Discussing the teaching of composition at the university

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Abstract: The challenge involved in the teaching of musical composition is somewhat analogous to the issue of reconciling theory and practice; this is when the teacher–student relationship triggers a flow of information that leads to the construction of new concepts that are established by either or both sides. The present paper emerged from a roundtable held at the "The Teaching of Composition at the University" colloquium, which took place at the State University of Paraná in November 2019. The authors did not attempt to arrive at definitive conclusions but, rather, point out directions for critical reflection and practical approaches about the issue of teaching composition. The occasion was also an excellent one for sharing didactic experiences taking place at universities in Brazil and abroad.

Keywords: Musical composition, Teaching, Poetics, Creativity.

This paper is the result of a roundtable on the teaching of composition at the university, with composers Yuri Behr and Clayton Mamedes as well as conductor Isaac Chueke as moderator. Held at the first "The Teaching of Composition at the University" seminar, the meeting took place on November 29, 2019 at the School of Music and Fine Arts of Paraná at the State University of Paraná (Brazil). We have gathered in a text the main considerations discussed on the occasion, summarizing some critical reflections, practical approaches as well as musical didactic experiences.

1. Paradoxes and complementarities in the teaching of musical composition

Students of musical composition are not tabulae rasae; rather, when they come to the classroom, they bring a whole world of practices and musical contexts that cannot and should not be neglected. However, there are canons and epistemologies that must be transmitted to the students comprised in the content of their learning interest. Far from paradoxical, we shall be addressing complementary issues. The challenge, however, relates to how to provide these students with technical and intellectual resources that allow them to understand and develop their compositional activity. It is Brian Ferneyhough who states: "For me, teaching is essentially reflecting and amplifying back to a student a coherent articulation of what he wanted to do in the first place. In that sense it's a passive role. The most important thing that one can teach, I think, is the capacity for consistent self-criticism, for asking the right questions of oneself and one's materials". (FERNEYHOUGH, 1990, p. 29)

When the British composer refers to the "passive" nature of teaching he is seeking to underline that the teacher's role is to "reflect and amplify back" to the students to allow them to perceive what is between an idea and its writing. However, this requires the students to have at least two qualities: The first is the ability to handle the tools used by the teacher, while the second, which is perhaps more difficult, is the ability to engage in self-criticism. Today's students have developed a sense for arguing, but they have not necessarily learned or even allowed self-criticism. This is because of their urges for false assurances that one can acquire accurate and reliable tools that guarantee complete success, aacademically or professionally speaking. We should point out that after the first two decades of the 21st century and after overcoming positivist reasoning, a quest for certainty and for a ready formula remains. In this sense, the teacher's role is always uncomfortable, because he or she has the task of telling the students that there

is no safe way to carry out musical composition.

Considering all the issues that students bring with them and their universe of musical references–that is, the way in which they understand music making–the teacher must do more than add new references that would merely expand the students' repertoire of classical techniques. It is necessary to change the students' way of thinking.

> My hypothesis is the following: since we can not effectively and rightfully seek to change the personality of a student, an alternative and effective approach is to drive this same personality to the bosom of an environment that is intellectually foreign to him and that confronts these same traits of character under radically different requirements. (FERNEYHOUGH, 1998, p. 190, our translation).[1]

Students must be taken out of their comfort zones, but of course, there must be strategies that give them confidence to work with, such as what Ferneyhough calls a "problem-oriented approach." Nevertheless, each student group requires a different approach.

Technology is no connected to this situation, as inevitably, all technological resources are valid for teaching, and at the same time, technological tools are supposed to be expendable. All practices may inevitably go through some sort of automatism, and because at some point, there is nothing left between mind and expression, we create tools. Besides, composition learning is so complex that compositional practice must consequently be open to new ways of thinking so that it allows the means to create new points of contact between all parties involved in the process.

> We believe that it is vital today to continue to differentiate and calibrate the pedagogical interaction between technological education and the teaching of composition, which are two integral components of a pedagogical evaluation that is just beginning (FERNEYHOUGH, 1998, p. 199, our translation).[2]

What was originally proposed as a dichotomy or paradox is only part of a question whose solution calls for an approach that is capable of integrating not only music and other knowledge but also the

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[1] From the original: Mon hypothèse est la suivante: puisqu'on ne peut pas effectivement et légitimement chercher à changer la personnalité d'un élève, une approche alternative et efficace consiste à pousser cette même personnalité au sein d'un environnement qui lui est intellectuellement étranger et qui confronte ces mêmes traits de caractère à des exigences radicalement différentes.

[2] Je crois qu'il est vital, aujourd'hui, de continuer à différencier, à calibrer l'interaction pédagogique d'un enseignement de la technologie et d'un enseignement de la composition comme deux composantes intégrales d'une évaluation pédagogique qui ne fait que commencer.

composer's and the world's perceptions of what is called musical composition. The interaction between teacher and student has the same dynamics as compositional practice itself.

Silvio Ferraz proposes a metaphor to highlight that composing is similar to a structure that can be made of different materials.

> Composing is like making a home. It is drawing a place. The elements for this operation, each one of us take them from a different location. And here the harmonies, the rows, the little reiterations, the reverberating sounds, the little resonance games are that material that we use to draw this place. It is with these small elements placed in circles that we draw a place (FERRAZ, 2005, p. 35, our translation).[3]

This is why thinking about compositional poetics also implies an analysis of reference works. This kind of practice shows students how composers use similar materials and yet achieve different results.

2. Practical strategies to link repertoire understanding to the development of individual creativity

The main objective of teaching music composition is to develop students' awareness of their own poetics. This objective arises out of a desire to instruct young composers about their ability to express themselves through sound. However, composers' poetics are built on a dialogue with their individual repertoires of references, reflecting their preferences and ways of seeing the world. In this paper, we will provide examples of the strategies that were employed in Clayton Mamedes' composition courses during the year 2018, seeking, through repertoire examples, to analyze how different composers reflected the sociocultural contexts in which they were embedded and how their life experiences were incorporated into their creative practices, leading them to develop new forms of musical expression. The idea is that students can be inspired by observing how different composers developed their own poetics from references that were dear to them.

In his chapter titled "Poetics of Analysis", Luciano Berio formalizes the idea that composers reveal themselves by analyzing repertoires. Through their gaze, their preferences stand out in the interpretation

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[3] Compor é como fazer uma casa. É desenhar um lugar. Os elementos para esta operação, cada um os toma de um canto. E aqui as harmonias, as séries, as pequenas reiterações, as sonoridades reverberantes, os pequenos jogos de ressonância são aquele material que utilizamos para desenhar este lugar. É com esses pequenos elementos colocados em círculos que desenhamos um lugar.

of any musical work, thus reflecting their individual conceptions of artistic making. The statement that "the most meaningful analysis of a symphony is another symphony" (BERIO, 2006, p. 125) reflects this concept. In the repertoires, composers observe procedures that converse with their own techniques, and by incorporating them into their own creative processes, they update them to include new expressive meanings. To the composer, every work is a sum of other works; the references that the composer makes implicit in his or her work are assimilated and reorganized according to his or her poetics. In this sense, the use of musical analysis as a tool for teaching composition acquires relevance by establishing logical relationships between what one hears and what one understands, which Berio presents as a relationship between the ear and the mind. (BERIO, 2006, p. 130)

The process of orienting students in creative practice departs from the analysis of paradigmatic examples of repertoires to establish bridges between the content observed in class and suggestions for how students can apply these techniques in oriented activities. The aim is for them to incorporate some of these technical procedures into their creative processes. This way, the use of musical analysis in the teaching of composition has a two-pronged objective. On the one hand, it enables the student to know the musical repertoire, creating a dialogue between his or her practice of musical creation and the historical and sociocultural context in which his or her activity is inserted. We dialogue with our references, and this is a critical awareness that young composers should maintain in their work. On the other hand, the analysis serves as a mechanism for the discovery and rationalization of experimental processes in order to develop individual logics for treating musical structures and to critically evaluate the results that are achieved. In this context, the analytical work focuses on the identification of recurrent, contrasting, and varied musical structures, seeking to understand how their organizational logic builds a discourse that develops over time. The idea is to create an awareness of aesthetic value about the work in the process of creation and to provide tools for the student to generate and interrelate the musical materials that will compose their works.

The aim of music analysis that is focused on compositional processes is to understand the logic that guides the process of composing the work. This type of analysis ranges from the study of strictly procedural questions, such as how a musical idea is varied to generate diversity of its formal structure, to more conceptual issues, such as the study of the processes that guide the inter-textual adaptation of extra-musical models and references. By indicating the operational logic employed in classical repertoire works,

the analytical process acts as a tool for teaching musical composition by allowing it to exemplify different processes for treating a musical idea. Several compositional methods use analytical strategies to teach the composition métier based on examples from the past. One of the best examples of such an approach is Arnold Schoenberg's *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (1996), in which the composer departs from classical and romantic examples, focusing extensively on Ludwig van Beethoven's work to explain musical thinking with motivic, phraseological, melodic, thematic, and formal structures.

However, it should be noted that the analyses themselves are not the main objective but part of a process that consists of guiding the student regarding composition strategies. It is necessary to be cautious in teaching practice in order to make students aware that these examples should inspire the practice of creation as exercises, rather than as strict methods, such as when following cake recipes, for the reproduction of models. To develop this critical sense when working on the fundamentals of compositional technique, questions must be raised. For example, we cite the study of variation, which is a fundamental technique for reconciling unity with diversity in the treatment of musical material. This study aims to instruct students in how to recognize in the creation of their motivic structures the fundamental elements of their organization, elements such as rhythmic accents, interval relations, and the symmetries between their components. The exercises should explore changes in the character of the material, transforming those changes into new expressive means. Such a procedure can be studied with reference to classical and romantic works—notably clearly structured works on the principle of variation, such as Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* or Johannes Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*. Again, however, students should raise questions about the meaning and expressive potential of the *theme and variations* musical form in the context of 21st-century music and the insertion of this technique in the scope of their poetic projects.

2.1 Excerpts from analytical examples used in the classroom

Among the examples used during composition classes, we would like to select the works of three composers that illustrate this search for the development of an individual poetic. These outputs all depart from the personal experiences that reflect the sociocultural contexts in which they were embedded. We will examine the works of Claude Debussy, György Ligeti, and Tristan Murail.

The development of harmonic thinking during the second half of the 19th century and the 20th century reflects the ideals of originality and the conception of the work of art as a product of human genius. The incorporation of chromaticism and the progressive distension of dissonance resolution can be interpreted as manifestations of the freedom to extend the limits of tonality and to incorporate new sonic nuances. However, this emancipation of dissonance does not mean that the relationships between the different intervals lost all meaning. Proposing an analysis of the harmonic thinking of music from the idea of the tension scales between intervals, Paul Hindemith argues that each interval has an associated level of tension and that this relationship still governs music (HINDEMITH, 1945, p. 85-86). What is abandoned in this domain are the methods of resolving the dissonances, which is the elementary principle of the tonal system, whose basis is inherited from the contrapuntal practice. This paves the way for the proposition of several alternative methods of organizing harmonic structural thinking: chromaticism, atonalism, dodecaphonism, modalism, and the influence of non-Western musical systems.

2.2 The expansion of harmonic thinking

The search for elements outside of harmonic tonal thinking contributed to the development of an important source of inspiration to expand tonality toward greater creative freedom. This approach was based on the interest in musical systems of the past, especially traditional and regional music, which reflects the growing nationalist sentiment characteristic of the late romantic period, and also the incorporation of musical structures from other cultures (an approach that will be consolidated in works of composers such as Béla Bártok, Zoltán Kodály and Heitor Villa-Lobos).

La cathédrale engloutie, the piano prelude by Claude Debussy, exemplifies this early process of expanding tonal practice. By establishing bridges with an established tonal practice based on a repertoire that we expect to be known by the student of composition, this work makes a smooth transition between the historical practice that is part of the regular study of music at the pre-undergraduate level and the development of his or her poetics. *La cathédrale engloutie* was composed shortly after Debussy's experience with the 1899 World Exposition. The composer's fascination with the performance of a Javanese gamelan was a major influence on the creative process of this piece (TAMAGAWA, 1988, p. 94-97). The first part of the work is based on a structure of parallel chords in superposed fifths, which is a

movement that refers to the melodic and harmonic structures that are characteristic of gamelan.

In class, we performed the spectral analysis of a more harmonious bell sound to understand the composer's logic of thought. To bring the sound material closer to the work's profile, we used a recording of a Tibetan meditation bell with two main sets of partials overlapping at intervals of fifths, which is the same harmonic structure that was used by the composer. At this point, an explanatory note ought to be presented to introduce students to the acoustic model that governs the distribution of the spectral content of a bell. This consists of superimposed series of partials according to the vibration modes that its physical structure allows (which almost always present deviations from the Pythagorean harmonic series). As we analyze the recording of this bell using a spectrum analyzer, we can see that the constitution of its timbre highlights partials in a structure that is very similar to the parallel chords of the *Cathédrale*. This provides the logic to a harmonic thinking that is no longer based on superimposing thirds but, rather, on the construction of a timbre and color, which are intrinsic to the poetic intention of the work. The analysis of the prelude in class includes the description of its harmonic structure, specifically by delimiting its predominant tone (C major) and the modal approach of its first section. This is also inspired by parallelisms and built from the descending diatonic movement from G major to C major, with an interruption of the regular flow by suspending the harmonic movement over the relative minor of the dominant (E minor), thereby creating two expanded harmonic gestures over the bass line: *G-F-E* and *E-D-C*. It should be noted that the gestural profile of the right hand is superimposed on this harmonic evolution, keeping its contour stable in its reiterations without transpositions or modal adjustments. This is another behavior that can be associated with gamelan by providing a percussive approach to the interpretation of the parallel chords that characterize the first section of the work. According to Didier Guigue's book *Estética da Sonoridade* (2011, p. 25-30), this kind of structure paves the way for the later development of a composition based on sounds, which is a concern that will permeate the musical production of Edgar Varèse and composers of the spectral movement, Tristan Murail and Gérard Grisey, among others.

The aim of the analytical presentation of this reference work is to encourage students to seek elements in their daily activities that serve as the basis for musical creation. This class is accompanied by the proposition of an extra-class activity that consists of collecting referential sounds, whose spectrum-morphological behavior (SMALLEY, 1986) generates some kind of fascination that inspires students to

think about musical structures. This material serves as a starting point for the composition process. This activity is expanded in subsequent classes by placing it in dialogue with reflections on the spectral behavior of the sounds developed by Giacinto Scelsi (we analyze the timbre structure of the *Quatro Pezzi* for orchestra), the influences of Edgar Varèse's scientific thinking (we analyze *Hyperprisms*), and the formalization of musical material in modal structures (we analyze Olivier Messiaen's limited transposition modes and some of his works such as the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, the prelude *La Colombe* and the movement "L'Alouette Calandrelle" from the *Catalogue d'oiseaux*). The idea is that, in parallel with this process, students begin with an experimental approach and progress toward the development of an individual harmonic system that is the result of their own subjectivity.

2.3. The influence of musical tradition

In a second moment, we seek to present the potential that arises from the contextually updated interpretation of practices that have been consolidated in the musical literature. Our reference example for illustrating this process is György Ligeti's *Atmosphères*, and we explore the conditions underlying the development of his micropolyphony technique. The didactic approach to this class begins by the contextualization of Ligeti's fascination with Johannes Ockeghem's music.

Ockeghem's *Requiem* is a work for the ordinary of the mass of the dead, which, based on Ligeti's analytical interpretation (KIEVMAN, 2003, p. 14-18), presents a continuous flow of alternating information, like waves that begin and end in an infinite time, which could continue to sound forever. Ockeghem's music is analyzed as a master example in the art of *varietas*, which is a principle of the period that has similarities with the current concept of variation: the production of a great diversity of musical material from a common ground. This provides unity and differentiation to build a continuous flow and a tendency to reach an eternal time, as described by Ligeti (KIEVMAN, 2003, p. 73-79). In this sense, Ockeghem's polyphonic composition, especially in his *Requiem*, collaborates to create a global texture that fuses musical materials. From this texture, stand out melodic designs that always return to the textural mass in a continuous cycle of variegated continuity.

György Ligeti is one of the composers who, along with Krzysztof Penderecki, Witold Lutoslawski, and Iannis Xenakis, played a critical role in the development of a textural thinking during the 20th

century. The composer developed the concept of micropolyphony, a technique for elaborating the relationships among voices based on canon movements at different speeds that were not intended to be individually identified but perceived as a cohesive whole. This technique was developed during the late 1950s, when the composer began to work at the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) Electronic Music Studio in Cologne (GALLO DIAS, 2014, p. 14). While there, he composed two electroacoustic pieces – *Glissandi* and *Artikulation* – and these works mark his distancing from the composition based on the Hungarian nationalist principles that sustained the creative processes of his early compositions. In this context, Ligeti discovered the principles of *entry delay* and *démontage* techniques, and he developed the principle of *supersaturated polyphony*. Supersaturated polyphony consists of a dense canon that is based on small intervals (steps) to create complex sound masses, resulting in the perception of the main structure as a texture that evolves in a controlled manner over time (VITALE, 2016, p. 6-11; CATANZARO, 2005, p. 1250-1252). *Démontage*, technique that was developed by Gottfried Michael Koenig, divides the spectral structure of a synthesized sound (its partials) into individual frequencies. This technique works in tandem with the principle of *entry delay*, which consists of delaying the beginning of each partial for a time lapse that is longer than 50 milliseconds. This is the limit of our psychoacoustic ability to separate two sounds. When above this threshold, it results in the perception of individual voices, such as in a melody, and by reducing this time interval, sounds begin to merge and to be perceived as a resulting timbre.

Transposed into the instrumental environment, these principles enable the creation of different timbric and harmonic complexes by controlling the density of attacks resulting from very short notes, thereby creating an iterative texture that fuses different voices into an amalgamated sonority. Ligeti operated with the boundaries of this principle by combining instrumental gestures that merge themselves as a consequence of speed and polyrhythmic combination. The idea behind this principle is that movement has the potential to turn into timbre. Interestingly, such an effect would be impossible to achieve using a single soloist instrument; the orchestra works together from multiple time differences to construct the resulting sound. The influence of the polyrhythmic principle on Ligeti's music became more intense and structured in his works as he comes into contact with African music from the Banda-Linda tribe (GALLO DIAS, 2014, p. 96).

Atmosphères, a work analyzed in class, illustrates the use of micropolyphony as a technique based on

a cloud of continuously moving sounds, causing the emergence of different timbric and harmonic complexes resulting from careful contrapuntal work. Analyzing the first gesture of micropolyphony that appears in *Atmosphères*, on p. 4-5 of the score (1963 edition), we can observe the saturated canon structure. The parts are written in different *a 1*, that is to say, one musician per staff. We have, for example, an effective ensemble of 14 first violins with independent melodic lines and so on throughout the entire orchestra. The gesture selected as an example presents a canon in two dimensions. First, each orchestral section makes canonic entries, going from treble to bass and establishing a clear formal directionality. Within each orchestral section, a similar movement occurs, starting with violins I-1 through 4 (the first to the fourth violins of the First Violins section) and followed by the next four performers and so on; when everyone has entered, begin entries of the next section until the entrance of the last cello. What occurs, in formal terms, is a thickening of the instrumental texture, which increases in regard to the number of instruments, tessitura, and rhythmic complexity, expanding the scope of the instrumental ensemble from one to five octaves. The timbre, in turn, is characterized by a decrease in the tension, going from *sul ponticello* to *sul tasto*, thereby making a retrograde movement toward the increased tension caused by the rise in the number of events.

The purpose of the reflection developed in this class is to instruct students in the critical examination on the technical procedures with which they are in contact. In keeping with Ligeti's example, the idea is for students to focus on their studies of music theory (harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, analysis, etc.), searching for inspiration from musical techniques that can be reworked and updated based on the influence of his individual poetics.

2.4. The development of a harmonic logic of its own

Finally, we would like to address Tristan Murail's *Désintégrations*, which serves as an example of the practical application of procedures for treating the harmonic material of a composition. The approach to this content starts with the contextualization of the historical moment in which spectral movement arises, locating its main influences: that is, composers Olivier Messiaen, Edgar Varèse, Giacinto Scelsi, and György Ligeti, as well as Italian futurists – specifically Luigi Russolo – accompanied by an opposition to the predominance of integral serialist thinking. It should also be noted that the composers

of the spectral movement (Tristan Murail, Gérard Grisey, Michaël Lévinas, Roger Tessier, and Hugues Dufourt) founded an instrumental ensemble, *L'Itinéraire*, to facilitate the performance of their works and of guest composers, thereby providing an alternative to the lack of groups specializing in contemporary music performance.

Désintégrations exemplifies the phenomenon of technomorphism (CATANZARO, 2018, p. 18), a concept that describes how the influence of technological and computational resources enabled a broader understanding of the sound phenomenon and the emergence of new techniques for the treatment of musical material, which established new paradigms for composition. *Désintégrations* is one of the main examples of spectral thinking that takes as its harmonic reference the chord-timbre structures—that is, harmonic structures that merge as a resulting timbre and negotiate with the concepts of harmony and timbre as an inseparable unit. According to Anthony Cornicello's (2000, p. 55-102) analysis, the sonorities underlying the work result from the spectral analysis of piano notes and the instrumental simulation of synthesis and audio processing, such as ring and frequency modulation. Among the techniques used by the composer to create musical development between sound structures, mutation and spectral distortion stand out. Mutation starts from a chord-timbre structure and changes it into another via the progressive substitution of notes from the first harmonic structure by the ones from the second; this process is achieved by interpolation. Spectral distortion comprises changes in the interval relations of a chord-timbre structure, which modifies the perception of harmonic tension.

The first section of the work, which begins soon after the introduction of the tape, starts from a situation of almost instrumental synthesis—that is, one in which the harmonic structure is faithful to the analyzed model in terms of timbre chords and the dynamic evolution of partials over time. The use of mutations between the spectra of these two notes contributes to generating a harmonic field with varying degrees of dissonance. The possibility of fusion between these two spectral structures was explored by Murail for the construction of different degrees of harmonic tension, in which chords formed based on close relations to the harmonic series are treated as stability points, while denser structures or structures that are characterized by distant relations to the harmonic series are treated as points of increased harmonic tension. This process of variation in harmonic tension is supported by technical procedures that are common to the musical practice, such as the increase in dynamics, frequency, speed, and pitch range, which results in the establishment of a dialogue with listeners' usual patterns of perceiving

relationships among musical materials.

Within the scope of the course, the study of *Désintégrations* is treated as a model for the presentation of computer-assisted composition environments—in our case, OpenMusic. The proposal is to present practical procedures that are similar to those employed by Murail in his creative process, comprising the analysis of a recorded sound and the respective conversion of the most important partials of its spectrum into musical notation. Based on this example, we present the usual techniques of spectral composers, such as instrumental synthesis, spectral distortion, and the formation of harmonic reservoirs. The final purpose of our class activity, even if the students do not use technological resources to support the process, is for them to be able to generate harmonic content variations based on logical procedures that are no longer inspired by the model of overlapping thirds but, rather, by the variable relationships that explore different degrees of tension via the interval relations prevailing in a given part of the piece. The development of this technique includes a critical reflection on the interval material as a way to control the evolution of harmonic tension as a form of musical expression.

We can observe the constant search to broaden the palette of harmonic possibilities under the discourse of liberating music from its technical bonds when comparatively analyzing the main paradigmatic changes in the harmonic thinking of the Western music that is briefly presented here. All of these paradigmatic changes reflect sociocultural characteristics that are related to the conception of art in each period of music history. In the case of composition teaching, it is never enough emphasizing how much social contexts in which we live influence our creative practice. A student's analytical knowledge of music will pave his or her path to the development of a sensible approach to the individual artistic practice of each artist-creator.

3. The teaching of composition at universities

When examining the teaching of composition at universities, a major topic that inevitably arises is how to establish a connection between this discipline and others, such as counterpoint, harmony, orchestration, analysis, aural training, keyboard harmony, and score reading.

Today, these courses, which were progressively integrated into the music conservatory system in the form of a replica of the model installed by the French Conservatoire in the 19th century, are found in

most music programs offered by universities and colleges worldwide. The names of some of these courses might vary: In the United States, for instance, there was a period during the 1980s when Mannes College used the term "Techniques of Music" when referring to anything related to ear training. In France, a single term, *écriture*, is now used for counterpoint and harmony, a choice that is quite revelatory, whereas in Germany and Austria, *Kontrapunkt* and *Harmonielehre*, which bear definite functions, are still in vogue.

If content is what counts, we shall briefly defend the extent to which these teachings, which are generally considered within the realm of theory courses, can and do contribute significantly to the musical equipment of any aspiring composer. Even in the face of changes being regularly implemented into curricula, it is our strong belief that adaptations are generally intended to prepare students for an array of new possibilities offered by the current musical market. Among these, we can mention, for instance, learning how to compose for games, which is undoubtedly a new trend, especially because of its great power of attraction amongst youth.

It is well known that for centuries, young musicians were taught on a private basis, which would be no different when turning to composition as a supplementary activity. The art of composition was approached through the didactics of learning one specific discipline – the counterpoint. After having his exercises regularly corrected by the master, the student would also quite commonly learn by copying various compositions. Step by step, constant and thorough apprenticeship would take place by care and attentive observation (not imitation) of practical music making. What we define nowadays as a hands-on experience.

The Romantic period emphasized the persona of the creator – the *démiurge* – with the composer being increasingly mystified, and its craft became almost sacrosanct. Incidentally, the same happened with the role played by the orchestral conductor albeit much later. It is, thus, not difficult to understand how much has been passed on the idea that composition requires a certain genius attribute that is exclusive to the artist while simultaneously denied to the craftsman (at least in principle), regardless of the latter's display of well-rounded knowledge of his or her métier.

In an effort to link the various circulating thoughts on composition, why not argue that a creative act already takes place from the very beginning of the student's acquisition of a musical background – that is, that it occurs by exercising, in a practical manner, the abilities required within the scope of these

so-called theory courses? In concrete terms, we do not reserve uniquely for the discipline of composition the exclusive privilege of ministering the tutelage in terms of allowing creativity and liberty when seeking individual artistic expression.

For it to flourish, individuality per se is not required to meet a certain number of prerequisites; it may happen anytime, and the learning of a repertoire and musical languages, which naturally have their own paths and procedures, is not synonym with the delivering of exercises that should perhaps, based on the understanding of some, merely comply with the fitting of rules. An accurate measure of this misrepresentation is that rules of music theory, though prescribed one way or another by the teacher, are not rarely overemphasized by students, who innocently view them as the sole focus of instruction.

The theme of creativity complex and eliciting passion, it may undergo a deeper venture on our part in the near future. However, for now, we affirm our proposal to liberate the stigma of a theory that has been alienated from the praxis; it is only then that we shall be able to appreciate and continuously stimulate our students' composition talents.

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