

**CREATIVE LEARNING PROCESS OF A STUDENT  
INSTRUMENTALIST: ASCERTAINING EXPERIMENT  
(based on the author's methodology)**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Teacher training for the artistic cycle of disciplines is one of the important tasks of further development of education in the conditions of its humanization. In the theory and methodology of music education, the problem of students' creative development has received some consideration. Creative activity is interpreted mainly as a means of forming cognitive independence in the process of historical and theoretical disciplines studying (O. Voronin, S. Oliinyk, H. Poberezhna, etc.), as a basis for methodological training of future music teachers (L. Archazhnikova, A. Bolharskyi, V. Orlov, O. Rostovskyi, V. Yakoniuk, etc.), as a condition for the formation of artistic and performing abilities (A. Kovalov, O. Prykhodko, etc.). There was also a productive tendency in the national theory and methods of musical education to study the creative and educational potential of students' composing activity (E. Brylin,<sup>1</sup> H. Holyk<sup>2</sup>).

With all the breadth of consideration, there is a lack of systematicity in the study of the activation problem of students' creative activity. The diversity of approaches, the uncertainty of leading positions gives rise to ambiguous assessment of the effectiveness and necessity of applying different methods of activating students' creative activity in the process of music learning. In addition, the peculiarities of providing the creative orientation of teaching the historical, theoretical, conducting and choral

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<sup>2</sup> Голык Г. Развитие элементов композиторского творчества студентов музыкально-педагогических факультетов при подготовке к педпрактике. *Вопросы профессионально-педагогической направленности преподавания специальных дисциплин на музыкальных факультетах*. Казань: КГПИ, 1979. С. 66-72.

disciplines, the production of voice are considered much more fully than the possibilities of instrumental preparation of students in intensifying their creative activity. Although a number of scholars have touched upon the issues of forming the autonomy of future teachers in musical-instrumental classes (I. Nemykina, N. Pleshkova, etc.), the principles and a number of important characteristics of the methodological support of the creative orientation of students' preparation in instrumental classes have remained out of research. These include issues of elements introduction of composer creativity into the practice of musical instrumental teaching of students, study of the composer activity influence on creativity in the field of music interpretation, the possibility of stimulating future teachers of music art to creative activity on the basis of professional motivation, outlining the optimal conditions for the interaction of reproductive and productive musical activities, etc.

### **1. Methodical model of involvement of students instrumentalists in composer's creativity**

In the course of the author's research, a methodological model of engaging students in composer's creativity in the process of instrumental preparation was developed.

Therefore, the practical application of the proposed methods and techniques depends significantly on the individual abilities of students, whose creative talent has significant differences, it was important to determine the possibility of individual application of the methodology, while maintaining its stable coordinates. This direction corresponds to the methodological definition of hierarchical stages of student involvement in various types of composer's creativity.

We have distinguished three stages of activation of students' creative activity in the process of involving them in elementary composer's creativity<sup>3</sup>:

1. **“Creative imitation”** (the first stage of students' creative activity activation). The structure of students' musical activity at this stage is

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<sup>3</sup> Душний А. Методика активізації творчої діяльності студентів педагогічних університетів у процесі музично-інструментальної підготовки: автореф. дис. ... канд. пед. наук: спец. 13.00.02 «Теорія та методика навчання музики та музичного виховання». К., 2006. 20 с.

determined by its varieties, which contain creative approaches, but they are of a relative, limited nature. Students' creativity takes place, but it takes place as a process of reproduction, imitation, and action on a model. The methods and techniques of teacher-student interaction in the process of working at this stage include hearing; adaptation and arrangement of musical works; creating student samples of music in the style of a particular composer.

2. **“Predetermined creativity”** (the second stage of activation of students' creative activity). The content of students' work at this stage involves the creation of their own music samples within the parameters given externally, which can be genre features, music program, ways of formation, etc. For many students, the urge to be completely free, self-directed, in their creative work is too abstract and, therefore, complicated. Conversely, the specification of the creative task, its predetermination, serves as a certain impetus for the activation of creative efforts. Variations of predetermined creativity include: creating variations (variational change of melody, completion of unfinished variations, genre variation, and creation of variations on a given theme); creation of pedagogical and instructional plays (sketches, exercises, plays of didactic direction); creation of programmatic music.

3. **“Free creativity”** (the third stage of students' creative activity activation). This is the highest degree of students' involvement in composing. Its main varieties at this stage are music improvisation on free themes, as well as the creation of free choice music. Unlike the previous ones, there are no restrictions on the creative process at this stage. The mechanism of indirect regulation of students' creative actions at this stage can be imagined as a sequence of stages that cover the creative process from artistic design to embodiment. The projective fantasy stage involves maximizing the student's imagination, finding ways to “push” it so that external and internal stimuli interact with each other, forming a whole. The leading method is a stimulation of artistic associations, activation of associative thinking. At the second stage (intuitively-shaped) there is a maximum activation of students' artistic intuition. The most important at this stage are such techniques as: stimulating a student to seemingly enter the image, experiencing his emotional state; statement of requirement of non-standard solution of creative problem; the task of finding an instant

solution; stimulating a sense of confidence in the effectiveness of creative process; encouraging students to create and sort out different creative choices. The third stage (control and corrective) is aimed at checking or self-checking the results of creative activity of the student. Its positive background is provided when control (self-control), correction (self-correction) are perceived by students not as a process of elimination of defects, but as a creative process of artistic grinding of the composition results.

## **2. Ascertaining experiment of author's technique of student's creative development in the process of instrumental preparation**

The ascertaining research is aimed at studying the state of activity and analyzing the means of activating students' creative activity in the process of learning to interpret musical works and to find out the peculiarities of involving students in composer activity in the existing practice of musical instrumental preparation. Creativity in the process of students' musical activity is not purposeful, occurs spontaneously, episodically. A certain correlation between the creative potential of the teacher and the activity of students' creative activity is revealed.

In the process of scientific literature researching (D. Bohoiavlenska<sup>4</sup>, V. Moliako<sup>5</sup>, H. Padalka<sup>6</sup>, S. Sysoieva<sup>7</sup>), **the criteria** for the creative activity were determined, which also concerned the interpretation of music and the creation of musical samples by students. Priorities are:

- **the level of motivation for creative activity in the process of performing or creating music**, which indicates the activity of its flow. We proceed from the assumption that the degree of activity intensity, its activity or passivity depends to a large extent on the presence of students' purposefulness for creativity. Therefore, speaking about the level of activity, it is necessary to take into account its motivational characteristics, the main of which in the study was a measure of awareness, depth, and stability of motivation. Indicators of this or that level of motivation were

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<sup>4</sup> Богоявленская Д. Основные современные концепции творчества и одаренности. М.: Молодая гвардия, 1998. 126 с.

<sup>5</sup> Моляко В. Психология творческой деятельности. К.: 1978. 45 с.

<sup>6</sup> Падалка Г. Музична педагогіка: курс лекцій з актуальних проблем викладання музичних дисциплін в системі педагогічної освіти. Херсон: ХДПІ, 1995. 104 с.

<sup>7</sup> Сисоева С.О Педагогічна творчість: монографія. Х.-К.: Каравелла, 1998. 150 с.

recognized such as the presence of interest in the independent performance of creative tasks, going beyond the educational requirements of the discipline “Basic Musical Instrument” the frequency of creative tasks, the degree of effectiveness of creative activity in the field of interpretation or music creation;

- **the degree of effectiveness of creative activity in the field of interpretation or creation of music** by students of pedagogical universities is of a relative nature. At the same time, the need to focus on this criterion is conditioned by the need to obtain an objective assessment of creativity as such a kind of activity aimed at creating certain values. Although the creation of musical instrumental samples by students is mainly educational rather than artistic value, the introduction of this criterion to evaluate the characteristics of the interpretation of music and elementary composer activity of students orient the research search to identify characteristics that are inherent in the essence of artistic creativity. It would be difficult to imagine an assessment of the results of musical creativity, even within its educational limits, beyond the introduction of such indicators as content, artistry, expressiveness, imaginative brightness, etc.

Additional criteria for creative activity were:

- **an originality measure of the result of students’ creative activity.** This criterion was intended to testify to those features of musical activity that characterize it as containing a novelty either in the process of interpreting the music or in the created musical samples;

- **modality (subject orientation) of creative activity.** This criterion was aimed at identifying the nature of students’ creative interests, ascertaining the characteristics of students’ incentives to creativity. We believed that indicators such as the desire to achieve higher learning success, the pursuit of professional self-improvement, the desire for self-expression in the process of fulfilling creative tasks, determining the motivational characteristics of creative activity, in some way affect its level. Thus, the desire for creative expression is characterized by a higher level of motivation compared to the pursuit of professional excellence, which, in turn, is a much higher motivation than the focus on achieving higher learning success.

These criteria are taken into account because they to a certain extent testify to the nature of the creativity process, but are treated as additional in

order to avoid the empirical multidimensionality of the experimental data. Therefore, they refer to both the students' interpretive and elementary composing activities.

In the process of the ascertaining experiment, a research methodology was used, which provided:

**1. Pedagogical observation of conducting individual lessons in the discipline "Basic Musical Instrument"**. Of particular importance in the process of observing individual lessons was the fixation of such moments of the lesson as: the nature of the interaction of the teacher with the student; the overall emotional background of the teacher communicating with the student in the class; availability of creative tasks in the field of music interpretation and the degree of independence of their performance by students; availability of tasks for elementary composer creativity of students, varieties of similar tasks and features of analysis by the teacher of student creative works of composer character; attitude of students to creative tasks.

**2. Surveys of teachers (written) and students (oral individualized interview)**. In the process of interviewing teachers (written and oral), special attention was paid to the attitude of the teachers to activating students' creative activity, assessing its importance and necessity, as well as practical possession of pedagogical means to stimulate students' independent creativity both in the field of music interpretation and composer.

The students' survey was aimed at identifying students' attitude towards independent creativity, finding out their interest in creating music, the place of composer's activity in the students' creative life, their predominant predispositions to particular genres. Written surveys made it possible to reach a large number of students at the same time, but oral interviews made it possible to apply individualized approaches to clarifying students' musical and creative aspirations and expectations. Complementing each other, the methods of written and oral questioning contributed to a deeper penetration into the study of the initial state of the phenomenon under study, that is, the creative orientation of the process of musical-instrumental preparation of future teachers in the existing practice.

**3. An analysis of creative activity level in the process of performing the task of interpreting a piece of music performed by students**

independently, without the assistance of the teacher. The diagnostic effectiveness of this method was based, first, on the ability to obtain objective data by analyzing the products of student activities, rather than verbal responses. Second, the independence of the task, the exclusion of assistance from the teacher, could indicate the actual state of the features of the student's creative approaches to the interpretation of music.

**4. Analysis of students' creative works in the field of elementary music composition.** This diagnostic method consisted of an analysis of music samples previously created by students, as well as an analysis of the performance of elementary compositional techniques suggested by the experimenter. These included tasks such as: "Diversify the rhythm of the proposed pattern", "Add a tune to the accompaniment", "Diversify the composition", etc.

When analyzing music samples created by students, their indicators such as content, originality of thinking, appropriateness of using the means of musical expression were taken into account. In order to better capture in the process of analysis, at least the smallest manifestations of creative features of composer's activity, prudence of the development of musical thought, intonational brightness of musical images, emotional fullness, textural diversity, expressiveness of harmonic sequences, etc. We should note that the proposed indicators are to some extent conditional, since the artistic performance of student works of a composer character is relative.

**5. Getting acquainted with the creative work of teachers in the field of interpretation of music and composition.** This kind of diagnosis was used to find out the relationship between the level of creative activity of students and teachers, especially the influence of the creative potential of the teacher on the activation of students' creative activity. Consideration was given to indicators such as the presence of works of a composer character in a teacher's creative work (translating musical works for a particular instrument, creating variations, composing works of music, etc.), as well as the activity of the teacher's performing activity (participation in concerts, use in performance lessons etc.).

**6. Comparison of the assessment by the teacher of the creative work of the student of his class with the evaluation of the experimenters.** The introduction of this method of research should serve to achieve objectivity of indicators. It was taken into account that a teacher

who has been working individually with a student for a long time may note certain subtle signs of his creative activity.

**7. Student's self-esteem results of his own creativity.** The purpose of this method of research was to obtain indicators related to the degree of student activity, the partial detection of which may be self-esteem. At the same time, it was taken into account that self-esteem contained the danger of subjective approaches to characterizing the results of one's own creativity.

The use of a set of these methods should have comprehensively covered the phenomenon under study, contributing to the reliability of the data obtained. In the course of the ascertaining experiment, the following conditions were observed: the use of multiple tests in order to avoid accidental results; lack of rigid time limit on tasks; use of a system of identical tasks to create equal conditions for the participants of the experiment; in order to objectify the results of analysis and observations made in the course of the ascertaining experiment, a tape recording of students' performance lessons was widely used.

**Organization and course of the ascertaining experiment.** The observation of individual lessons in the basic instrument class was carried out in the process of open lessons, the results of the analysis were discussed by the invited guests in the class in the presence of a teacher who was able to express his own assessment of the lesson, agree with the comments or refute them; the participants were particularly interested in the opinion of the teachers regarding the creative direction of the process of learning to play the instrument.

As a result of observations, the conclusions were drawn regarding the nature of music instrument training for future music teachers. Among the positive points there were:

- professional level of preparedness of the vast majority of teachers in professional disciplines, as evidenced by their skill in performing, which was manifested in the demonstration to students of musical works or their fragments, in the accurate and pedagogically appropriate remarks regarding the performance of music to students.

- the classes in the vast majority of respondents are dominated by a friendly atmosphere, teachers are attentive to the individual artistic inclinations of students, features of their performance apparatus, to



differences in previous university training, to the individual personality traits of students.

Given the significant influence of composer activity on the activation of students' creative activity in various fields of music, including interpretation, we have given particular importance to the analysis of the answers to the questions regarding the involvement of students in the elements of composition. Respondents were asked about the expediency of engaging students in elementary composer activity in the basic instrument class, whether teachers were interested in creative works of students in the field of composition, about those varieties of elementary composer activity (music creation, adaptation of musical works, arrangement of musical works, improvisation), creating variations, etc.), that, in the teacher's opinion, are most attractive to a student.

The analysis of the activity level of creative activity in the process of performing the task of interpreting a musical work, performed by students independently, without the help of the teacher, took place in the process of listening to students. According to the instructions for the experiment, an atmosphere of trust and goodwill was to be created during this test. Students should be convinced that the results of the analysis of their creative work, as well as answers to questions, opinions, judgments, etc., will in no way be used against them. The above also applies to exams, tests, which in no way can be dependent on the results of diagnostics obtained during the experiment. Neglectful replies, current corrections, rough estimates should be completely excluded.

Students were asked to choose one of the works of the individual curriculum for their own learning and interpretation. For the sake of purity of the results obtained, any clues of an executive character during the students' independent creative work were completely excluded. In assessing the results of students' interpretive and creative work, the indicators were conditionally defined as: objective (observance of style features of composer's creativity, content of interpretation); subjective (revealing their own attitude towards the performed music, originality of artistic thinking). In addition, students' attitudes toward self-creativity (the level of motivation for creative self-expression in the process of interpretation) were specifically characterized by such parameters as: "lack

of interest in independent creative-interpretive activity”, “superficial interest”, and “enthusiasm”.

One part of the students showed emotional stiffness, uncertainty about the correctness of the figurative treatment often affected even on the technical side of performance. The other part, on the contrary, showed emotional exaggerations when performing an image creation, revealing subjective approaches to the interpretation of the author’s text.

In order to test the level of motivation and ability of students to elementary composer creativity, three blocks were proposed in which identical tasks for elementary composer creativity were placed.

**Block 1** (Additions, elaboration of musical examples). The tasks of the first block included such as: diversification of the rhythmic presentation of the given musical sample; adding to the proposed accompaniment of the melody; adding to the accompaniment melody; diversifying of structure in the proposed music example; filling in the free beats in the suggested music example. The task was designed to engage students in various types of music making. The most difficult of these was the last one, because it involved the identification of students’ style sensitivity.

**Block II** (Arranging of musical works for different types of performance, for different instruments). The tasks of this block were to diagnose students’ skills in arranging music for different types of performance and aimed at: arranging a tune with accompaniment to an instrumental piece; arranging a play (song) for ensemble performance; arranging a piano piece for button accordion (for button accordion students); arranging the symphonic piece for piano (for students-pianists).

**Block III** (Independent creation of musical plays). The task was to create a play of marching, song, dance character (optional); create an instrumental play.

The tasks involved checking students’ preferences for creativity, which has certain limitations, in this case – genre limitations, or an arbitrary expression that is not constrained by any tasks. In the process of summarizing the completion of the tasks of the first block, it was noted that the vast majority of students were interested in completing the proposed tasks. At the same time, it was noted that not all of the respondents showed compositional skills at least at the elementary level. Thus, in the course of

completing the tasks of the first block, a number of students formally "wrote" a tune or accompaniment. The task of rhythm diversity was performed in only one variant; while performing the task of structure diversity, a number of students used constant representations of the "bass chord" type, "solid chord presentation", etc.

In completing the tasks of the second block, it was noted that students were interested in different types of music arranging with some interest, motivating their attitude to practical needs. The most widespread defects were such as distortion of the author's (original) musical text or, conversely, too high fear of moving away from the finished musical presentation.

Students received the tasks of the third block with the greatest interest. However, their performance results were poor. The students were more attracted to the creation of music of a certain genre than the creative expression in free creativity.

Acquaintance with the creative work of teachers made it possible to conclude that in those classes where the teacher is inclined to composer creativity, the creative indicators in the vast majority of students are higher than in those classes where the teacher is indifferent to the composition at least in its elementary forms.

As a result of diagnostics, the activity levels of students' creative activity in the process of musical and instrumental preparation were determined. By dividing students by the levels of creative activity found during the ascertaining experiment, we focused on the results obtained in the field of both interpretive and compositional activities of students. It should be noted that the assessment took place in the process of collective discussion; in addition, the final distribution of students by levels was based on the opinion of the teacher, who works with the student individually.

**Low level (passive and reproductive)** of creative activity is characterized by practically lack of motivation for creative expression of students. Students refuse to perform creative tasks independently. They are not at all interested in expressing themselves in the process of interpreting music. Students shy away from performing music-making tasks. The refusal is mainly explained by the lack of time and compositional skills. Some openly state that they see no sense in composer activity that attempts

at elementary composition will always be amateurish, so it is not necessary to spend the time gained from composer student activity on music samples, etc.

The low activity level in the interpretive activity is characterized by the inability of students to independently build a performance concept of a musical work, the interpretation is characterized by emotional indifference or, conversely, exaggerated expression of emotions, often contrary to the content orientations of the work, inattentive to the stylistic foundations of the composer's creativity, even to the note text.

In performing composer tasks, students of the passive and reproductive level exhibit almost complete helplessness. There are such defects as, for example, the use of only three-tone chord accompaniment in the process of creating a chord accompaniment, and their reversals are not used; chord joining is created at random, without regard for any harmonious sequence or specific musical pattern; the banality of harmonic hits is noted; the intonational primitiveness of the tunes created. Students on different occasions refuse to assign tasks for independent creation of an instrumental play.

**The average level (initiative and productive)** of creative activity is characterized by superficial interest of students to active self-expression in creativity of interpretive and composer content. Motivation is situational in nature and is triggered mainly by students' desire for higher academic achievement, teacher demands, desire to justify good student status, etc. The desire to express oneself in the process of creativity is episodic, not sustainable.

The analysis of the accomplished tasks by their artistic performance in the field of music interpretation shows that the independent approaches to the creation of the executive plan of interpretation of the work are insufficiently formed; the choice of the performing means of expression is marked by uncertainty. Some students are not always aware of the choice of different dynamic shades, tempo, nature of accentuation, etc., playing, guided solely by the natural sensation of music. Others, on the contrary, are meticulously guided by the directions of the note text, but at the same time reveal the lack of measure sense, the integrity of interpretation, which transforms a piece of music into separate fragments in sound. In general, the creative activity in the process of interpreting music in students of the

initiative and productive level can be evaluated as having a limited character, is not fully understood, and constrained both by the lack of musical knowledge and the lack of experience of independent creative work.

The analysis of students' fulfillment of creative tasks in the creation of music also showed limited development of compositional skills, however, unlike students of the passive and reproductive level; students, attributed to the initiative and productive level, showed the ability to intonational development of the melody, the ability to diversify the accompaniment and structure. Often, students try to imitate their already known musical phrases but try to give them an alternative look. The task of arranging music is erroneous (often disregarding the laws of speech, missing meaningful sounds for harmony). Creating a music play has some difficulties. Typically, music samples created by students on their own are short, contain 4–8 beats, they can be called exercises rather than works containing a certain image.

**The high level (creative)** of creative activity. This level includes students who showed a keen interest in performing creative tasks, enthusiastically working independently to create an interpretation of a piece of music, and seeking to create musical samples independently. A considerable amount of work intensity was recorded. Thus students studied the selected work in the given list for 2–3 weeks; each task of a composer character was often performed not in one, but in two variants.

The students' self-created interpretation of this piece of music is marked by us as one that meets the requirements of expressive performance. Students of this level showed their emotional attitude during the performance of the work. Among the features there are "artistic performance", "musicality", "emotional approach", "conscious and creative approach to the transfer of copyright content", "original vision of the text", "imaginative brightness", etc., which to some extent concerned the detection of creative activity in interpretation of music.

Students, whose creative activity was attributed to the creative level, performed tasks for elementary composition of music with interest, revealing signs of melodic ingenuity, variations in the creation of rhythmic structures, variant presentation of the texture, the accuracy of the use of harmonic sequences, improvisational approaches to creating a chord.

Students' self-created pieces of music, although not always qualifiable as highly artistic samples of music, were, in contrast to previous levels, marked by a certain content, integrity and imaginative content.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Comparing the teachers' creative activity with the students' creative activity made it possible to conclude that there is a significant influence that teachers have on the students. The influence is not directly related, however, students whose teaching activities are more likely to be creative than those whose teachers disconnect from active creative activity, whether in concert or interpretation, or in the composing process.

Summarizing the ascertaining experiment showed that:

1) The creative orientation of the learning process to play a musical instrument in the existing practice of work of pedagogical universities is at a relatively low level. Students in the learning process are oriented mainly on the instructions of the teacher. The setting for students' creative expression in the learning process has not been formed, their own independent approaches to creativity are almost absent in the majority of students. Creativity in the process of musical activity of students is not purposeful, occurs spontaneously, episodically.

2) In the process of interpreting music, students show a relatively greater tendency for creativity than in elementary composing. However, it is noted that those students who are interested in composing and have some experience in this direction, are more inclined to think creatively about a piece of music in the process of its interpretation and achieve greater success in performing music than those who are not interested in composing activities. Based on these observations, we come to consider the influence of composer activity, even in its elementary forms, on the students' creative expression in the process of interpreting music. The final conclusion about the presence or absence of influence of composer activity on the activation of students' creative musical activity in all its educational varieties can be made after conducting a formative experiment.

3) Among the tools used by the instructors of the instrumental classes in the process of teaching students, a number of those were noted, which in some way influence the creation of a creative atmosphere of the classes. However, it is reported that this influence is predominantly indirect in

nature, more related to the activation of students' emotional attitude to music and their awareness of the semantic foundations of musical images, than the direct encouragement of future teachers to creativity. This includes, in particular, the widespread use by teachers of verbal explanations of the musical image, the performance demonstration of fragments of a musical work taught by a student, in a number of classes – the drawing of artistic analogies between different types of art and more.

Thus, as a result of the conclusions obtained in the analysis of the data of the ascertaining experiment, the assumption is made regarding the activating influence of students' elementary composing activity on their creative self-expression in the basic form of instrumental learning – music interpretation.

### **SUMMARY**

The article describes the process of ascertaining experiment author's methodology of A. Dushniy, on involvement of students of pedagogical universities in elementary composing in the instrumental training class as a creative process.

We have distinguished three stages of activation of students' creative activity in the process of involving them in elementary composer's creativity "Creative imitation", "Predetermined creativity", "Free creativity".

The stimulating role in the activation of the creative activity of students in the stage of "Creative imitation", is played by the developed in the process of study teaching and composing tasks in style, selection on hearing and adaptation (translation) musical works. Varieties of creative activity in the instrumental classes of the pedagogical universities at the stage of "Predetermined creativity" recognized such as: variant processing of musical material, creating playbooks for instructional purposes for children and program music. Engaging students in creativity, not constrained by any restrictions, at the stage of "Free creativity" according to the study, can qualify as a productive means of unleashing creative energy with the most talented students.

The proposed and experimentally proven method is not an additional component of the professional training of a future music teacher, and as needed, its organic component, which contributes to the achievement of the

goals of professional development of the individual in the modern conditions of development of art education.

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