

4. DIDACTIC CHALLENGES IN TEACHING VIOLIN SKILLS, AT THE LEVEL OF BEGINNER PUPILS

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Abstract: *The supporting idea of this work is to facilitate the acquisition and education of some violinist skills at the level of beginner pupils, using their little musical "creations". The experimental study was implemented by the practicing students, within the activities of the "Pedagogical Practice" discipline.*

Key words: *Challenge, Education, Violinist skills, Experiment*

1. Introduction

The theme of the present work is addressed both to students concerned with the didactic career in pre-university musical-instrumental education, as well as to teachers who are in various stages of further professional development. As it is well known, the education of instrumental skills at the level of the first year of study represents a theme of permanent relevance in didactics, constituting a real challenge and concern for any instrument teacher, either at the first experiences of the didactic career, or experienced in the wide sphere of teaching. Although the specialized program for the violin instrument offers a wide palette of repertory contents aimed at acquiring the skills specific to the first year of instrumental study, too many technical exercises are suggested in relation to the didactic artistic repertoire (songs, pieces intended for this age group), which is actually the main attraction for children. The didactic repertoire currently used in the training of beginner pupils includes manuals-methods such as: "Ionel Geantă - George Manoliu", Konstantin Kuznici Rodionov: "The first lessons for the study of the violin", Maia Bang: "Violin Method", very well systematized methods, with complex exercises targeting the basic skills of the two hands. The violin technique part is developed in almost all possible variants, generating a large volume of exercises, which implicitly leads to a sophisticate approach to the technical elements, very unattractive for beginner pupils.

2. Discussions

Of course, as didacticians, instrument teachers, we support the indisputable usefulness of exercises and studies, the diversified approach to the elements of violin technique. But, the more complex the method manuals are and the more rigorously the instrumental technique is treated, approached from all methodical angles, the faster the beginner pupils lose interest in studying the violin. So, we cannot ignore this relationship of inverse proportionality between the complexity of the didactic approaches and the decrease in the pupil's interest and motivation, the child feeling overwhelmed by a real "informational bombardment". Suddenly, learning the violin becomes difficult to access and the beginner sees in the multitude of exercises and technical studies only a "labyrinth".

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From this point started the approach of the present study-experiment, constituting a real challenge both for the violinist students involved and for the mentor collaborators from the application school, within the pedagogical practice of the students. The support idea was to stimulate pupils learning of the violin through their own little musical "inventions". Starting from the hypothesis that technical-instrumental skills can be acquired optimally and through a repertoire suitable for children, composed by children for children, excluding in a first phase monotonous technical exercises for which pupils of this age group are not interested and no will to deepen them, the following objectives were proposed:

- The acquisition of new theoretical notions and elements of instrumental technique through one's own musical "inventions";
- Capitalizing on the pupil's cognitive abilities;
- Capitalizing on the pupil's affective potential;
- Developing the pupil's creativity;
- Stimulating the intrinsic motivation to learn the instrument.

3. Results

The experimental didactic activities took place during a school/university year (October 2018 - June 2019), at the "Sigismund Toduță National College" application school in Cluj-Napoca, within the pedagogical practice of the third-year students of the "National Academy of Music by Gheorghe Dima" majoring in violin. The experimental study was carried out on a sample of four beginner pupils, from four different instrument classes, so four different mentor teachers, who opted for the established manual method, belonging to pedagogues Ionel Geantă and George Manoliu. At the time of the start of the experiment, all four pupils had mastered the following basic theoretical notions: the staff, the treble clef, note values and rests, the whole note, the second, the fourth, the eighth and the sixteenth. All the four selected pupils had learned the basic technical elements of the right hand technique at an early stage. The pupils participating in the experimental study were selected according to the following criteria:

a) musical skills:

sense of pitch	exact reproduction of notes
metric sense	differentiating binary from ternary measures
rhythmic sense	exact reproduction of rhythmic structures, including short rhythms: dactyl, anapest, triplet on a beat
sense of sound intensity	perception of dynamic contrasts
harmonic sense	perceiving a harmonically performed interval; identifying the elements of a three-sound chord
auditory memorization	the faithful reproduction from memory of a short musical fragment, sung vocally

b) physical and motor skills:

the shape of the hand	palm wide enough, fingers appropriately long, not too thin, elastic ligaments
mobility and motor flexibility	arms and hands with sufficiently developed, flexible joints
motor agility	quick and precise movements of the hands and fingers

It was taken into account that both musical, physical and motor skills can be taught during the training process. Next, we present two of the didactic activities supported by the practicing students.

Didactic activity no. 1

The subject of the lesson: "Placing the fingers of the left hand on the 'la' string". Operational objectives:

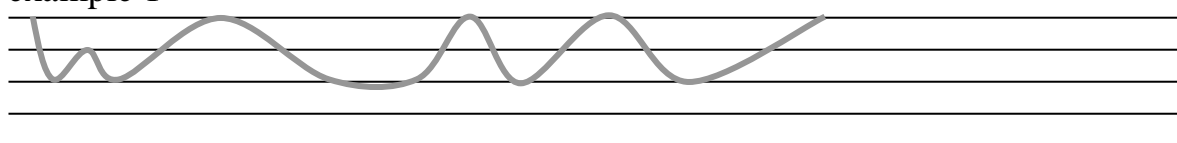
O1 – to simultaneously apply the fingers to the "la" string;

O2 – to perform joint movements correctly.

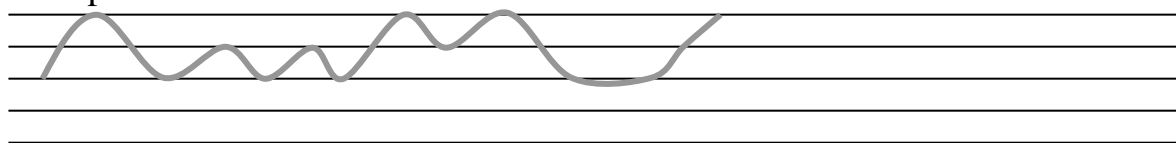
Directing learning: The pupil is challenged to discover different fingering combinations on the "la" string, drawing on the portable an outline in which to use the last three lines and the last two spaces of it.

Pupil drawings:

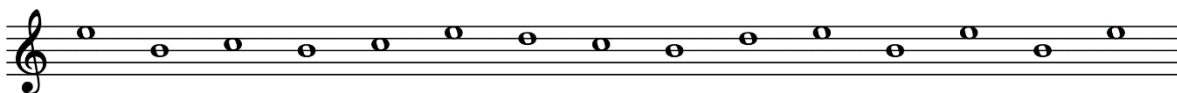
example 1



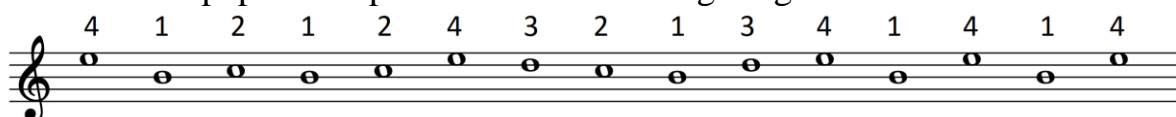
example 2



The outline drawn by the pupil is put on the notes, with the help of the practicing student.



The pupil's little "invention" is performed on the instrument by the practicing student. The pupil is asked to write on the sheet the fingering he observes (the fingers acting on the string), in the observed sequence. Example: 4 1 2 1 2 4 3 2 1 3 4 1 4 1 4 The pupil must place the observed fingering above the notes.



The pupil learns his little invention by ear, imitating the execution of the practicing student, on small structures (two notes each). It is memorized through the "addition system". The pupil's homework challenge: write down the following drawing (example 2); to repeat the "little invention" learned.

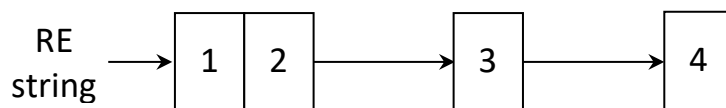
Didactic activity no 2

Lesson topic: "Placement of fingers on the 're' string" Operational objectives:

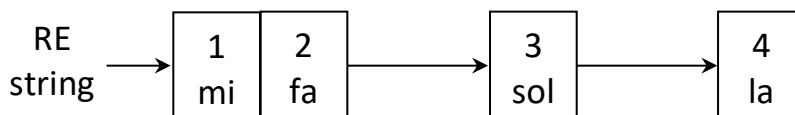
O1 – to correctly place the fingers of the left hand on the "re" string;

O2 – to adequately perform articulation movements;

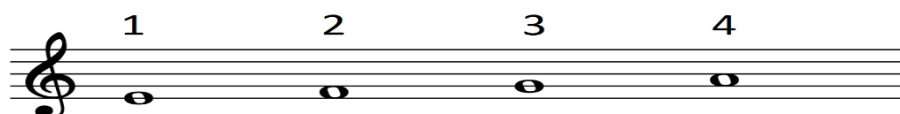
The pupil is challenged: to place the four fingers on the "re" string by himself, based on a scheme made by the practicing student. The pupil must choose a color for the "re" string, the musical notes and the fingering on this string. The scheme made by the student, using the color green, chosen by the student:



It is explained to the pupil that he must place his fingers on the string observing the given scheme, without playing with the bow. The pupil must deduce the notes corresponding to each finger, reproduce the initial scheme and complete it with the deduced notes (the color chosen by the pupil is used).



The pupil must place the notes with the fingering obtained through the scheme, on the staff (with the help of the student). The color chosen by the pupil is used.



The practicing student demonstrates the exercise; the pupil learns by hearing, by imitating the musical performance. The pupil's challenge for homework: to compose an "invention" on two staves with the finger combinations he discovered, in values of second and fourth; to note the fingering above each note. Pupil "invention":



"Musical invention" will be learned during the next lesson, after listening, together with the practicing student. The placement of the fingers on the "la" string will also be deepened. At the end of the experimental didactic activities, the practicing students concluded:

- easy and "fun" learning of some technical elements using the pupil's creativity;
- stimulating the pupil's interest and curiosity to acquire new knowledge through "little musical inventions";
- developing musical hearing by learning "by hearing";
- stimulating the types of memorization: auditory, motor and visual through musical audition, imitation, didactic drawing and didactic scheme;
- streamlining the didactic act by reducing the number of lessons assigned to "Placement of fingers on the strings", from sixteen (according to traditional textbooks) to four didactic activities.

4. Conclusions

It should be specified that the present work does not wish to overshadow traditionalism in violin teaching, but to highlight, once again, the need to adapt the curriculum and didactic approaches primarily to the needs of pupils in this age category, to let their expression more freely through the tool; basically everything is about the pupil and for the pupil.

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