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Composition of Song Accompaniment as a Form of Developing Future Music Teachers' Harmonic Hearing

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Abstract

Harmonic hearing, just like any other kind of musical hearing, functions on different levels: music perception, music making and creativity. The creativity of harmonic hearing involves not only the ability to freely operate with musical auditory perceptions and a harmonic structure, but also with consonance criteria, expressiveness, principles of creating forms, and a proportional distribution of musical time. A well-developed music teacher's harmonic hearing provides the opportunity for creating original compositions: accompaniments for songs and arrangements for choirs, etc. One of music teachers' creative competences is composing accompaniments for songs which, during its formation and developmental process, requires a base of previously gained musical perceptions, logic of harmonic functionality of chord sequences as well as previously developed basic skills of playing some musical instrument. The process of composing the accompaniment activates the auditory control, which is related to the logic of the development of harmonic hearing and helps to create perceptions about the musical material. The problem of melody harmonization and choosing the accompaniment has been dealt with by many researchers (Macligin, 1994; Buckler, 2012; Karaban, 2018.). However, in their studies, scientists have not defined specific skills which are required for learning to choose the accompaniment, and kinds and the specificity of types of piano accompaniment have not been analysed as well. On the basis of a long pedagogical experience, in this research, the formation and developmental stages of the skill of composing the accompaniment for songs have been defined and characterized within the context of the development of future music teacher's harmonic hearing.

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Keywords: Harmonic hearing; composing song accompaniment skills; future music teachers.

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1. Introduction

Music making implies a broad, universal set of skills and abilities: playing an instrument and in the ensemble, choral singing, sheet music reading, as well as elements of composition and improvisation. At sol-fa lessons learners are introduced to the basic modes, chords, and their practical skills of choosing melodies by ear as well as the harmonic accompaniment for them are developed.

One of music teacher's creative competences is composing accompaniments for songs, which during the process of its formation and development requires a base of previously gained musical perceptions, logic of harmonic functionality of chord sequences, as well as previously developed basic skills of playing some musical instrument. During composing the accompaniment, auditory control is being activated, which is related to the logic of the development of harmonic hearing and helps to create a perception about the musical material (Zavadska, 2015).

In pedagogical practice, we frequently face the situation when future music teachers, being quite skilled at playing the piano, are not able to select music by ear. To overcome this drawback, learners, by all means, have to practice a lot. To cope with this problem is extremely difficult, but a sol-fa teacher can help to do that. In training future music teachers, a pedagogue himself/herself must be competent in all the existing techniques of choosing the accompaniment.

The problem of melody harmonization and choosing the accompaniment has been dealt with by Macligin (1994), Buckler (2012), and Karaban (2018). However, in above mentioned studies, scientists have not defined specific skills which are required for learning to choose the accompaniment, and kinds and the specificity of types of piano accompaniment have not been analysed as well.

Harmonization of melodies by ear (unlike harmonization as a way of fulfilling tasks in harmony course) is a practical skill requiring freedom of constructing and combining structures on the piano as well as having a good command of basic textures and rhythmic formulas of accompaniment. Psychological preconditions for the formation of harmonization by ear are internal-auditory and thinking-analytical processes. The nature of these processes manifests itself in arbitrary operating with harmonic perceptions, in creating a generalized harmonic image of a vocal or instrumental melody. To successfully choose harmony for a melody, an adequate degree of automation of these processes is necessary.

2. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to determine and characterize the stages of the formation and development of the skill of composing song accompaniments.

3. Research method

The data was obtained through an analysis of the researchers' personal pedagogical experience supported by the comparison of contemporary methodologies for choosing the accompaniment via an extensive literature review.

4. Findings

4.1. The Nature of the Accompaniment

For a long time, a simple beating the rhythm with feet or clapping with hands was considered a kind of accompaniment. Musicologist van der Merwe (1989) notes that from French, the word 'accompaniment' is translated as 'to complement', 'to echo', 'to play to'. He thinks that the accompaniment is complementing a melody with a musical accompaniment in the form of a harmonic or rhythmic support for a soloist.

The basic task of the accompaniment is to complement a soloist, helping him/her to create the artistic image. This help may be provided through several directions:

- Adding different registers and timbres which a soloist does not have in his/her arsenal, eg. colorful enrichment of sounding;
- Adding a chord harmonic texture to a one-voice melody, which creates the effect of capaciousness and conveys a definite emotional sub-text;
- Metro-rhythmic support, keeping the stability of tempo and musical form in general.

The accompaniment provides the rhythmic and musical support for a solo part or parts. The accompaniment may be vocal and instrumental. It may include the accompaniment for songs, dance, or processions and may be provided by percussion instruments, by a long sound or a consonance (e.g. the bagpipe fifth), but this may also be a modification of a melody, strict duplication, and instrumental accompaniment, which duplicates vocal voices in unison (Ciechan, 1990).

4.2. Types of Accompaniment

There are different types of a piano accompaniment which depend on the specificity of the textural interpretation of a musical composition. They are:

4.2.1. *Chord support* - the simplest form of a harmonic support (*accords plaques* – ‘columns’) – it is mono-rhythmically duplicate the line of the upper voice which is a support for a melody by holding chords on the main degrees of a tonality (Holopova, 1979). Here, the harmony emphasizes a mode-tonal gravitation and helps a soloist not to deviate from the tonality, i.e. it performs the function of a tuning-fork to some extent. This quality of harmonic supports is a transition stage from a figured bass to the development of a homophonic-harmonic style. The role of chord supports grows in importance. This type of accompaniment occurs in chamber and romance music.

4.2.2. *Alternation of bass and chord* - a lot of national dances have become such typical symbols for expressing definite images and moods that they have crossed the limits of the national and have become a common gain. Such dances are mazurka, polonaise, minuet, gavotte, waltz, saraband, etc. They have two basic principles of the accompaniment texture:

- a regular accentuating of identical progression moments (steps) within the bar; such a progression may be heavy (saraband) or relatively light (minuet);
- correlation of the supporting bass sound with lighter chords; this texture is characteristic of gavotte, mazurka, waltz, and polka. The popularity of such a form of dance accompaniment is due to its correspondence to the step, pace: the bass sound conveys pushing off the ground, while the chords – lighter movements. This is the simplest type of accompaniment.

4.2.3. *Chord pulsation* - departure from the dance-like music and focusing on other themes and genres change the accompaniment - create enormous diversity of rhythmic figures which characterize movement. Enlivening of the harmonic supports in homophonic music developed in two typical directions: a) by increasing the rate of chord pulsation and b) by decomposing a chord into the form of a harmonic figuration. They embody enormous potential for emotional loading at the account of activating tempo and dynamics. The pulsating chords create different emotional coloring: the unhurried ones - peace, reflection, those emphasized at supporting the harmonic development - excitement, emotional experience etc. The chord *arpeggio* is a frequent case in harmonic supports. This technique has been borrowed from the expression means of the

harp, guitar, and psaltery. It is typical of epic, fairy-tale, ballad, lyrical genres. Wide amplitude of a harmonic wave, merging into a chord consonance, is created.

4.2.4. Harmonic figuration - figuration (from *figurare* – to shape or form, to organize, to do) is a textural pattern of voices of a musical material (Holopova, 1979) or arrangement of chords, their ‘embellishment’. Preserving the nature of its mode, harmonic figuration creates a mobile background. The pluses of these figurations are:

- a wide diapason, and dynamic amplitude allow creating emotionally filled, colorful pictures, as well as to enable to activate the state of characters;
- the opportunity to transfer the melodic progression to harmonic voices, thus leading to a polyphony of the accompaniment.

The types of arrangement are: a) inserting sounds between the chord intervals (singing, retention, appearance of sequences of seconds creates great tension), and b) decomposing the chords into harmonic figurations. At changing harmony at the account of mode gravitation, the supporting voice becomes well-arranged and expressive. The so called hidden melody emerges. The example of this may be a melodic move in the bass. Great importance, significance is attached to the part of the accompaniment. Such a melodic bass compresses the mass of sonority, forces the dynamic level.

4.2.5 Polyphonic combination with a solo part - which is the next step in the melodic progression of the accompaniment. These melodic structures a) have the nature of a supporting voice, b) imitate the motives of a solo part and c) are more independent and finished counter-structures. For a performer, this type of accompaniment is most difficult, since it requires definite skills, and it also requires auditory potentials, the skill of combining solo and the accompaniment into a single musical material.

4.2.6 The accompaniment duplicates a solo part - duplication is doubling the melody by some consonance (Holopova, 1979); here, the skills of playing combine with the skills of singing a melody. Singing vocal pieces with the text and with the accompaniment is one of most important forms of developing harmonic hearing. This is a link between sol-fa lessons and classes in speciality. Combining these two disciplines into a single study process contributes to the development of musical thinking, imaginative perception and imagination. [Karaban \(2018\)](#), in turn, singles out nine types of accompaniment:

- harmonic support;
- alternation of bass and chord;
- chord pulsation;
- harmonic figuration;
- a mixed-type accompaniment;
- accompaniment duplicates a vocal part;
- accompaniment has some digressions from a vocal part;
- accompaniment includes some sounds of a vocal part;
- melody of a vocal part is not included in the accompaniment.

Basically, the types of accompaniment offered by Karaban (2018) are similar to those analysed above; the ninth type, where the melody of vocal part is not included into the accompaniment, can be singled out. The melody of a solo part is absolutely independent of the accompaniment. This type of the accompaniment is one of the most complicated and requires many skills and abilities from the future music teacher.

When selecting the accompaniment for a song, choosing the right type of accompaniment is of great importance. Every melody requires its own variant of accompaniment which will not contradict its idea and style. Therefore, it is necessary to know many types of accompaniment. In practice, we need to combine different types of accompaniment within the frame of one melody or song.

4.3. Skills of Composing Song Accompaniments

Buckler (2012) notes two important aims in the harmonization of chords and melody:

- the ability to choose effective chords implied by the melody;
- the ability to connect these chords into progressions which will make the melody sound musical and performable.

This skill cannot be acquired theoretically. They develop only in a practical activity, only in the result of repeating some definite actions (Zavadská & Davidová, 2013).

The skill of choosing the accompaniment for a melody relates to the development of

- sensory skills, that relate to functioning of organs of sense (hearing);
- cognitive skills, that manifest themselves at fulfilling mental tasks (skills of musical analysis);
- creative skills (combinations of harmonic accompaniment);
- performance skills (playing the instrumental accompaniment) (see Fig. 1).

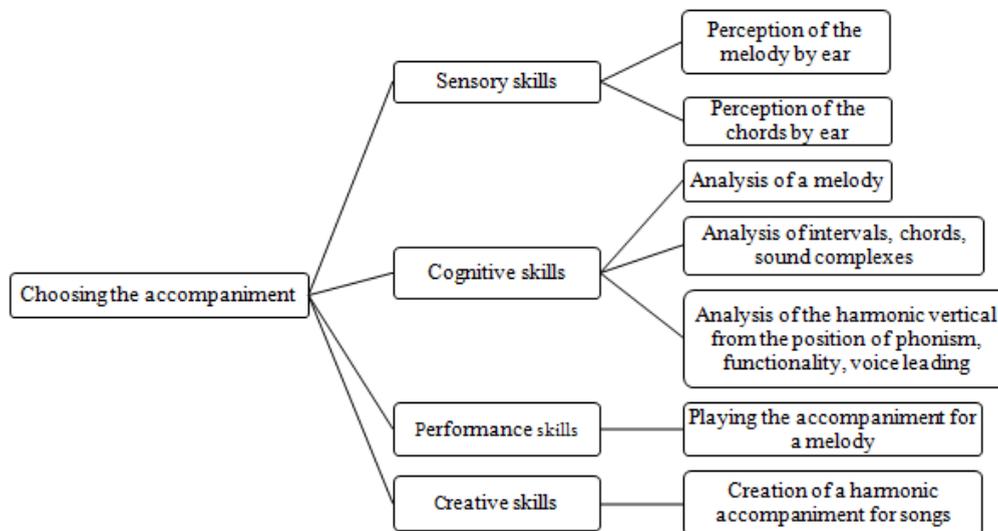


Figure 1. Model of future music teacher's skills necessary for composing the accompaniment for a melody

The ability to internally imagine a musical interval or a chord underlies the *sensory skills*. Such perceptions are being formed, and develop and manifest themselves at creating music and listening to music, and undoubtedly are a psychological process (Weisberg, 1992). The skill of perception relates to the development of the skill of inner intoning and the formation of associative links between the direct perception of sound complexes and their comprehension.

Systematic work on the development of *cognitive skills* (skills of the auditory analysis) provides the opportunity for a learner to accumulate internal auditory perceptions, develops his/her musical memory and thinking. The development of the skill of auditory analysis is looked at not only in the form of identifying different kind of elements - intervals, chords, sound pitch sequences, but much broader - from the position of phonism, functionality and voice leading.

The skill of playing musical instruments can be attributed to future music teacher's *performance skills*. The specificity of their future musical profession lies in the fact that students must learn the basics of a concert master mastery, which is based on skills of singing to one's own accompaniment, singing and a simultaneous conducting and duplicating the melody on the piano, choosing the accompaniment for a melody by ear, transposing a musical text due to vocal-choral work (Zavadaska & Davidova, 2013).

The skill of choosing the accompaniment belongs to the category of future music teacher's *creative skills*. This skill can be put into practice only if a student has expressive perceptions about

the musical material, about functional logic of harmonic sequences and a clear motor setting for its reproduction on the instrument.

It's worth mentioning that such a division of skills is quite relative, since during their development they are all interrelated. It is impossible to develop the cognitive skill of the auditory analysis without internal auditory perception (sensory skill), or to develop the skill of composing the accompaniment without sensory and cognitive skills.

4.4. The Process of Choosing the Accompaniment

The process of choosing can be subdivided into three component parts: choosing a melody, selecting harmony and arranging the accompaniment as the texture. The first two items are work limited by the potential of auditory development.

Choosing implies having a complex of musical abilities: melodic and harmonic hearing, sense of rhythm, inner hearing, musical memory, auditory experience. These abilities, being on one or another developmental level, are demonstrated by practically all the musicians and during the process of music classes they develop. However, at sol-fa lessons a teacher must teach the learners to use these qualities deliberately. Work on choosing an uncomplicated melody and a simple harmony can be done also at the piano lessons and independently.

4.4.1. Choosing a melody

Just before choosing the accompaniment for a melody, this melody should be listened to several times and divided into parts, i.e., for example, into phrases, motives, sentences, and the pattern of sound progression (down, up, on the spot, a leap) should be defined, but then the melody should be found on the keyboard, notes written down, and the rhythm provided according to the tonality and the chosen measure. The below mentioned exercises for the development of inner ear can prove useful to develop the skills of writing down the melody:

- to continue the started melody line;
- to sing and then play on the piano the melody you have listened to before;
- to make an attempt to play variations on the given theme;
- to make an attempt to compose the introduction or the end of the song melody.

4.4.2. Choosing a harmony

The harmonic base of a song melody is in most cases of the same type and simple. Its structure is mainly based on a chain of reiterating segments (i.e. series of repeated chords). At beginning to

work on choosing a harmony, it is essential to detect the chains of reiterating chords in the melody. Then, continuing to listen to the melody, the moment of the change of the first consonance should be determined and, by changing in turn the chords in a tonality, the appropriate one should be chosen. Applying this tactic, a further choice can be made. To this, several recommendations offered by Maklgin (1994) may be added, and which can be followed at starting work on the harmonization of a melody:

- First of all, the *type of mode* in which the given melody will be harmonized is determined, and the possibility of changing a mode is taken into account;
- The most appropriate kinds of cadences and a concrete texture of rendering are defined;
- Functional sequences and harmonic constructions most characteristic of this melody are found;
- At repeating one and the same constructions in the melody, their mode-harmony can be varied.

In her practical manual on choosing the accompaniment, Shaihudinova (2006) proposes the following work plan:

- Performance and analysis of a melody (identifying the sequences, if there are such);
- Choosing the appropriate bass (composing a bass voice);
- Playing a melody with the appropriate chords of the accompaniment;
- Singing a melody with a piano accompaniment.

Gvozdeva (2014), too, provides some practical advice:

- It is essential to emphasize the different functions of hands: performance of a melody - for the right hand, accompaniment - for the left. As soon as a complete freedom of the use of texture is acquired, a performer himself can give part of the accompaniment over to the right hand;
- For the sake of euphony, it is advisable to follow such a rule: the lower the placement of the chord is, the wider the distance from the bass to the next higher note. Thus, in the great octave, the interval must be no less than the fifth. Exceptions are possible in rendering the melodized bass.
- Before starting work, a learner must know a letter system in two of its variants: in a classical variant Si is “H”, while Si-flat is “B”. In the contemporary letter system, however, Si is “B”, and there is no letter “H” at all.

A full version of decoding the contemporary system of a figured bass is provided in the research by Buckler (2012).

In order for a learner to be able to read the melody accompaniment in a figured bass, he/she must know the symbols of all the chords, be able to quickly form them, simultaneously playing the melody. To achieve this, systematic practicing of sheet music reading at the lessons is indispensable, as well as working independently. It is useful to analyse the harmonic background of the musical material covered in this way.

In an organic unity with the fourth-fifth consonances are also the specifically expressed principles of *chord links and correlations*. The usual T – S – D might not be the leading ones and might be replaced by the seconds and the thirds. On the basis of this, the functional significance of consonances of secondary degrees increases. There appear also typical free sequences of consonances.

4.5. Arranging the Accompaniment as the Texture

Arranging is a laborious and long process. It involves not only choosing of the accompaniment texture, but also the final organization of the musical material, including introduction, interludes and the conclusion of a melody, as well as composing supporting voices which are actually elements of improvisation (Collins, 1985). It is vital to learn to choose the texture of the accompaniment for a melody in such a way that it would comply with the nature, melodic constructions and time of a melody.

As an introduction, some phrase or a motive from a melody or its end can be used. The melody may be finished by repeating a cadence construction or the introduction.

Quite frequently, at the end of phrases, sentences of a sounding melody there are either long sounds sounding or pauses are created. Such stops may be filled in by supporting voices. For this purpose, through-composed basses may be used (if the harmonic background allows it), as well as the change of the form of chords or melodic constructions complying with the nature of a melody may be employed.

An important moment in work on arranging songs is choosing the second voice, as well as inserting chords of accompaniment into the melody. In this case, the accompaniment plaid by the left hand must be maximally uncomplicated. The introduction of the second voice and chords must be embedded as short pieces.

The specific textural form of the material to be chosen and that of the accompaniment must reflect the two chief indicators of the melody content - its genre and nature. A learner has to acquire textural formulas of the accompaniment of melodies which have clear characteristic features of the

respective genre (a march, waltz, polka, barcarolle and other dances, lyric songs etc.). The basis of the accompaniment for many slow as well as march-like melodies is a chord vertical, while of that of songs – polkas - the traditional formula: *bass-chord*. If a melody lacks easily recognizable features of the above mentioned genres (lively, humorous, energetic, having a national colouring, jazz), the emphasis must be laid on exposing their nature through a specific textural form of the accompaniment. In such cases, a great variation in the choice of textural formulas and rhythmic patterns is allowed.

Buckler (2012) gives a detailed analysis of the characteristic features of accents in different measurements, since the beat of music refers to the recurring rhythmic unit of time. At establishing the genre and nature of a melody, the rhythm patterns of textural formulas (e.g. syncopated rhythms in jazz and pop-music melodies) are of great importance.

Imagination is the base of a creative activity. Imagination helps to mentally imagine the motive, tune, harmonic construction heard before, i.e. re-creates the image of what we have perceived or memorized before. Imagination joins in at the moment when a musician is looking at unfamiliar notes and on the basis of a previous musical-auditory experience is trying to imagine and choose the accompaniment for the heard melody.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Choosing the accompaniment for a melody is a creative process, which activates auditory attention, trains different sides of musical hearing (mode-intonation, harmonic, metro-rhythm, form, musical memory).

5.2 Harmonization of a melody by ear is a practical skill which requires freedom in building and combining the chord structures on the instrument as well as being competent in basic textural and rhythmic formulas of the accompaniment. There are different types of piano accompaniment: chord support, alternation of bass and chord, chord pulsation, harmonic figuration, polyphonic combination with a solo part, the accompaniment duplicates a solo part, a vocal part is not included in the accompaniment.

5.3 The formation and development of the competence of composing the accompaniment occur in the process of systematic work on the choice of the accompaniment for a melody. To this, sensory, cognitive, creative and performance skills can be attributed. Practical recommendations given by different authors (Maklgin, 1994; Shaihutdinova, 2006; Gvozdeva, 2014) add to each other, thus uniting the process of choosing the accompaniment into a single line: *melody – harmony – texture*.

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