

CURRICULAR TOOL

LEARNING MUSIC THROUGH MODULAR COMPOSITION

Musical perception is a phenomenon that develops in our brain in the context of the irrational, before the intervention of reason. The sensations generated within us by listening to music cannot therefore be explained with the words of reason, because music, as an art, is ambiguous, and refers to a plurality of extremely subjective meanings, and therefore cannot be categorised univocally.

Addressing the teaching of music through the forced imposition of rigid codes such as theory and harmony is less likely to have a positive impact on students. In this historical moment in which our kids live in a complex system that overexposes them every day to an incredible amount of information and music, the teaching of music must start from that irrational basis that generates within us the multiple meanings of music.

Like all cultural forms, music is a path in stages, the principle lies in the personal taste of each student. Only by teaching them how to make the music they love will it be possible to make them understand that theory and harmony are not boring lists of rules, but useful tools to give voice to what they cannot explain with words.

The more this practical experience evolves, the more their musical culture and their ability to appreciate more complex musical forms will grow.

For these reasons, the pillars of my lessons will be:

1. Inclusive classroom and focus on engagement:

The lessons and topics covered will be based on the music that students love, without placing limits on the music genre.

2. Incorporate technologies

Today's students are the most technologically literate generation to date, and Digital Audio Workspaces (DAW) are a particularly popular resource to incorporate in the music learning path. With the supervision of the instructor, tools like GarageBand and other open sources Apps for composition will be used. These resources are also accessible via tablet or smartphone, so as not to overlook those who do not have a computer at home.

3. Learning music through collective “Modular Composition”

Through active and collective composition, students will be able to learn, progressively and according to their grade, elements from the five fundamental areas of music: Rhythm, Melody, Harmony, Form and Color Tone.

Year aims for each middle school grade

Composition led by the teacher of 3/4 songs or instrumental pieces. The first part of the year will be dedicated to composition, while the second to arrangement, orchestration and rehearsals. The songs will then be recorded on a disc to be sold at the final concert for a fundraiser intended for needy families within the community. This will also give the students an opportunity to have a practical goal of helping others through their work.

Topics covered over the three years with modular composition

Rhythm:

- Time division: whole note, half note, quarter note, eighth note, sixteenth note;
- Time signature: simple times (4/4, 3/4, 2/4 etc.), compound times (6/8, 9/8 12/8 etc.), odd times (5/4, 7/4, 5/8, 7/8);
- Rhythmic reading with body percussion;
- Understand how the rhythm affects the difference between musical genres: from Hip Hop to Jazz.

Melody:

- Intervals: from unison to compound intervals;
- Melodic Rhythm;
- Melodic outline, melodic direction;
- Melodic reading and ear training on intervals.

Harmony:

- Key signatures, major and minor;
- Major and natural minor scale;
- Chords: triads and seventh chords;
- Harmonization of the major scale;
- Tonal harmony and basic progressions;
- Guide Tones;
- Introduction to modal harmony.

Form:

- Commercial music forms;
- Blues;
- Song form: AABA, ABAC, ABCA.
- Introduction to Rhythm changes;
- Through-composed tunes;
- Motivic composition;
- Episodic form.

Color Tone:

- Acoustic instruments tones;
- Electric instrument tones;
- Electronic tones: pads, synths etc.

Modular composition map

The composition process involves the choice of a specific topic from each of the five musical areas, and the subsequent progressive work on each of these.

The composition paths to be followed during the year are as follow:

1. Choice of a musical form among those present in the study program (for example: song form, blues form etc.);
2. Choice of the harmonic patterns and harmonic rhythms, tonal or modal. Special attention on the music genre beloved by the students;
3. Melodic outline, particular attention to the shape of the phrases, the rhythmic feet used and the melodic directions;
4. Development of the first draft with Tools like GarageBand; choice of sounds according to the musical genre. Free rein for students' creativity;
5. Discussion and adaptation of a possible text based on the metric of the piece;

6. Ensemble rehearsals. Analysis of the arrangement together with the teacher; during the analysis students will improve their ear training, creative inclination and style;
7. A final orchestration will be created based on the availability of musical instruments;

The teacher will supervise every step of the students supporting and refining their individual and collective musical growth. Everything will be supervised and perfected by the teacher in the manner dictated by the student's personal experience and, needs and inclinations.

The recording, mix and master of the tracks will be carried out in the manner prescribed by the institute.

Other activities

Depending on the availability of instruments played by the students, for the events organized by the institute, special arrangements and orchestrations of published tunes will be created and discussed in class with the students. Where possible, workshops can also be set up to work with smaller groups of students.