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## ARTICLE

# Higher education music programs, coloniality, and curriculum

Marcus Vinícius Medeiros Pereira<sup>1</sup> 

### ABSTRACT

The text aims at inspiring a reflection on the curricula of Brazilian higher education Music programs, highlighting the possibility of naturalization of their structure engendered by *habitus* dispositions incorporated throughout history. It proposes coloniality as a *doxa* of music teaching that, based on conservatory dispositions incorporated in the form of *habitus*, becomes *nomos* in curriculum documents. Thus, in dialogue with proposals of a decolonial turn and a transmodern project, the study seeks first to denaturalize this *doxa*, this *habitus*, and then proceed to redistribute legitimate knowledge and recognize other commonly silenced knowledge. To this end, we do not need to forget the conservatory and silence classical music; however, we must open spaces not only to other sound practices but also to other ways of thinking and organizing them.

### KEYWORDS

music education; coloniality; curriculum.

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## ENSINO SUPERIOR EM MÚSICA, COLONIALIDADE E CURRÍCULOS

### RESUMO

O texto busca provocar uma reflexão sobre os currículos dos cursos superiores de Música brasileiros, destacando a possibilidade de naturalização de suas estruturas engendrada por disposições de *habitus* incorporadas ao longo da história. Propõe a colonialidade como *doxa* do ensino de música, que, por meio de disposições conservatoriais incorporadas na forma de *habitus*, se torna *nomos* nos documentos curriculares. Dessa maneira, em diálogo com as propostas de um giro decolonial e de um projeto transmoderno, busca-se, em primeiro lugar, desnaturalizar essa *doxa*, esse *habitus*, para então prosseguir com a redistribuição dos conhecimentos legitimados e o reconhecimento de conhecimentos outros comumente silenciados. Para isso, insiste-se que não é necessário apagar o conservatório nem silenciar a música erudita, mas é essencial abrir espaço não somente para outras práticas sonoras, como também para outras formas de pensá-las e organizá-las.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

educação musical; colonialidade; currículo.

## EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EN MÚSICA, COLONIALIDAD Y CURRÍCULUM

### RESUMEN

El texto busca provocar una reflexión sobre los planes de estudio de los cursos de educación superior brasileños, destacando la posibilidad de una naturalización de sus estructuras engendradas por disposiciones de *habitus* incorporadas a lo largo de la historia. Propone la colonialidad como una *doxa* de la enseñanza de la música que, a partir de disposiciones conservatorias incorporadas en forma de *habitus*, se convierte en *nomos* en los documentos curriculares. Así, en diálogo con las propuestas de un giro decolonial y un proyecto transmoderno, busca primero desnaturalizar esta *doxa*, este *habitus*, y luego proceder a la redistribución del conocimiento legítimo y el reconocimiento de otro conocimiento comúnmente silenciado. Con este fin, se insiste en que no es necesario borrar el conservatorio y silenciar la música clásica; pero es esencial dejar espacio no solo para otras prácticas sonoras sino también para otras formas de pensarlas y organizarlas.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

educación musical; colonialidad; curriculum.

## INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The Brazilian Association of Music Education (*Associação Brasileira de Educação Musical* — ABEM) — a prominent association that brings together researchers, teachers, and students at all levels and in all modalities of music education — has proposed a theme related to music education in times of crisis for the discussions about the 2017–2019 biennium.

In tune with this theme, the present paper discusses some aspects of this crisis, in terms of the contemporary challenges faced by music teaching in higher education, especially in music teacher education programs, with respect to curriculum selection and coloniality. Thus, this study aims to acknowledge the naturalization of the colonial structure of higher education curricula in music undergraduate programs and offer possible paths to change, based on decolonial proposals.

First, “crisis” should not be understood as something negative in itself but as a favorable moment for taking a stand. In line with Hannah Arendt (1997), Veiga-Neto (2008) points us in this direction by exploring the etymology of the word *crisis*:

In Greek, *krisis*, *eōs* is both the ability to distinguish, separate, as well as to debate, dispute; the verb from which this word derives is *krínō* and means the very act of judging (to make a better decision). The Latin form *crisis*, is changed its meaning to signify the moment of decision, whose objective is undertaking a sudden change in the course of an event, an action, an illness, etc. The words derived from *crise* — such as *crítica*, *critério*, *endócrino* (criticism, criterion, endocrine) — do not have negative meanings; on the contrary, they evoke even a degree of productivity. As Bornheim explains (1996, p. 49), “in all this, no trace of negativity seems to be found — quite the opposite: there is the strength to choose, judge, discern, debate; these are words linked to the strength of thought and, therefore, to the creation of philosophy, science”. Therefore, according to Arendt, crises, the critical moments, provide us with the chance to reflect so we can act to try and change the course of events; hence, crisis has, in itself, a positivity that we should not waste. (Veiga-Neto, 2008, p. 143)

Thus, crises are moments that urge us to proceed with caution and encourage us to undertake an in-depth and broad study, which, in turn, involves debate and dispute. This scenario can lead us to transformative actions, which are the results of our judgments and decisions regarding what we believe is the best path.

Coloniality, in terms of higher education music curricula, poses a significant challenge. It is understood as the hegemony of knowledge, learnings, behaviors, values, and ways of acting of certain cultures that, when imposed on others, wield an enormous power of domination (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). The curricula of higher education music programs in Brazil are not only products of this logic, but they also (re)produce it. They are ultimately used as instruments to maintain such intellectual, artistic, and aesthetic domination in the music field.

In the critical tradition, the relationship between curriculum and culture is seen both as a field of symbolic creation and production and as battlefields, contested fields. This situation results from the fact that culture, within this tradition of thought, is not regarded as an inert and static set of values and knowledge to be transmitted to a new generation in a non-problematic way; it does not exist in a unitary and homogeneous fashion (Moreira and Silva, 2006, p. 26). The educational curriculum becomes, in this perspective, a privileged terrain for the manifestation of conflicts.

The daily routine of higher education music teaching reveals the struggles that are fought in the field of culture: for example, the imbalance of values placed on classical music, which is deemed as official and legitimate knowledge (Pereira, 2012), as opposed to other music genres that permeate the personal and professional lives of students. Also, in the context of music undergraduate programs, these “other music genres” are often silenced as processes, and, not infrequently, they are absent from the discussions that take place in the classroom. In fact, based on curriculum documents alone, we cannot make generalizations about the teaching practices that actually occur, on a daily basis, in these undergraduate courses. An immersion in the field, observing and listening to the agents in action, is essential to understand the case in a more holistic way.

However, curriculum documents play an important role in this context, since they reveal, as Goodson (1999, p. 21, our translation) declares, “a testimonial that is visible, public, and subject to change, a logic that is chosen to legitimize schooling through its rhetoric”. Thus, according to the author, the curriculum provides us with a map of the terrain that can be changed.

Based on these documented testimonials — visible, public, and, most importantly, changeable —, this paper proposes coloniality as a *doxa* that is perpetuated and operationalized by the curricula of higher education music programs: when structured from and for Western European classical music, such curricula act as instruments that colonize the senses, that is, they enable the colonization of *aesthesis* by a determined *aesthetic*.

It is noteworthy that the objective of this study is not simply to dismantle the structure put in place, which would otherwise be a simplistic and reductionist approach. Rather, the intention is to reflect on something that appears to be naturalized and, therefore, unthought: the fact that this curricular proposal is not the only possible version for music education, although it seems to be tacitly accepted as such.

The trajectory that marked the inclusion and consolidation of the music field in Brazilian universities is strongly underpinned by a history of exclusions, as stated by Queiroz (2017, p. 133). In this scenario, the intent is not to make the oppressed into a new oppressor (Freire, 1981): instead of excluding types of knowledge considered hegemonic from the curriculum, the solution may lie in including other processes, other practices, other repertoires, other realms of sounds more closely connected with Brazil’s diverse reality and in need of as much appreciation and recognition as those traditionally selected.

## HIGHER EDUCATION MUSIC PROGRAMS: PORTRAITS OF A CONSERVATORY *HABITUS*

Although this reflection may (and should) also cover other higher education music undergraduate courses, this paper focuses on music teacher education programs due to the small number of studies carried out about this theme. The very scarcity of discussions and studies on Bachelor's degrees could, per se, indicate the naturalization this work intends to reveal.

Queiroz (2017, p. 135, our translation) highlights that the analysis of higher education is based on two main axes: one related to its expansion and another to the “diversification of teaching models, methods, and modes, in order to incorporate the diversity of learning and knowledge that characterizes different cultures worldwide”.

The number of higher education programs in Brazil has been increasing more steadily since the 2000s, with a great impact on the music field: as of that decade, the expansion of undergraduate courses in the field is significant, especially music teacher education programs (Queiroz and Figueiredo, 2016; Queiroz, 2017).

However, concerning the second axis of analysis, several studies have shown that there is still much to reflect, study, and do in terms of higher education — especially in the music field (Vieira, 2000; Kleber, 2000; Denardi, 2006; Pereira, 2013, 2014; Queiroz, 2017).

The current proposal in music education involves a “model” or “conservatory form”<sup>1</sup> that has been perpetuated in music curricula — at the various levels and modalities of teaching. Vieira (2000), for example, detected the presence of a “conservatory model” in music teacher education in Belém (PA). According to her, this model is linked to the mastery of the written code as essential for executing a determined classical music repertoire. This musical code taught by the conservatory model corresponds to the knowledge produced at the time when the model was created and, by preserving this knowledge, the model ultimately preserves one of its underlying factors: a musical culture that comprises elements of a music genre from a particular historical moment (Vieira, 2000, p. 4) and also from a certain geographical space.

The “conservatory form” proposed by Jardim (2008) is present in the conception of a “teaching musician” whose specialized education assumes an essentially technical, aesthetic, artistic, and professional character (with a strong appeal to *performance*). In agreement with Vieira (2000), Jardim (2008) shows that, in this “conservatory form”, theoretical knowledge is considered essential for students, who need prior knowledge of the rudiments of reading and writing to be able to begin playing an instrument or singing. From her point of view, both this form and its intrinsic teaching practices are so ingrained and perceived as natural in music education that, in general, studies on this theme lack comments or explanations about it. For Jardim (2008), course structure, teaching programs, and students' profiles have contributed to consolidate this conservatory form.

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1 A model or a form related to Music Conservatories.

Kleber (2000) and Denardi (2006) had highlighted the need for reforms in curriculum documents of music teacher education programs that they had studied, raising the same issues discussed by Vieira (2000) and Jardim (2008). Such reforms, when carried out, were perceived by these authors as peripheral or cosmetic, as they changed only course names, syllabi, and the number of hours of some classes, but the essence of the curricular structure always remained the same.

It should be noted that the National Curriculum Guidelines (NCG) for Higher Education Music Programs (Brasil, 2004) has no disciplinary prescription, nor the definition of a common curriculum, especially regarding the specific knowledge in music. Such “Specific Knowledge” is understood, in the NCG, as “studies that focus on and flesh out the music field, comprising those related to Knowledge of Instruments, Composition, Aesthetics, and Conducting” (Brasil, 2004, p. 2, our translation).

However, this specific knowledge is similarly (not to say identically) structured in music teacher education programs in Brazil, as well as in South America (Mateiro, 2009, 2011; Pereira, 2013), and can be summarized in the following list of disciplines (with some possible variations): Musical Theory and Perception, Counterpoint, Music History, Harmony, Analysis, Piano, Complementary Instrument.

As previously demonstrated (Pereira, 2012, 2013), this structure is strikingly similar to that of the Brazilian Imperial Conservatory, founded in 1847, which has remained essentially the same throughout its history (until today, now with the name of School of Music of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro). Such structure is used as a reference model for other institutions across the country (both other conservatories and higher education programs).

In the analysis of this historical process of Brazilian higher education music programs, previous studies have shown how different conservatories in the country were gradually incorporated into universities and, thus, maintained their own logic of curriculum design and structure (Pereira, 2012, 2013). Therefore, even music courses that did not originate from the incorporation of a local conservatory adopted this previously established logic to structure their undergraduate music programs.

In this sense, “despite the country’s continental dimensions and the fact that the curricular guidelines ensure flexibility for adaption to specific regional contexts, the conception of music teacher education has more similarities than differences” (Pereira, 2012, p. 110, our translation). Most subjects and corresponding content are not only common to all courses, but their sequencing is also very similar.

While the author of this work has focused on music teacher education programs (Pereira, 2012, 2013), Queiroz (2017) extended this analysis to curriculum documents of all music courses/qualifications offered in ten Brazilian higher education institutions, two from each region of the country. From this documentary study, Queiroz (2017, p. 146) highlights:

- The so-called “music programs”, without any adjective or complementation, are courses whose single or major emphasis is placed on Western classical music;

- In several Brazilian music programs, even when they include knowledge and learning of genres other than those linked to classical music, they do so based on aesthetic and cultural parameters, value dimensions, among other aspects, connected to the world of classical music: even the term “popular music”, generically used in the professional profile defined in some courses, does not address the diversity of knowledge and learning of “popular music”, showing only one of its side that can be written within conventional standards, systematized using classical music canons, and arranged within aesthetic forms of that music genre;
- Even music teacher education programs, which have incorporated broader perspectives on music, maintain a trend similar to that of bachelor degrees generically called “music courses: great predominance of curricular components that focus on aesthetic standards of Western classical music.

In view of this panorama, some investigations have proposed the typical-ideal notion of *conservatory habitus* (Pereira, 2012, 2014), in an attempt to explain the permanence of change. Although this model is not necessarily reproduced in a completely unthought manner, the curricular practices of music teacher education programs — and this scenario could be extended to bachelor degrees — allow glimpsing a portrait of embodied historical dispositions, assumed as the version of the possibility that, despite the proposal of changes and reforms, ends up unconsciously guiding the practices in a way that is very closely connected to the colonial tradition. These dispositions help us understand the ever-peripheral and cosmetic character of the reforms, as well as the similarity among music programs in Brazil.

The notion is anchored to Pierre Bourdieu’s understanding of *habitus*:

*Habitus* — embodied history that is made nature, and thus forgotten as history — is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. However, *habitus* is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history from history and so guarantees the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world. (Bourdieu, 2009, p. 93)

By looking back into the analysis of the historical constitution of higher education music programs in Brazil, as well as the subsequent study of four curriculum documents of music teacher education programs of Brazilian institutions (Pereira, 2012, 2014), the existence of a musical ideology that sustains, legitimizes, and naturalizes the curricular practices in question is clear. It is an ideology that, by divesting musical experience of its social character, not only denies the historicity and mutability of music, its values, and experiences but in doing so, also implicitly constructs it as a system for the quotation of musical value:



When embodied in the agents, this ideology ratifies and immanently maintains the hegemony of a musical institution that makes these reified products be seen as superior. Selective tradition enters the scene and separates superior music from mass, profane music, which is classified as not really musical. When embodied in the agents, this ideology creates dispositions that guide musical practices, perceptions, and meanings. This whole scenario leads us to the concept of *habitus*, the internalization of exteriority, the embodiment of dispositions, the maintenance of ideologically-oriented practices. Or, as Penna rightly sums up: “The conservatory that is both outside and inside of us, whether in our practice or our training, whether in the textbooks or models we adopt”. (Pereira, 2014, p. 94, our translation).

These conservatory dispositions of *habitus* make classical music appear as legitimate knowledge and a parameter for structuring courses and hierarchizing the cultural capitals under dispute. They also make musical notation hold a central role in the curriculum, since most of the subjects that address classical music depend on it. Other works had pointed out (Pereira, 2014, p. 95, our translation), in music teacher education programs, what Queiroz (2017) also noticed in his study of bachelor degrees: “[when] the ‘other genres’ are addressed in the curriculum, they do so either for their eccentricity or because this approach is based on the classical music logic, that is, as content to be explored on the basis of the classical thought”.

In the case of music teacher education programs, as previously mentioned, the educational structure favors classical music and excludes other possibilities of musical practices that might be closer not only to Brazilian culture but also to students’ daily lives.

Therefore, we can note a clash with the proposals of Brazil’s National Common Curricular Base (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular* — BNCC), approved by the Ministry of Education in 2017 (Preschool and Elementary School) and 2018 (High School). This document has a mandatory character and must be used as the basis for the design (or reformulation) of the curricula of Brazilian basic education schools. It contains ten general competencies, and the word *diversity* appears in three of them:

6. To appreciate the diversity of knowledge and cultural experiences and acquire knowledge and experiences that enable understanding the relationships inherent in the professional world as well as make choices in line with the practice of citizenship and their life project, with freedom, autonomy, critical awareness, and responsibility.

[...]

8. To know oneself, appreciate oneself, and take care of one’s physical and emotional health, understanding oneself in human diversity and recognizing one’s own emotions and those of others, with self-criticism and the ability to deal with these emotions.

9. To develop empathy, dialogue, conflict resolution, and cooperation, earning respect from others and showing respect for others and for human rights, ac-

cepting and appreciating the diversity of individuals and social groups, their knowledge, identities, cultures, and potentialities, without prejudice of any kind. (Brasil, 2017, p. 9-10, our translation)

Based on the exposed, we can observe a need to build curricula that allow children and young people to develop the capacity to appreciate diversity, understand themselves in this diversity, and respect others. However, how can music teachers possibly do this, if their education is underpinned by markedly monocultural and colonial terms? If they have embodied and ultimately perpetuate a *habitus* linked to a certain colonial aesthetic that devalues and excludes everything different?

Addressing diversity in curriculum design — whether in basic or higher education — presents a major challenge in a continental country such as Brazil, with considerable cultural diversity and profound social inequalities. Thus, how can one deal with this disputed knowledge? How can one address, especially in the music field, the issue of diversity?

We are currently experiencing moments of great tension in Brazil regarding school, curricula, and diversity. The political forces in power today have strongly rejected certain positions on this issue and criticized what they call the “ideological bias” prevalent in Brazilian education. This paper does not mean to argue the merit of this discussion, but rather to characterize the current moment as critical and, therefore, propitious for more in-depth reflections that can offer some guidance on how to make decisions involving music education, curricula, and diversity.

Raguso (2005) proposed two models of conceiving a plural society, which offer an interesting way of thinking about how to approach diversity:

The first model, which has been particularly established in the United States in the last century, is recognized and self-defined as “a melting pot”: a singular dominant society that relates to several minority groups; this model assumes that minority groups are destined to be absorbed by the dominant culture and, therefore, will disappear with time. In this way, the myth of “a people, a culture, a nation” prevails. The second type of plural society is assumed to be multicultural and is defined as a mosaic, in which different ethnocultural groups maintain the sense of their own cultural specificity and participate in a social mold characterized by shared rules and laws, which regulate life together. (Raguso, 2005, p. 7-8)

In which of the two models do we currently fit?

It seems that, given the studies that have been carried out on higher education music programs in Brazil, we are experiencing the first one. Sound practices of minority groups, when addressed, are absorbed by the aesthetically dominant music logic. In the field of music education, though, we struggle to build the second<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, have we been working toward achieving it?

2 For a literature review on the relations between research on higher education music curricula and diversity in Brazil, see Pereira (2017).

## COLONIALITY AS THE FIRE THAT HEATS THE “MELTING POT”

As Professor Rosângela de Tugny pointed out at the ABEM Northeast Regional Meeting in 2018<sup>3</sup>, it is quite intriguing to note that, in Brazil, “the others” are indigenous, black, or multiracial peoples, while the always-ideological “we” is more closely related to Germans, Austrians, French, *i.e.*, Europeans.

This context can be understood as a result of the coloniality that endures in Latin America as a whole, although colonialism has already come to an end, at least officially.

Colonialism is defined by Maldonado-Torres (2007) as the political and economic domination of one people or nation over another, through an explicit relationship of power, sovereignty, and hegemony. As previously presented, coloniality is the hegemony of knowledge, learnings, behaviors, values, and ways of acting of certain cultures that, when imposed on others, wield an enormous power of domination. For Maldonado-Torres (2007), colonialism precedes coloniality, but coloniality outlives it.

Such terms lead us to the perspective of coloniality of knowledge, proposed by Quijano (2014): a process that consolidated the repression against other forms of non-European knowledge production, which tends to deny the intellectual and historical legacy of other peoples, such as indigenous and Africans, reducing them to empty and prejudiced categories, as primitive and irrational, because they belong to “another race” (Queiroz, 2017, p. 137).

We can understand coloniality as the fire that heats the “melting pot” proposed by Raguso (2005): the understanding of Europe as hegemonic, the place that determines knowledge, behaviors, and ways of acting and thinking, subjugating to its own perspective the knowledge, behaviors, and ways of acting and thinking of all those who are seen as “the others”.

This Eurocentric outlook is at the base of a whole coloniality process, be it relative to politics, being, knowledge, or aesthetics. Quoting Aníbal Quijano, Amara (2017) shows that, as a result of coloniality and socialization under its terms, Eurocentrism is not the exclusive perspective of Europeans, but of the group of people educated under its hegemony and who naturalizes this process.

Queiroz (2017, p. 108) speaks of musical epistemicides, crimes committed against a wide range of cultural expressions that were expelled from prominent places in society by historical processes of exclusion. When read, analyzed, and explained from the viewpoint of Western European classical music, various sound

3 Cf. speech delivered at the round table “Music education in times of crisis: voices of diversity” (*Educação musical em tempos de crise: vozes da diversidade*) of the XIV Northeast Regional Meeting of ABEM, held in Salvador (Bahia), on September 20, 2018. The table counted with the presence of professor doctor Rosângela Pereira de Tugny (Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia), professor doctor Laila Rosa (Universidade Federal da Bahia — UFBA), professor doctor Katharina Döring (Universidade do Estado da Bahia), and professor doctor Ângela Lühning (UFBA), the latter acting as the mediator.

practices, which have their own readings, analyses, and explanations, have been silenced throughout Brazil and Latin America.

As Araújo (2016, p. 8-9) rightly states, even the word “music”, which we use as if it were universal, can be understood as a term created in a certain Western context, but that often has a precarious, imposing, and/or violent application to other practices and knowledge, almost always subverting the rigid domains of the Kantian art framework. In this perspective, continues the author, the apparently neutral category “music” has led to the reduction of cultures considered subordinate to the terms of others that imposed themselves as superior, a scenario that may even result in an intellectual and physical-material erasure of any significant differences in subordinate worldviews after their translation into those allegedly superior.

Therefore, we must ask ourselves: what are we assuming “Music” to be in terms such as “Music Teacher Education Program”, “Bachelor of Music”, “Music at schools”, “Music discipline and/or content”, “specific knowledge of Music”? Are we not naturalizing the imposing and violent meaning assumed for Music in the traditional History of Music discipline, present in practically all curricula of higher education music courses in Brazil and the world: a heteronormative and Christian white male Western European classical music?

How does the understanding of this term affect how we have organized curricula and practices in music education? Would not this term also contribute to the reproduction of a “melting pot” kind of society?

## THE COLONIZATION OF SENSES: *AESTHESIS* × *AESTHETICS*

The word *aesthesis*, which originates in ancient Greek, is accepted without modification in modern European languages (Mignolo, 2010, p. 13). The meanings of *aesthesis* relate to words such as “sensation”, “perception process”, “visual sensation”, “sense of taste”, or “auditory sensation”. As a result, the word *synaesthesia* refers to the intersection of senses and sensations and was used as a rhetorical figure in poetic/literary modernism.

As of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of *aesthesis* becomes restricted to the meaning of “the sense of beauty”. Thus, aesthetics is born as a theory, and the concept of art, as a practice. According to Mignolo (2010, p. 13), much has been written about Immanuel Kant and the fundamental importance of his thinking in the reorientation of *aesthesis* and its transformation into aesthetics. Thereafter, in retrospect, the history of aesthetics began to be written, and its origins were found not only in Greece but also in prehistory.

Mignolo (2010, p. 14) argues that this cognitive operation is nothing but the colonization of *aesthesis* by aesthetics. Since *aesthesis* is a phenomenon common to all living organisms with a nervous system, the author continues, aesthetics is a particular version or theory of such sensations related to beauty. Namely, no universal law makes the relationship between *aesthesis* and beauty necessary. This belief was “created” in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The problem, according to Mignolo (2010), is that the unique experience of the heart of Europe translates into a theory that “discovered” the truth of *aesthesis* for a particular community, which cannot

be universalized. This does not mean that non-European civilizations did not know what Europe had defined as “beauty”. Just looking at any civilization with documents saved proves that in Ancient Egypt and Ancient China, as well as in Brazilian indigenous tribes, the satisfaction of sensations and the taste for creativity in language, images, buildings, decorations, among others, were not uncommon to anyone. In modern Europe, as in ancient civilizations, these human experiences also existed. For complex reasons, which for Mignolo (2010) are associated with the construction of Europe since 1492, the particular theorization of the European experience has become universal.

Dussel (2005, p. 30) proposes that the modern *ego cogito* was preceded in more than a century by the practical *ego conquiro* (I conquer) of the Portuguese-Hispanic people who imposed their will on indigenous Americans. Modernity has its origins, according to Dussel, in free medieval European cities, centers of enormous creativity. However, it was “born” when Europe was confronted with “The Other” and could control them, overcome them, violate them. Modernity was “born” when Europeans could be defined as this *ego conquiro*, as conquerors and colonizers of the Alterity that constitutes this same Modernity. Dussel (1994, p. 10) argues that this other was not “discovered” as Other rather than “covered” by what Europe had always been. For the author, 1492 was the moment of the “birth” of Modernity as a concept, the “origin” of a “myth” of a very particular sacrificial violence and, at the same time, a process of “covering” non-Europeans.

Dussel (2005) proposes a global sense of “Modernity” that

would consist in defining as a fundamental determination of the modern world the fact that [Europe] is (its States, armies, economics, philosophy, etc.) the “center” of World History. In other words, empirically, World History did not exist until 1492 (as the start date for the “World System” operation). Before that year, empires or cultural systems coexisted. Only with the Portuguese expansion that began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and reached the far east in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and with the discovery of Hispanic America, that the whole planet became the “place” of “one” World History. (Dussel, 2005, p. 28, our translation)

For the author, the notion that Europe’s “Modernity” would be the operation of possibilities that open up by its “centrality” in World History, and the constitution of all other cultures as its “periphery”, allows understanding that, even if all culture is ethnocentric, Eurocentrism (modern European ethnocentrism) is the only one that can claim to identify itself with the “universality-modernity”: “The ‘Eurocentrism’ of Modernity lies exactly in the confusion between abstract universality and the concrete world hegemonized by Europe as its ‘center’” (Dussel, 2005, p. 30, our translation).

The idea of a Modernity myth, which carries out an irrational process hidden from its own eyes, is then presented by Dussel (2005), showing Modernity as the justification for an irrational praxis of violence. In this myth, the “modern” civilization self-describes as more developed and, therefore, superior. This superiority forces

them, as a moral requirement, to develop those considered to be more primitive, barbaric, and rude. The path to this educational development process must be the one followed by Europe, and, as barbarians oppose the civilizing process, modern praxis must ultimately perpetrate violence, if necessary, to destroy the obstacles to this modernization. Such domination ends up producing victims (in many and varied ways), but this violence is interpreted as something inevitable, with a quasi-ritual sense of sacrifice. As stated by Dussel (2005, p. 30), “the civilizing hero puts his own victims on the condition of being holocausts of a saving sacrifice (colonized indigenous peoples, African slaves, women, environmental destruction, etc.)”. For opposing the civilizing process, barbarians would be “guilty” from the perspective of modernity. This guilt allows Modernity to present itself not only as innocent but as an emancipator of its own victims from this guilt. Finally, the sufferings or sacrifices (the costs) imposed by modernization are interpreted as inevitable results of this “civilizing” process of Modernity.

Dussel (2005) proposes to overcome Modernity by denying the denial of its myth:

To this end, the denied and victimized “other-face” of “Modernity” must firstly find itself to be “innocent”: the “innocent victim” of the ritual sacrifice, which upon discovering itself innocent, judges “Modernity” as guilty of the sacrificing, originally conquering, constitutive, essential violence. By denying the innocence of “Modernity” and affirming the Alterity of the “Other”, previously denied as a guilty victim, we can “un-cover”, for the first time, the “other-face” hidden and essential to “Modernity”: the peripheral colonial world, the sacrificed indigenous population, the enslaved black people, the oppressed women, the alienated children and popular cultures, etc. (the “victims” of “Modernity”) as victims of an irrational act (as a contradiction of the rational ideal of “Modernity” itself). (Dussel, 2005, p. 30-31, our translation)

As one of the results of this “civilizing process”, the change of *aesthesis* into aesthetics laid the foundations for the construction of its own history and for the evaluation of any aesthetic experience that had not been conceptualized in the terms in which Europe conceptualized its own and regional sensory experience.

In our higher education music programs, would we not be offering our students tools built from this regionalized perspective of aesthetics to analyze and value practices of the sound universe that often have other intentions, other systems, other aesthetics? Would we not also be perpetuating all of this in the selection we make when working at elementary schools? Would the *conservatory habitus* not be a *modus operandi* of coloniality in terms of Brazilian music curricula?

We often understand the treatment of diversity only as the approach to other products, but under the narrow lens of colonizing aesthetics. We do not address them based on their own systems, intentions, and aesthetics. Thus, we frequently reedit the myth of Modernity, sacrificing, in a civilizing ritual — albeit with the best intentions —, the most varied practices of the universe of sounds. We, therefore, commit the musical epistemicides mentioned by Queiroz (2017).

## OVERCOMING MODERNITY AND ITS COLONIALITY: THE TRANSMODERN PROJECT AND THE DECOLONIAL TURN

The many authors who address coloniality agree that recognizing its existence and perceiving its effects is a fundamental step. Dussel (2005, p. 31) defends a worldwide project of liberation, a “Transmodernity” that begins — as shown above — with the denial of the *civilizing myth* and the innocence of modern violence, revealing the injustice of the sacrificial praxis outside (and sometimes inside) Europe.

Emancipatory reason is overcome as a “liberating reason” when the “Eurocentrism” of illustrated reason is discovered, when the “developmentalist fallacy” of the hegemonic modernization process is defined. This is possible, even for the illustrated reason, when the dignity of the Other (of the other culture, of the other sex and gender, etc.) is ethically discovered; when the victim is declared innocent by the affirmation of their Alterity as Identity in Exteriority, as people who have been denied by Modernity. Thus, modern reason is surpassed (not as a negation of reason as such, but as a negation of the Eurocentric, violent, developmental, hegemonic reason). (Dussel, 2005, p. 31, our translation)

Dussel (2005) proposes to promote a transcendent passage (hence Transmodernity), in which Modernity and its negated Alterity (its victims) would be co-realized through mutual creative fruitfulness:

The transmodern project is a co-realization of the impossible for Modernity; that is, the co-realization of solidarity, which we call analeptic, of: Periphery/Center, Woman/Man, diverse races, diverse ethnicities, diverse classes, Humanity/Earth, Western Culture/Cultures of the ex-colonial peripheral world, etc.; not by pure denial but by incorporation from Alterity. (Dussel, 2005, p. 31, our translation)

Similarly, Maldonado-Torres (2008) proposes a *decolonial turn* as a responsible and ethical confrontation when dealing with diversity. This turn is the theoretical and practical movement of political and epistemological resistance to the logic of modernity/coloniality. A decolonial attitude and reason are both fundamental to this turn. Dialoguing with Dussel’s (2005) transmodern project, the turn basically refers to the awareness of the silencing, concealment, and epistemicides that were and are produced by modern forms of power, as well as their effects on different peoples and social segments over time. The colonial turn also refers to the recognition that colonial forms of power are multiple and that both the knowledge and the lived experience of subjects marked by coloniality are highly relevant to understanding modern forms of power and providing alternatives to them (Maldonado-Torres, 2008, p. 66).

The decolonial turn and the transmodern project are not characterized by the denial of the colonial heritage, but by the unveiling of its hegemonic version of the truth and, consequently, the insertion of new epistemological possibilities



into the understanding of the world. As Dussel (2005) declared, it is an analeptic — not aseptic — solidarity. Also, it would be a turn because this subsumption, this incorporation, would take place based on Alterity and no longer on the supposed civilized, civilizing, conquering, and dominating Modernity.

The concept of decolonial turn, in its most basic expression, aims to use a series of conceptual and methodological tools, numerous contestatory strategies that seek a radical change in the current hegemonic forms of power, being, and knowing.

The change from the natural racist or individualistic attitude of modernity to a decolonial attitude of cooperation in breaking with the world of colonial death is the most fundamental moment of the decolonial turn, according to Maldonado-Torres (2008). For him, “decoloniality cannot be achieved without a change in the subject. This question is related to what others call decoloniality of the mind or the historical imaginary of memory<sup>4</sup>” (Maldonado-Torres, 2008, p. 67, our translation). We propose a dialogue with Pierre Bourdieu (1983, 2008, 2009) to reflect on this change of the subject: from the awareness of their *habitus*, which is structured and structurer of colonial *doxa*”.

## DIALOGUING WITH PIERRE BOURDIEU: COLONIALITY AS DOXA

With his praxiological theory, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu helps us understand and, thus, deconstruct these natural — or naturalized — attitudes. Based on the Bourdieusian perspective, I have proposed to understand coloniality as the *doxa* of the music education field, which has incorporated conservatory *habitus* dispositions as its *modus operandi* of perpetuation.

*Doxa*, in Pierre Bourdieu’s words (2003, p. 87), is the consensual opinion, the whole set of what is assumed as obvious, what is agreed by everyone to the point that they do not even talk about it, and it remains hidden. From our *habitus*, we transform this internalized *doxa* into *nomos*: laws that govern and regulate the struggle for domination of the field (the curricula, for example).

Conservatory *habitus* dispositions, gathered in the typical-ideal notion of *conservatory habitus* (Pereira, 2012, 2013), act as matrices that engender modes of action and perception, as well as beliefs and value criteria institutionalized by Music Conservatories.

The practice of looking at coloniality in music education by drawing on Bourdieu’s ideas encourages us to wonder: what kind of cultural capital is valued in the music field? What kind of thinking governs the selection of musical knowledge and experience for music curricula? Is there really a reflection on musical knowledge and experiences, or do we just accept those legitimized by the field? Those that refer to a certain type of musical practice, designed by and for this practice, universalized as a product of “the” pure aesthetics?

4 According to the original: “La descolonización no se puede llevar a cabo sin un cambio en el sujeto. Este asunto está relacionado a lo que otros han denominado como la descolonización de la mente o del imaginario histórico y la memoria”.



Beliefs and value criteria, as well as actions and perceptions in Music, have legitimized classical music as specific knowledge to be delivered, disseminated. All theory and systematization carried out from and for this music are regarded as the doctrine to be followed and applied to all practices of the universe of sounds. As if the erudite culture were legitimized by tradition and time, the “great purifiers of knowledge”, and had nothing questionable (Lopes, 1997, p. 101).

The institutionalization of this *doxa* by Music Conservatories, perpetuated throughout history, raised musical coloniality to the condition of *nomos* in the curricula that address music teaching. This coloniality is linked to a belief, a true myth of the superiority of Western European classical music, produced by a musical ideology that “is based upon the assumption that music is the atomised and fragmented creation of isolated individuals, and that it achieves greatness when it transcends this apparent singularity and pertains to the universal, the timeless, the ahistorical” (Green, 1988, p. 5). For the artistic field, such an ideology would be the refraction of coloniality and the myth of Modernity.

Understanding the conservatory as a school institution also helps to understand the invented selective tradition: music teaching practices are organized in a school time and space, structured by the written language and culture — which imposes itself at the expense of orality (Pereira, 2018, p. 13). According to Vincent, Lahire, and Thin (2001), the school (in this case, the conservatories) starts to occupy a specific space, distinct from the space destined for the performance of other social practices, and it will be structured around an educational project in which the knowledge to be transmitted is organized into content, curricula, courses, methods, and materials, thereby producing its own know-how. In this institutionalization of the education of musicians, which is naturalized and transposed to the educational field in its proposal for the comprehensive education of citizens, the conservatory chooses (noted) European classical music as legitimate knowledge and parameter — for structuring courses, selecting methods, organizing content, and valuing musical practices.

My intention with the notion of *conservatory habitus* was to denaturalize these practices as the only way of teaching music: be it for the education of musicians, or the education of citizens — in a broader perspective.

The denaturalization of our *habitus*, coupled with the recognition of its conservatory dispositions, is a tool proposed to help us, on the one hand, to decolonize art and its canons and, on the other, to decolonize *aesthesia*, the aesthetic perception that subjectively links beauty and complexity to the standard of classical art in Europe.

This proposal is based on Setton’s statement (2002, p. 61) that *habitus* is not destiny. The first step toward change would be to denaturalize traditions, recognizing them as being invented. Therefore, if they are invented, they can be reinvented. Reinventing them with a decolonial turn, analeptic solidarity, a transmodern project.

Contradicting the coloniality of aesthetics, starting with this denaturalization of our *habitus*, does not mean preaching the return to a supposed pure or essential

artistic expression, but rather the attempt to legitimize other forms of experience and expression, other value systems, considering them according to the meanings of those who forged them.

It is not a matter of establishing inquisitorial courts to burn conservatories, classical music, and its systematization, but of building new outlooks and spaces of value for other practices, other music, other systematizations. Challenging and transcending this truth that is considered unique, opening space for other types of epistemology: space for speech and listening, allowing the co-realization proposed by Dussel (2005).

## A DECOLONIAL CURRICULUM: BETWEEN REDISTRIBUTION AND RECOGNITION

When focusing on higher education music programs — without excluding thinking about possibilities for basic education —, denaturalizing coloniality as a curricular *doxa* in the music field involves the search for curricular justice. Curricular justice, in its conceptual potential, can be a collective instrument that allows us to promote the defense of school justice and the social quality of education (Silva, 2018, p. 1).

In this context, recognizing the processes in which coloniality is expressed in curricular *nomos* — as a result of the influences of conservatory *habitus* dispositions — is crucial because “contemporary pedagogical thinking cannot avoid reflecting on the issue of culture and cultural elements of different types of educational choices, at the risk of falling into superficiality” (Forquin, 1993, p. 10, our translation), artificiality, and a strong semantic distance from music as a daily social practice. It is not about constructing curricula based exclusively on the students’ daily musical practice, but including this practice as an object of knowledge and study.

The concern with the knowledge to be taught — understood by Young (2014, p. 195) as “the ability to envision alternatives”, which cannot be defined merely by results, skills, or evaluations — does not suggest a static or stable perception of what is taught. School knowledge is socially anchored; therefore, it is referenced in the social practices of our time and aims, among other things, at the quality and relevance of education (Silva, 2018, p. 5).

At the same time, what has fundamentally and always justified the educational enterprise is the responsibility of having to transmit the human experience considered culture, that is, what, over time, has been able to reach a public existence, virtually communicable and memorable, crystallizing in cumulative and controllable knowledge, systems of intelligible symbols, perfectible instruments, and admirable works (Forquin, 1993, p. 13-14).

Therefore, in the curricula, it is both a process of redistribution — ensuring access to valued knowledge, the one that has been considered “the best possible knowledge” (Young, 2014) — and a process of recognition — recognizing and appreciating cultural differences, other types of knowledge, and other possible

practices. It involves discovering that the best possible knowledge is not just the one that has been regarded as “the treasure of humanity”. There are other treasures covered by the veil of coloniality.

This is a transposition of Nancy Fraser’s proposals for curriculum studies carried out by Silva (2018): Fraser (2006, p. 231) assumes that justice today requires both redistribution and recognition. For her, this assumption means, in part, thinking about how to conceptualize cultural recognition and social equality so that they support, instead of annihilating, each other. Here, we can see some similarity with Dussel’s (2005) transmodern project: the objective is not to annihilate coloniality (since it is impossible, given the depth of the cultural marks left, also assumed as one of our cultural matrices), but to promote a solidary co-realization with the culture of Latin America valued as such and regarded as a perspective of looking (and listening).

Although the sociologist uses redistribution as an alternative to economic injustice, rooted in the economic-political structure of society<sup>5</sup>, in the curricula, we consider redistribution as the knowledge that has remained inaccessible to a large part of the population:

With regard to redistribution, the curriculum justice proposal could ensure access to specific forms of knowledge for those historically unable to have access to school. It would be a reference of social quality that, instead of corresponding to a stable framework of contents or a fixed list of competences, would enhance differentiated forms of social inclusion and democratization through the expansion of students’ cultural repertoires. It could be read as an important grammar for shared life. (Silva, 2018, p. 16, our translation)

Recognition is thought specifically for cultural injustice, representing some kind of cultural or symbolic change — a decolonial turn, for example. Fraser (2006, p. 232) indicates that it may involve revaluing the disrespected identities and cultural products of defamed groups; recognizing and positively appreciating cultural diversity; and, even more radically, comprehensively changing social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication, in order to transform the sense of self of all people.

As far as curricula are concerned,

Redistribution would need to be linked to the demands of recognition, which, in curricular terms, could be represented by issues related to cultural differences in their political variations. As stated in the last section, debates around a curriculum that is open to, respects, and values cultural differences have been recurrent in the field of educational policy. It would favor the study of differ-

5 Examples include exploitation (being expropriated from the fruit of one’s own work for the benefit of others); economic marginalization (being forced into undesirable and poorly paid work, as well as not having access to paid work); and deprivation (not having access to an adequate material standard of living) (Fraser, 2006, p. 232).

ent inequalities that are still present in our society, the consideration of the multiple forms of discrimination, and the contemporary agenda of rights, or, more importantly, it would help to expand the educational capacity of schools through a reunion with otherness. (Silva, 2018, p. 16, our translation)

Fraser (2006, p. 237) proposes affirmative and transformative “remedies” as actions to fight these injustices. The first is understood as actions aimed at correcting the unequal effects of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying structure that engenders them, whereas the second seeks to correct these unequal effects precisely by reshaping the underlying generative structure.

Affirmative remedies are associated with a type of “mainstream multiculturalism”, which proposes to compensate for disrespect by revaluing unfairly devalued group identities, while leaving intact the contents of these identities and the group differentiations underlying them. In contrast, transformative remedies are associated with deconstruction: they would compensate for disrespect by transforming the underlying cultural-valuational structure. “By destabilizing existing group identities and differentiations, these remedies would not only raise the self-esteem of members of currently disrespected groups; they would transform everyone’s sense of self” (Fraser, 2006, p. 237).

This can be a direction for the decolonial turn (and for the “deconservatory turn”): at the same time that affirmative remedies promote the differentiations of existing groups, transformative ones destabilize such differences in the long run, in order to open space for future regroupings, for solidary co-realizations.

Recognizing, emphasizing, and valuing differences will ultimately inculcate new *habitus* dispositions, which will engender new, more dialogical, analeptic, solidary practices.

## FINAL NOTES

Throughout the text, we can observe how challenging it is to face the crisis of curricula whose design was based on *habitus* dispositions engendered in the coloniality *doxa*. The paper attempted to highlight the visible testimonials of coloniality offered by curriculum documents of higher education music programs through different studies that took it as an object. I, therefore, proposed the understanding of coloniality as “the fire that heats the melting pot”, that is, as the *doxa* that, incorporated in the form of conservatory *habitus* dispositions, ultimately (re) produces effects of domination and colonization of knowledge, excluding other musical practices, and even leading to epistemicides.

Based on this reflection, we can see that the curricula of higher education music programs have often acted as an instrument of colonization of musical *aesthesis*, defining European aesthetic standards as the foundation for a system of quotation of musical value and hence for curriculum selection in music.

First, though, we need to recognize the existence of a crisis and identify, in this crisis, a propitious moment for transformation, for structural reforms that actually reach the essence that organizes the curricular structures in higher education

music programs. The proposal for a “transmodern project”, a “decolonial turn”, a deconservatory turn is — in itself — a possibility for transformation.

As I have argued for some years now, these projects and turns will not be the result of a curricular imposition, but of an individual “reckoning” with our beliefs, values, and practices: of becoming aware of our *habitus*.

As Osho (2016), a controversial Indian philosopher, states:

If you are listening to me, and if you are an educated person, a sage, then you simply cannot hear me directly. You will not be able to hear me. While I am speaking, deep down, you will be judging, evaluating, criticizing — there is no dialogue, there is a debate. You may seem silent, but you are not silent; your knowledge keeps spinning in your head. It destroys everything I am saying, distorting it, and whatever reaches you is not the real thing. What reaches you is just what your knowledge allows to reach you. (Osho, 2016, p. 16, our translation)

Thus, we do not need to deny the knowledge we have, but transcend it, opening ourselves to what is happening or what is going to happen.

Inviting oral knowledge masters to tell us about their art — something that has been done in Knowledge Meeting Projects at some Brazilian universities — and how they understand the art we make is crucial. We need, as Spivak (2014) defends, to abandon the uncomfortable place and the complicity of intellectuals who think they can speak on behalf of others and, thus, build a discourse of resistance. According to Spivak (2014), by acting in this manner, we are reproducing the structures of power and oppression, keeping the subordinate silent, without offering them a position, a space for them to speak, and, especially, for them to be heard. Therefore, the Indian teacher warns of “the danger of intellectuals, who aim merely to speak for the other, constituting the other and the subordinate only as objects of knowledge”. After all, “are voiceless those who act and fight in opposition to those who act and speak” (Spivak, 2014, p. 40)?

How much of the other have we included in our curricula and musical practices in higher education music programs? How much of the dynamics of coloniality have we imposed on our alleged practices in favor of diversity? How can we do it differently?

To answer these questions more consistently, we must transcend documentary analysis and immerse ourselves in the field, observing and listening to the agents who produce history from history, who structure and are structured by this field. Going deeper into everyday practices is a possibility that can be a fruitful development of the research carried out so far.

Starting a decolonial turn, together with a long and slow revolution, requires recognizing the coloniality in our daily actions and thoughts. We must affirm the value of differences, while fighting to transform the structure that differentiates us both economically and culturally. To this end, we do not need to close down conservatories and silence classical music. However, we must recognize the effects of this cultural monopoly and pave the way for other ways of

thinking and organizing the universe of sounds. If we assume Blacking's (2000, p. 10) statement that "music is humanly organized sounds" as the curricular premise for structuring music teaching, then every student, at different levels of education, has the right to study the different properties of sounds, as well as silence. Above all, every student has the right to come into contact with the most diverse ways in which different human groups organize these sounds into music — be they regarded as erudite, previously schooled by the conservatory, or as others that undergo different systematizations, senses, and combinations with distinct social and artistic practices.

The path does not seem easy, but denaturalizing everyday practices seems to be a consensual first step. As Williams (1961) said, the revolution will take a long time. Only time can make us embody new *habitus* dispositions, which (re) structure and are structured by new fields, with a new *doxa* and new *nomos*. The marks of coloniality will not disappear, since they are profound and constitutive of our practices, but we must learn how to coexist with them and build new projects for the future, with them and despite them.

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