantly develop musical-choreographic abilities, singing skills, stage and dance movements, performance culture in future preschool and primary school teachers. Finally, these forms allow using different methods of developing musical-choreographic competence (music and movement activities, theatrical games, staging of fairytales and songs, improvisation on a given topic (image), impersonation).

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Author 2 collected and processed relevant data on the most effective methods of developing musical-choreographic competence in a professional context.

Author 3 studied theoretical fundamentals of relevant scientific works, clarified the related concepts and terms and was responsible for text editing.

Author 4 prepared the list of references associated with effective methods of musical-choreographic activities used by Ukrainian scholars.

Author 5 systematized the list of works by foreign scholars.

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