

What Should We Teach Future Musicians in the 21st Century?

Regarding the field of music education, there are a lot of articles about *how* we should teach music, but astonishingly nearly no one deals with the question *what* we should teach in a vocational education. On first view the answer seems to be easy. We should teach them everything they need to make a living as musicians. But what will a musician need in the future to meet the increasing requirements?

I cannot make a final decision here but I will try to give some thoughts and considerations that might be helpful answering this question.

Situation

In the 20th century happened two things shaking up the whole music. The first was the appearance of Jazz in the beginning. Its concept of rhythmic organisation and kind of playing without sheet music was new and scandalous then. Nowadays it is a common part of our music culture that had not only an important impact on popular music but became a part of our art music tradition.

The second, even more important change in the 20th century was the development of audio technology. Music today is in nine of ten cases a technologically mediated thing. That means music became in the 20th century from a performing to a recording art that is inseparably connected with the technological process of production. This development gave us an unthinkable amount of music and changed production, perception and our whole concept of music totally and made music – mainly popular music – to an important branch of economy.

The result is, that we have several independent musical categories existing in parallel today: Classical Music, Jazz, Folk Music and Popular Music from Pop and Rock to Hip Hop and Techno.

<i>Genres:</i>	Classic	Jazz	Popular	Folk
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These different musical categories are independent and times are definitely over, when a good musician could play any kind of music. Even an outstanding classical musician is not a Jazz musician and a brilliant Jazz musician is not a Rock or Hip Hop performer or Techno producer. And each and every of these categories or genres is divided in sub-categories like Old Time Jazz, Bebop or Free Jazz or Baroque, Romantic or Dodecaphony and so on. That

means today you can only be good at one genre and be at the top in maybe two or three sub-categories. So a student has to decide for one genre.

Job outlook

If we try to prepare music students for a life as musicians we should first know, how they could make a living from music. There are three main categories of jobs for musicians: regular employment in an orchestra, teaching an instrument or teaching music in schools or working self-employed.

<i>Jobs:</i>	Orchestra	Teaching	Self-employed
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For a classical orchestra employment most music schools offer quite a good education. The problem here is not that the education doesn't prepare the students well for their future job, but that there are too many people. More and more young people graduate from music schools but in the same time the number of professional orchestras is decreasing all over Europe. In Switzerland for example there are every year a few tens of newly graduated flute players but only a handful of orchestras that offers full- or at least part-time positions. Even if they are educated as well as they can be: for ninety-five per cent of them there will be no job. So the focussing on educating classical orchestra musicians is too narrow because most of them will never have a chance to make a living in that field. Of course they can turn to teaching and most of them do. But do they have a proper education for that?

The number of children who want to learn a classical instrument is decreasing. A great many of young people prefer to play jazz or popular music. The demand for that kind of lessons is on the increase. In my opinion it doesn't make sense educating professional rock or pop musicians: a "state-approved" or "graduated" rock-musician seems to be a contradiction in terms. The thrill of rock and pop music is its straightforwardness and its quality depends on categories like originality, individualism and authenticity: things you cannot learn in school. But I'm convinced that contemporary music teachers at least must have a clue about the aesthetics and production facilities of popular music even if they are teaching a classical instrument because one of the common rules in pedagogy is that you can only build on a firm ground. If you want to get young people enthusiastic about music – even classical music – you have to start from where they are, and most of them grew up with popular music.

Most musicians are at least part time self-employed. They play musical instruments, sing, compose, arrange or conduct groups in instrumental or vocal performances. They may perform solo or as part of a group. Although most of these entertainers play for live audiences, some perform exclusively for recording or production studios. Music directors

conduct, direct, plan and lead instrumental or vocal performances by musical groups such as orchestras, choirs and singing clubs. Bandleaders lead instrumental music groups such as dance bands, show bands and various popular ensembles. Choral directors lead choirs and singing clubs, composers create original music such as symphonies, operas, sonatas, radio and television jingles, film scores or popular songs. Arrangers transcribe and adapt musical composition to a particular style for orchestras, bands, choral groups or individuals.

This incomplete listing shows how manifold and large the possibilities are earning one's livelihood by music. But all of these possibilities have one thing in common: regardless of which genre – classical, jazz, popular or folk music – it is not enough to play an instrument better than anybody else. A self-employed musician must have knowledge in music technology. He must at least be able to run a sound system and should have experience with recording studios. (It is astonishing that many violin players improve their tone over years and spend a fortune for master instruments but they have no idea of microphone types and positions, which influence the result of a recording a lot more than many construction details of the instrument.) A composer of classical music can of course still fix his ideas with pen and paper, but if he really wants to be successful, he should know working with music notation software and MIDI equipment. For example looking for financial support for a performance of a work for symphony orchestra is much easier if one can present a printed version and a MIDI recording instead of a handwritten piece of paper.

That leads us to another field in which a musician has to be competent nowadays: business and law. Musicians organise concerts, events, performances, apply for grants, try for sponsors, they draw up and conclude contracts, deal with copyright and publishing agreements. Knowledge in cultural management, fundraising, contract law and copyright is indispensable for a self-employed musician.

Summarising this, we see that a contemporary professional music education should not only cover the genres classical, jazz, popular and folk music but should also provide different subjects like instrumental practice, theory, technology, pedagogy and business and law.

<i>Subjects:</i>	Instrumental Practice	Theory	Technology	Pedagogy	Business & Law
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Up to now I just compiled what a musician needs to know in the 21st century. And now we are confronted with a serious problem: nobody can learn all these things within a reasonable time.

The worst we can do to solve this problem is to teach them a little bit of all. The competition for jobs is very keen in the field of music and only the best will succeed. It seems that we are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. On the one hand there is an endless requirements list for musicians but on the other hand it will take all their time to get on the top in one subject in one genre.

Modular Concept

The only way to escape from that dilemma is a modular education concept. This modular concept is the ideal conception of vocational music training; a music school that provides not a fixed three, four or five year curriculum but a variety of courses in every genre and every subject.

Subject <i>Genre</i>	Instrumental Practice	Theory	Technology	Pedagogy	Business & Law
<i>Classic</i>	Classical orchestra instruments	History, Harmonics, Counterpoint, Aural training, Aesthetics, Composition, Orchestration Conducting, Research ...	Recording, Software application, Research...	Classical pedagogy ...	Preparing for auditions and competitions, Fundraising...
<i>Jazz</i>	Jazz instruments (Trumpet, Saxophone, Piano, Keyboards, Electric guitar, Double bass, Bass guitar Drums...)	History, Harmonics, Scale theory, Aural training, Aesthetics, Arranging, Composition, Research ...	Recording technology, Software application, Amplifying equipment, Research...	Jazz pedagogy ...	Cultural management, Fundraising...
<i>Popular</i>	...	History, Aesthetics...	Sampling, Sequencing, Multitrack recording...	Popular music pedagogy ...	Business administration...
<i>Folk</i>	National and international folk music instruments...	History, Aesthetics, Research...		Folk music pedagogy

The students choose themselves which courses, tutorials or workshops they attend. That gives them the possibility of becoming specialists in the field they are interested in. So they can

place the main emphasis of their education on those fields of activity where they want to work afterwards.

Today we train too much students as classical orchestra musicians. A great deal of them doesn't attend these classes because they really want to be orchestra musicians but simply because they have no other choice. If they want to graduate in music, they have to attend a school for classical music. I don't say anything against that kind of education – for those who really want to be classical musicians its great and they still have the possibility to concentrate on classical instrumental practice and theory. But for the others it doesn't make sense.

I will give you an example: Someone is interested in film music and knows that composing film scores and TV jingles is exactly what he wants to do. So he can compile an individual training program that supplies his needs and gives him the competence to succeed in that field. He will lay stress on – depending of his personal preference classical or jazz – keyboard practice and on technology. A film score composer doesn't have to be a great pianist but he must be able to work with synthesizers, samplers and sequencers and software like Pro Tools, Logic Audio or Final Cut. He doesn't need to be a master in counterpoint or harmonics but he should attend some classes in composition, arranging and orchestration and have some knowledge in copyright.

Another example are music teachers for primary and secondary school: they are the only ones that need to be generalists. They don't need to be very good in one genre or subject – except in pedagogy –, but they need a basic knowledge of classical, jazz, pop and folk music history, they should be able to conduct a small orchestra and lead a choir or a jazz band, run a sound system and print out sheet music on a computer and so on. However, they avail themselves of the wide range of courses and are better prepared for their jobs in the end.

The thrill of a modular system is, that the students have the choice to learn exactly what they want and what they need to make a living.

Result

The result of the modular concept is positive in many respects:

1. A school with a modular concept has highly motivated students, because they can study exactly what they want and what they need. This will raise the level of the school because every course will be disburdened from those who only attend it because it is part of the curriculum.

2. A modular concept education produces gainfully employed musicians, because the students are prepared for the labour market. They are first-rate specialist in their own fields.
3. A school with a modular concept contributes to a flourishing musical life because it educates musicians on a high level in every genre. And that will improve the whole musical life.
4. Last but not least: This kind of education is in accordance with the Bologna process and the ECTS credit point system. (For those who don't know that system: ECTS, European Credit Transfer System, was developed by the Commission of the European Communities in order to provide common procedures to guarantee academic recognition of studies abroad. It provides a way of measuring and comparing learning achievements and transferring them from one institution to another. This is achieved through the use of a common ECTS credit unit and a common ECTS grading scale.)

Problems

Of course there are many problems related to the idea of a modular concept. Covering all subjects and genres requires an uncountable number of courses. No music school is able to provide all of that. However this is not an unsolvable problem. Of course every school has to limit on some genres and some subjects but it has to keep in mind the others. For example most schools cannot afford a whole Business & Law department but they may at least offer some courses in that field. Another problem is the fact that a modular concept makes new demands on teachers. They have to customise their lessons to the varying background of every student. Nevertheless, if they recognise this as an enthralling challenge and not as a troublesome duty they will benefit from that system too because it prevents them from fossilising.

However, in my opinion the advantages of a modular education concept prevail over practical difficulties and I think it is the best way, to prepare students for a life as musicians.