The Contemporary Jazz Composer: The Importance of the Conception of the Source Material in the Compositional Process

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Advisor: Ph. D. Ricardo Futre Pinheiro

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1. Abstract

This study is focused on the compositional process of current jazz composers, more specifically on the starting idea and the conception of the basic material for a new composition, or as Ed Neumeister named it when describing his compositional process, “the source material”.

The aim of the exploratory study is to attempt to find an initial approach to a comprehensive way of understanding how jazz composers deal with the creative process in the first stage of composition. For this purpose, a qualitative research was performed interviewing 6 Portuguese jazz composers with a distinguished career. Taking the above into account, the ultimate objective of this project was to try to develop a variety of compositional methods that can help dealing with the creative aspects of the starting point of a new composition.

The results allowed to design a map that can be applied as a composers’ guideline to approach the compositional process, at the same time as for the analysis of the creative process of the first stage of composing music. Finally, the above-mentioned map was used to analyze one original piece regarding the compositional process during the conception of the source material.

Keywords: Compositional Process, Contemporary Jazz Composition, Creativity, Improvisation

2. Resumo

Este estudo tem como foco o processo compositivo de compositores de jazz da atualidade, mais especificamente no que respeita à ideia inicial e conceção do material base para novas composições, ou como Ed Neumeister nomeou aquando descreveu o seu processo compositivo, "o material de origem"[1].

O objetivo do estudo exploratório diz respeito a uma tentativa de encontrar uma abordagem inicial para um esclarecimento acerca de como os compositores de jazz lidam com o processo criativo na primeira fase de composição. Neste sentido, foi efetuada uma pesquisa qualitativa, com 6 entrevistas a compositores de jazz portugueses com carreiras distintas. Tendo em conta o exposto acima, o objetivo final deste projeto seria tentar desenvolver uma variedade de métodos composicionais que poderiam servir de auxílio no processo inicial de criação de uma nova composição.

Os resultados permitiram a projeção de um mapa que pode ser aplicado enquanto orientação de compositores para abordar o processo composicional, ao mesmo tempo que para a análise do processo criativo da primeira etapa de composição. Por último, o mapa mencionado acima foi utilizado para analisar uma peça original tendo em conta o processo de composição durante a conceção do material base.

Palavras chave: Processo Composicional, Composição de Jazz Contemporâneo, Criatividade, Improvisação.

[1] Original term in english: “Source Material”

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5. Acronyms

CB: Carlos Bica

ML: Mário Laginha

CA: Carlos Azevedo

AF: André Fernandes

PMA: Pedro Melo Alves

JB: João Barradas

6. Introduction

This project emerged as a continuation of the last research study I conducted: *Understanding Jazz Composers' Current Reality*, wherein I analyzed the most relevant concerns of jazz composers of today. Among them, the initial stage of the compositional process stood out as one of the most conflicting aspects.

Therefore, the focus of this study is the compositional process of the contemporary jazz composers, more specifically on the starting idea and the conception of the basic material for a new composition, or as Ed Neumeister named it when describing his compositional process: "the source material"[2].

The aim of this exploratory project is to attempt to find an initial approach to a comprehensive way of understanding how jazz composers deal with the creative process in the first stage of composition. This matter is of significant importance and it is not as thoroughly studied as the elements involved in the next stages of the compositional process, such as harmony, counterpoint, motive development, scales and orchestration.

Considering that the main matter of this research is the initial stage of the compositional process; it is unavoidable to address the issue of the psychology of creativity. Nevertheless, being this an extensive subject, it will be approached in a delimited way, focusing on the creative process regarding music composition.

Taking the above into account, the ultimate objective of this project is to try to develop a variety of compositional methods that can help dealing with the creative aspect of the starting point of a new composition. For this purpose, a qualitative analysis of a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted. The sample consists of 6 Portuguese jazz composers with a distinguished career, who comprise three generations: Carlos Bica, Carlos Azevedo, Mario Laginha, André Fernandes, Pedro Melo Alves and João Barradas.

[2] This Concept was mentioned during an interview performed in 2018 in the context of a previous research study called Contemporary Jazz: Understanding Jazz Composers' Current Reality.

Finally, the results of the study were used to analyze – in terms of the compositional process and the methods to approach the creation of new music – one original composition included in the repertoire written during the Master's Degree in Jazz Performance at the Escola Superior de Música de Lisboa.

7. Literature review

Considering that this research has its focus on the initial stage of the compositional process of contemporary jazz composition, in this section I will review the most relevant literature regarding contemporary jazz composition, improvisation, creative process, compositional process and inspiration.

7.1. Defining Jazz: Between composition, improvisation and performance

In the first place, it is important to look for a possible definition of jazz and the implications of composition and improvisation nowadays. It is evident that there is an agreement about improvisation as a crucial aspect for a definition of jazz. The first definition of jazz was "collective improvisation" (Finkelstein, 1948). Following this line of thought, Gioia (1990), Pressing (2003) and Elliott (1995) all agree that improvisation is the center of jazz. Nevertheless, interpretation and performance of pre-composed material, including composition, are required for jazz improvisation (Elliott, 1995).

Reinforcing this argument, Collier (2009) stated that normally, in jazz, the starting point is a complete object which can be considered a composition that exists before improvisation, interpretation and performance. But he also highlights that jazz is based on improvisation and performance and not on written or pre-planned music.

On the other hand, in view of recent developments what is considering to be jazz "may shift more and more to composition" (Zenni, 2012, p. 1). Currently, most jazz musicians perform their own compositions. This leads us to consider that jazz is a hybrid form of art, between popular art – performance and improvisation predominance – and high art – composed and written music predominance (Piazza, 2005).

Taking the above into account, jazz may be outlined by the relationship between composition and improvisation; and there are many authors who approach this relationship. Very commonly researchers compare both processes considering that improvisation may be a type of composition. However, both concepts may be regarded as opposites – "the one spontaneous, the other calculated; the one primitive, the other sophisticated; the one natural, the other artificial" (Nettl, 1974, p. 4). On the same premise, the account by Rose and McDonald on chapter 8 of *The Act of Musical Composition* (Collins, 2013), mentions that typically improvisation and composition are confronted as opposites, but takes into consideration that "[…] such separation seems to be acculturated rather than pragmatic" (p. 188).

There are also considerations about their pragmatic aspect, where improvisation forces the improviser to accept the first solution that comes to hand while the composer can "reject possible solutions until he finds one which seems to be the best for his purposes" (Lehmann, Sloboda, & Woody, 2007). Following this line of thought, Impett defines composition as "a reflexive, iterative process of inscription" (Hallam, Cross, & Thaut, 2015, p. 661).

Finally, regarding a compositional approach to improvisation, Harvey stated that "the process of improvisation can help the composers to transform what is initially a rather vague musical idea into a more definite theme" (Harvey & Downes, 1999, p. 28).

There are also many other attempts to define improvisation and composition regarding musical education, which will not be reviewed considering that education is not the subject of this research.

7.2. Distinguishing Creativity and Inspiration

To be able to get into the initial phase of the compositional process it is necessary to understand how creativity and inspiration may be interpreted and how the creative process works. Defining creativity seems to be a difficult task because what is called creativity is different according to the historical and cultural period (Sawyer, 2006). Despite this fact, it is possible to find two aspects of a definition that imply a consensus among the researchers and that are pertinent for the study of the compositional process.

The first standpoint is about the process and the opinion that creativity is the consequence of systematic work. “Creativity is a habit” and creative people regularly approach to problems in novel ways (Sternberg, 1999, p. 3). As Sawyer (2013) said, “creativity [comes] in tiny steps, bits of insight, and incremental changes” (p. 2). It “is almost never the result of a sudden insight […] but comes after years of work” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 1).

The second aspect of the definition of creativity is that it is a process that happens within a context. “Creativity is conceived as a transformation process of prior knowledge to build something new” and it may be “better thought of as the entire system by which processes operate on structures to produce outcomes that are novel but nevertheless rooted in existing knowledge” (Ward, 2001, p. 18). This conception leads us to define creativity as the result of the interaction of multiple sources (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). As Csikszentmihalyi mentioned, there are three elements that interact in the process of creativity: domain, field and person. Domain is nested in the culture. It is “the symbolic knowledge shared by a particular society or by humanity as a whole”. The field “includes all the individuals who act as gatekeepers of a domain” and validate what is novel and worth to be included into the domain. And finally, the person. “Creativity occurs when a person, using the symbols of a domain […] has a new idea or sees a new pattern, and when this novelty is selected by the appropriate field for inclusion into the relevant domain” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 28).

Regarding these two aspects of the definition of creativity it is possible to understand that, even if it is usually confused with inspiration, there exists a set of fundamental differences. Considering the common misinterpretation on the difference between creativity and inspiration it is worth to look for a possible definition of inspiration.

As Harvey (Deliège & Wiggins, 2006) denoted, “creativity refers to a complex process involving inspiration” (p. 397). Thus, inspiration is different than creativity but related to its process. Harvey defined inspiration as “that which causes, provokes, forces the artist to create – the catalyst of the creative process” (p. ix). But it is important to clarify that this definition is not complete because it excludes the element of mystery, which is essential to a meaningful definition of inspiration.

The element of mystery is directly related with the non-conscious thought and for many musicians, it is difficult to describe but easy to identify (Harvey & Downes, 1999). Inspiration does not arise disconnected from the outside world. On the contrary, as Harvey

stated, inspiration is an external force that works as a source of the internal process – which t is creativity – and most of the times it arises as the result of careful preparation (Deliège & Wiggins, 2006). In conclusion, inspiration is directly related to the creative process, which implies stages influenced by the conscious and non-conscious thoughts and includes moments of insights. Therefore, to be able to focus on the first phase of the compositional process it is imperative to take into account how the creative process functions through the stages that characterize it. For that reason, the review will be concluded by examining the different theories that explain the creative process and describing its different phases.

7.3. Creative Process

The creative process has been thoroughly studied by cognitive psychology and it is directly related to the compositional process in music. The theories of how this process works are generally explained in stages of thought that go from the initial ideas to the final results in the process of creating something new. Furthermore, the process normally includes different ways and approaches that a person can apply to go through it.

To begin the review of the literature in this matter, the stages presented by Graham Wallas (Wallas, 1926) are taken as the basic theoretical framework, considering that the theories that came after seem to be based on this one.

In *The art of thought*, Wallas presents a four-stage process: Preparation, Incubation, Illumination and Verification. The first one is the stage during which the problem is thoroughly investigated; it is a stage of "hard, conscious, systematic, and fruitless analysis of the problem" (P. 53). Incubation is the stage during which there is no conscious thinking about the problem. The third stage, Illumination, consists of "the appearance of the 'happy idea' together with the psychological events which immediately preceded and accompanied that appearance." Finally, Verification is the stage in which the validity of the idea is tested, and the idea itself is reduced to exact form.

One of the most important studies about creativity is presented in the book *Creativity* by Csikszentmihalyi (1996), in which he introduces, among other concepts (such as the *Flow* theory), a four-stage creative process: Preparation, Incubation, Insight, Evaluation and

Elaboration. As we can observe, the first two stages are the same as Wallas' theory. Thereafter, Insight can be related to Illumination, where "unexpected connections" begin to appear, and finally, Evaluation and Elaboration can be related to Verification. Additionally, Csikszentmihalyi analyses the environments that influence these stages and explains that in the Preparation stage, "when one is gathering the elements out of which the problem is going to emerge, an ordered, familiar environment is indicated […], without the distractions of everyday life." At the second stage, "the distraction of a novel stimuli, of magnificent views, of alien culture, allows the subconscious mental process to make connections that are unlikely when the problem is pursued by the linear logic learned from experience" (p. 145). At the moment of Insight, "the familiar environment is again more conductive for completing the process. Finally, evaluation and elaboration proceed more efficiently in a sober atmosphere where the logic of the domain prevails" (p. 146).

In the book *Music and Inspiration,* Harvey (1999) presents a similar creative process when he states that "greatest inspirations [same as Illumination] have been preceded by period of gestation or preparation" (p. 15) [similar to Incubation and preparation]. Furthermore, Harvey makes a division of two categories of approaching the preparation for the non-conscious inspiration stage. "The first consists of conscious activity, deliberately undertaken by the composer in an attempt to stimulate the unconscious." And the second is described as the "activity that is not consciously related to any compositional purpose (p. 15)". On this line of thought, it is possible to consider that preparation includes the first two Csikszentmihalyi's stages: Preparation (conscious) and Incubation (non-conscious).

Sloboda (2005), makes a distinction between the "basic idea" and the "note-by-note working out" regarding the cognitive process of composition. The basic idea "is present in the mind over a longer time span" and it is the result of the non-conscious thinking; the other is "subject of repeated experiment". In addition, Sloboda divides the composition process in two stages regarding consciousness: "inspiration […], where the skeletal idea or theme appears in consciousness; the second called execution, where the idea is subject to a series of more conscious and deliberate process of extension and transformation" (p. 116).

In *Psychology for Musicians* (Lehmann *et al*., 2007), a model of the compositional process that includes trial-and-error is presented. The stages that they propose are Preparation, Incubation or Gestation, Illumination, Elaboration and Verification. The only difference with

the Wallas' model is the inclusion of an elaboration phase where the trial-and-error activity is comprised.

In the book *From Beethoven to Shostakovich* (Leichtentritt & Graf, 1948), Graf divides the creative process in four moments – with consciousness as the conductive thread – where the composition process is the last and includes four types of activities. Consequently, four more stages are incorporated in the whole process. Even if the conscious and non-conscious thought are the basis of this creative process model, this theory could not be directly related to Wallas' because it includes more stages and they are associated to different moments during the process. The first moment is the condition that precedes the whole activity of the "artistic creation" and it is called Productive Mood. It is the moment in which "everything that had accumulated in the subconscious" starts to pass towards the consciousness. "The productive mood indicates to the composer that the door leading from the unconscious to consciousness – which is usually well guarded – is to be open" (p. 279). The second stage is the Musical Conception, where the musical ideas begin to be retained in the conscious mind enabling the conscious thinking to progressively accompany the composing process. The third stage starts with the "beginning of the critical work," resulting in the creation of first sketches. The intellectual functions of critique, reflection and conscious forming allow the organization of the musical ideas. Lastly, the fourth stage is the Compositional Process, when "actual composition work is accomplished in a regulated coordination of unconscious forming and critical thinking, of inspiration and work." This stage comprises four activities: condensing and simplifying the sketched material; expanding the ideas and forms; elaborating and intensifying every detail; and revising.

Wiggins (2006) explains that "as initial musical ideas are generated, they are immediately contextualized, which includes repetition, development, revision and refinement" (p. 459). In addition to these four phases of the development of a composition, the author includes an element that is not present in the other theories. The existence of a "preconceived image" from where the composer accepts or rejects ideas during the process.

8. Research framework

The aim of this research project is to develop a series of methods that may be applied during the first stage of the compositional process, which is a very important part of the creativity aspect in music and is not thoroughly studied in terms of its direct application in the practice of musical composition. According to the creativity theory reviewed before, it is possible to consider that the conception of the first material – that will work as the basic ideas for the development of a new composition – is developed following a preparation stage, then, an assimilation of the influences period that will affect the emergence of ideas and finally a period of execution of the initial ideas that may be called source material.

The framework of this study was oriented by the following research question: How do contemporary jazz composers approach the initial stage of the compositional process? Consequently, by posing this question, other questions arise extending the first one and covering more specific aspects. Namely, would it be possible to recognize common patterns of action between different composers? What kind of habits do composers have to stimulate their creativity at the beginning of a new composition? Would the success of the first stage of composition be the result of systematic work or could inspiration be a necessary factor to succeed? How do composers create their sketches before starting the following writing stages of development of a composition? Which are the external influences that may condition the first stage of the creative process? Would it be possible to develop different methods that help to approach the starting point of the compositional process? What is the influence of composers' jazz background and improvisation in the compositional process?

In order to find possible answers for the research questions and to achieve the goals of the research study, it was crucial to collect and analyze – in a formal, objective and systematic way – qualitative data concerning the compositional process of the current jazz composers.

9. Methodology

The collected data was directly related to the research questions mentioned above enabling comparison across participants statements (Crotty, 1998). For this purpose, semi-structured interviews that allowed to analyze the first stage of the compositional process of current jazz composers were conducted.

A phenomenological approach was applied by considering the individual experiences looking for a description of universal concepts (Creswell, 2007). The implementation of this research method has allowed to contextualize and explain impressions that could apply to most contemporary jazz composers and create a groundwork for further research, including the possibility of extending the territory to other European countries and North and South America, where jazz composition is substantially developed. It should be taken into account that the task of understanding experiences and explaining circumstances has to be complex considering the relationships and interactions between different elements presented by the participant's statements (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The semi-structured interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were conducted based on an interview protocol. This guideline was followed in the same way with each participant and with open-ended questions they were allowed to develop their personal perspective about their compositional process. Furthermore, with more focalized questions, the interviewer could collect specific data that has made it possible to understand, in a general way, the issues that concern this study.

The interviews, performed from July to August 2018, were conducted in person - except one by video conference - and were recorded in high-quality audio and video format. To avoid any ethical implications the participants were informed that the interview was being recorded.

The participants were all experienced and recognized Portuguese contemporary jazz composers aged between 27 and 61. This sampling choice allows us to assert that the generalized contemporary jazz composer is represented by the sample. The number and nationality of the participants were limited to 6 Portuguese jazz composers due to the time and logistic restrictions implied in this study. The participants were: Carlos Bica (CB), Carlos Azevedo (CA), Mário Laginha (ML), André Fernandes (AF), João Barradas (JB) and Pedro Melo Alves (PMA).

The interviews were transcribed following a regular and simple method by selecting the relevant data and allowing further analysis to be possible and focused in the research questions. The transcription process followed the following criteria:

- The final transcription was presented in standard language considering that the dialects and informal contractions were adapted.

- The sentence structure was maintained despite possible syntactic errors.
- If direct speech was quoted in a recording, the quote was written with quotation marks.

Once the interviews were finished and transcribed, a template approach (Robson, 2002) was applied for the analysis of the data. The collected data was organized, commented and labelled into key codes that represent the different issues concerning this research project, thus permitting further interpretation and exploratory accounts. The predefined categories are presented below:

- Creativity and inspiration;
- The initial idea and source material (first stage of the compositional process);
- Compositional process;
- Implications of the jazz background and improvisation in the compositional process.

Further ahead, the already organized data was linked by comparing the statements of the participants. For this purpose, after giving the codes, some comments and annotations (memos) were made, which allowed finding relationships, similarities and differences. With this organized information, it was possible to set logical generalizations that were used to formalize the results and develop a system of features that influence the whole process of the conception of the source material.

Finally, the conceptual and practical elements involved in the initial stage of composition were represented by symbols that were included into a map that could work as a guide-line for composers to approach the conception of the source material. In addition, said map was applied to analyze one original composition included in the repertoire produced within the framework of the artistic project which was developed during the course of the Master's Degree in Music.

10. Analysis

As previously mentioned, the analysis was executed according to a template approach with predefined categories. These categories were defined as a result of the study of the existing literature and the research questions. The codes of analysis, derived from the predefined categories, include the most relevant aspects implied in the jazz composers' reality, which surrounds them during the process of working on the first ideas for a new composition. The categories allowed to progressively elaborate a set of generalizations that covers similarities among the participants' statements obtained from the interviews. Finally, by making links among the generalizations, it was possible to develop a theoretical framework that supported the constitution of a series of potential methods and guidelines to approach the first stage of the compositional process.

Although the sum of the categories below constitutes a unique subjective experience where they interact simultaneously during the whole process of composition, the division between categories was necessary for the analysis of the data and the extensive study of the subjects of research.

The five principal categories (Figure 1) were defined as the mainstay aspects that influence the internal and external circumstances of the current jazz composers during the first stage of the compositional process:

1. Creativity
2. Inspiration
3. The initial idea and source material
4. Compositional process
5. Implications of improvisation and jazz background in the compositional process

Even if these aspects work simultaneously, it is possible to conceive a progressive order that helps to develop a comprehensive understanding of the complex experience of music composition. Following the presented order of categories, it is plausible to consider that, as

a result of the psychological aspects of creativity and inspiration (1-2), the first idea for a new composition arises establishing the source material (3) that will be elaborated during the compositional process (4). Furthermore, the whole process may be influenced by the implications of improvisation (5) considering that it is an intrinsic element of jazz style. Additionally, inspiration may appear in different moments of the compositional process influencing any of the other aspects. The presented succession of compositional aspects can appear cyclically during the whole process of composition from the first impulse of creating a new composition to the finished piece.

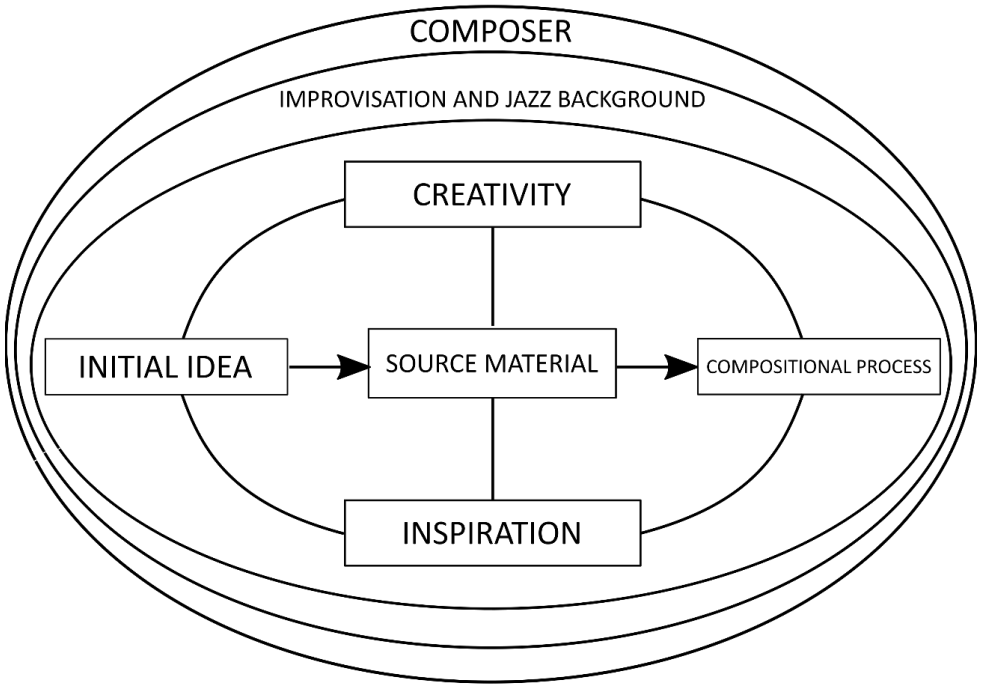


Figure 1. The cycle of elements involved during the process of musical creation.

From each main category, it was possible to establish sub-codes that allowed to address more specific aspects and focus on more comprehensible and simple concepts. Some of these sub-codes were defined before the analysis, and new codes emerged during the study of the collected data.

In regard to Creativity in music composition, many factors affect its development. Among them, there were a few that stood out in terms of importance for this study (Figure 2).

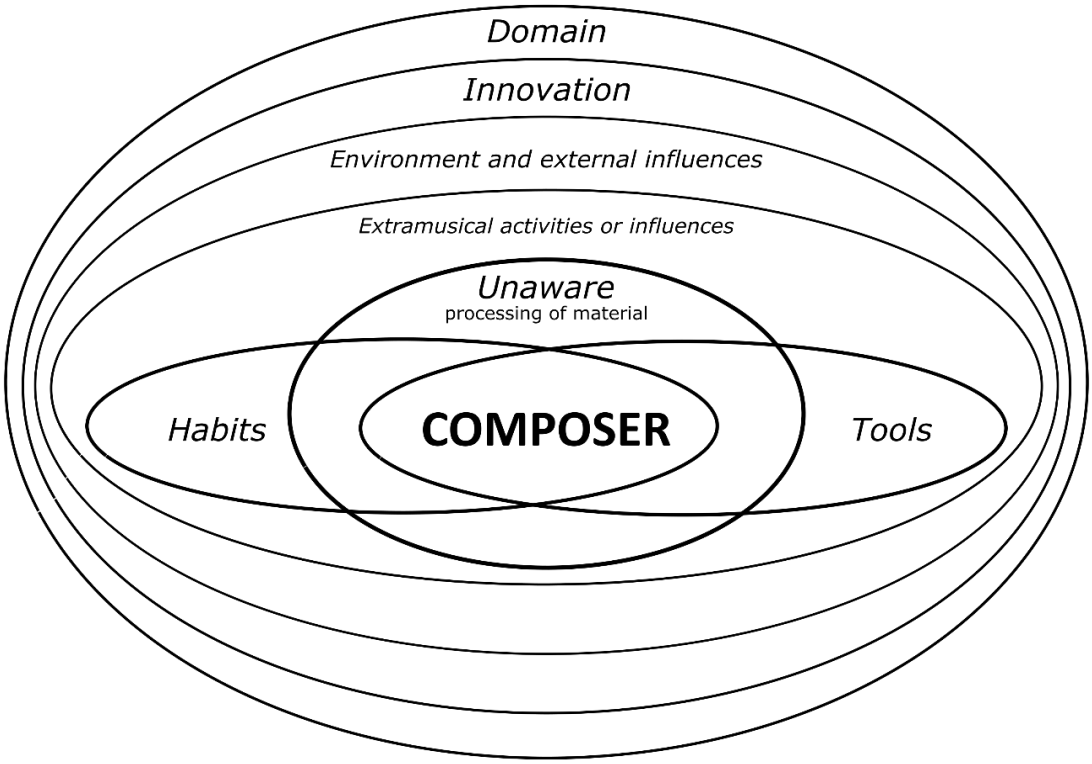


Figure 2. The composers' reality representation during the compositional process.

The Domain: Represents in what ways composers deal with the existing knowledge about music composition. It may refer to the music that was made before – by other composers and also by the actual composer – and to the music theory.

Innovation: Includes participants considerations about the possibility of doing something new into the domain.

The environment and external influences: External influences that affect the way composers feel, think and act during the compositional process.

Unaware processing of the material: the instances when composers indirectly solve compositional problems without being conscious of it.

Habits: Patterns of action that composers have during the creative process and which may influence the result.

Extramusical activities or influences: Non-musical elements that may affect how composers deal with musical creation.

The tools: What composers need to succeed in the process of composing new music.

The Inspiration code includes the statements about a positive state of mind or spirit – being inspired – or an unexpected element that comes from the outside and helps to complete the composition successfully.

The Initial Idea and Source Material code consist of the aspects regarding the first stage of the compositional process, and it comprises the subsequent sub-codes:

Goals and Expectations: Objectives that composers may have for the new composition.

Problem-Solving: The activity during the first stage of the compositional process can be understood as problem-solution procedures.

Selection of Material: How composers found the material that will take part in the composition, how they discard the useless material and what they do with it.

Sketches: Different ways that composers register the source material for a new composition.

The Compositional Process code includes activities and features involved in the elaboration of the musical material during composition. Although the compositional process is positioned after the initial idea and source material in the cycle presented above, its features may also be involved in the initial stage of the compositional process. This category comprises the aspects that are directly related to the elaboration of the source material represented by the following sub-codes:

Trial and Error: Activity by which composers explore different possibilities for a specific musical situation until the best solution is found.

Techniques: Any systematic procedure that composers apply to achieve their goals in composition.

To conclude the description of the analysis codes, the implications of improvisation and jazz background can have a direct impact on the way jazz composers deal with the act of composition during the whole process.

In Figure 3 the full template of codes that were used for the analysis of the collected data is presented. It is possible to observe – represented by the arrows – that the elements that intervene in the compositional process are related in various ways influencing each other.

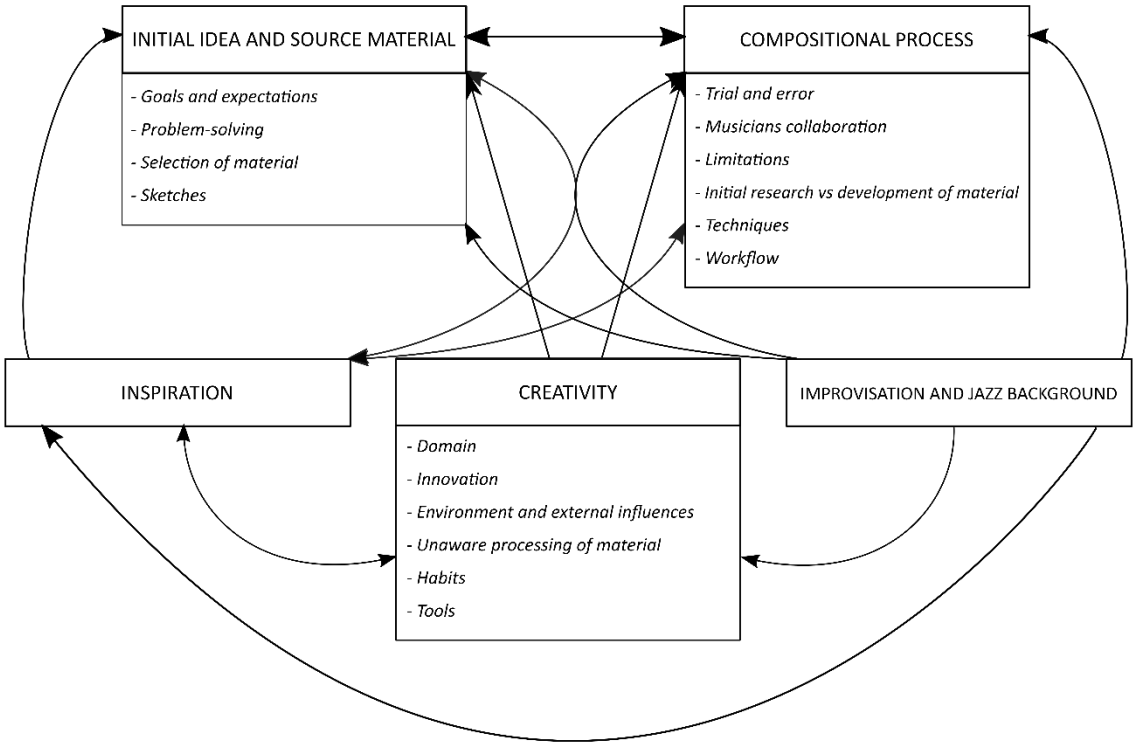


Figure 3. Full codes template used for the analysis of the collected data.

Lastly, during the analysis, recurrent terms used by the composers stood out. In consequence, they were used as an additional category of analysis representing other aspects that delimit the act of composition. Namely: Judgment, Confidence and Honesty.

11. Results

Following the template approach explained before, the analysis was developed through the comparison of the participants' statements and led to finding generalities that apply to most contemporary jazz composers. In this section, the analysis' development is presented code by code.

11.1. Creativity

As presented in Figure 3, creativity can be divided into categories that will benefit the analysis of the data without neglecting that the aspects represented by sub-codes function simultaneously during the compositional process. Among the sub-codes of creativity in the compositional process we can name: Domain, Innovation, Environment and External Influences, Habits, Unaware Processing of Material and Tools.

Domain

As mentioned before, domain is the aspect of creativity that represents the body of knowledge that exists in composition. It can be music theory, composition techniques learnt from formal education, the experience as a listener, and all the music made before and accepted by the experts and professionals of the field. The analysis showed that the domain has three dimensions of great importance for the creative process of composers: the domain developed in the past; the present domain and memory.

The past domain is directly related to the study of music, which mainly includes the music already accepted as masterpieces and musical education. It is the background that supports the new music made by composers, as AF said, "You already have your musical culture, your musical history, your academic history, your studies and your experience. After that, you must let it do its job." Following this line of thought, it is possible to consider that a composer, to be able to compose new music, has to internalize the existing knowledge. CA explained how he needed to go through a long period of time that can be considered as a period of

assimilating knowledge, during which he had the necessity of "forgetting" what he had learnt at university. The fact of forgetting represents the internalization of the studies: "When I finished the composition degree, I couldn't write anything for two years. I had too much information in my head and I felt like I had to forget everything I knew to start writing music that was mine."

On the other hand, the study of the domain can be a conscious practice that composers engage in order to learn solutions applied by masters of composition. JB explained that he analyses "pieces from other better composers that know more about music and learn solutions that [he] wouldn't find by [himself]." In a similar approach, ML explained that he learnt composition by "analyzing pieces [he] liked. [He] used to buy the scores, listened to the recordings and looked at the score […]."

Furthermore, PMA thinks about the past domain as something that can limit creativity, conditioning his music writing:

> When the moment I have to write comes, I usually try for it to be as genuine as possible in order to have a clear mind, I mean, I will not be composing with theoretical, aesthetical or historical models as the main base because I know that something like that happens easily.

He considers that the study of composition is essential, but at the moment of writing, he makes a conscious effort trying not to be directly influenced by "certainties" that probably would close possibilities in terms of solving musical events during the composition process.

Alternatively, CB has a different approach by which he considers that the lack of theoretical knowledge about composition may be a crucial factor for his "authenticity" as a composer: "I know I can learn a lot, and then, even use the material that I learnt. At the same time, I know that my music is the result of a lack of knowledge. During the creative process, there are things that arise as the result of the *less-knowledge*". Concerning this statement, it is essential to recognize that the study of the past domain can occur through other means than formal education, but it is still present. In this case, the domain is studied by practical experience and CB may be referring to a similar approach of PMA of not being conditioned by prior knowledge but in a non-conscious or non-active way.

The present dimension of the domain is represented by the music done currently that may influence the composer. All the participants are attentive to the music that colleagues are making. PMA considers that the more he listens to new music, more material arises.

According to PMA: “I feel that the more I am listening to new music, in live performances or recordings, more material I have.” Regarding the present domain, in terms of creating new music, being up to date with current music seems to be a significant factor in the compositional process.

An element that is necessarily active regarding the past and present domain, is memory. The composers have a memory, which is not entirely conscious, of the music that they listened to before and the music that impressed them in different ways, and those impressions can influence the ideas that arise at the moment of creating new music.

Regarding this aspect, ML explained: “You must have memory. What you have in your head is your memory and if it is rich, it will always provide support. You have archived everything you saw and listened to… Those chords, those sounds.”

Memory also works with the composers’ own material and it may be called preexisting source material. AF’s statement illustrates this aspect of the domain:

> [The place from the material for new compositions comes] is probably a mix of many things. The things that emerged in your mind are related with your own experience as a listener and things that impressed you in a specific way […], the music which you grew up with, which you were exposed to and which affected you. I think that you don’t remember it that way but the sonority and the search for that kind of sensations turn out to be almost instinctive.

This kind of memory is present in the mind of composers in a way that sometimes makes them wonder if the ideas that they have are really theirs. This is evident when JB asks himself about musical ideas:

> Where do I know this from? Why do I like this motif? Would it be that it is saved in my memory and suddenly I am using it as it was mine? Or is it similar to something that I already know and I ended up reinventing it in my mind?

CB also has this kind of considerations:

> Sometimes I start singing music, or playing anything on the piano …wait! Does this already exist? Sometimes with certain musical ideas, I doubt if I was the one who wrote it or if it was a colleague of mine. Because it makes part of the common musical universe [domain].

Innovation

Innovating implies changing the domain in some way, adding novelty and being recognized by the field. Innovation from the point of view of composers during the creative process has two implications. On the one hand, the composer deals with his own former material and the fact that he could repeat himself. On the other hand, the composer is placed in a situation where he may try not to compose music that is exactly the same as music that was done before by other composers.

Even if it seems to be a very relevant concern for composers, it was possible to observe that they do not aspire to innovate, and they avoid that kind of thinking when they are composing. ML thinks that innovating is very difficult, and he does not have that aspiration. He "makes music without thinking about doing something that no one else did before." JB simply does not think about that and PMA tries to compose from a "pure place where [he] is not creating based on anything" which implies that he "tries not to think about the impact" that the new composition may have in the domain. Reinforcing this perspective, CA considers that if a composer thinks a lot about innovating, he would not be able to do anything. He asserts: "if you think that you have an original idea at a certain moment, you certainly do not because someone already has had it."

The fact that composers try not to think about innovating when working in new music does not mean that they do not care about it. Latterly, it is the field who will decide if the music is innovative or not. AF exemplifies this idea: "when it is something natural when you write something, and someone considers it as something new or especially different, it is fantastic." And PMA reinforces this statement when he affirms: "[innovation] is something that I value a lot in music by another artist and I am definitely looking for something similar to that. If it ever happens, it does not concern me".

Regarding the possibility of repeating their own material, the interviewed composers generally consider that it is an inherent element in the musical identity, and it is the way a composer can be distinguished from the others.

Environment and external influences

During the composition period, composers may be influenced by various factors that come from their surroundings. During the analysis it was possible to conceive a scheme where the composer is inside his working space and has to deal with external factors (Figure 4). Four aspects in regard to the external influences stood out. The first factor is the working place where it seems to be defined by the possibility of isolation more than material conditions. The second one is isolation, which was mentioned as very important for a successful compositional process. Finally, the environment and the opinions of other people can be something that influences how composers deal with the act of composition.

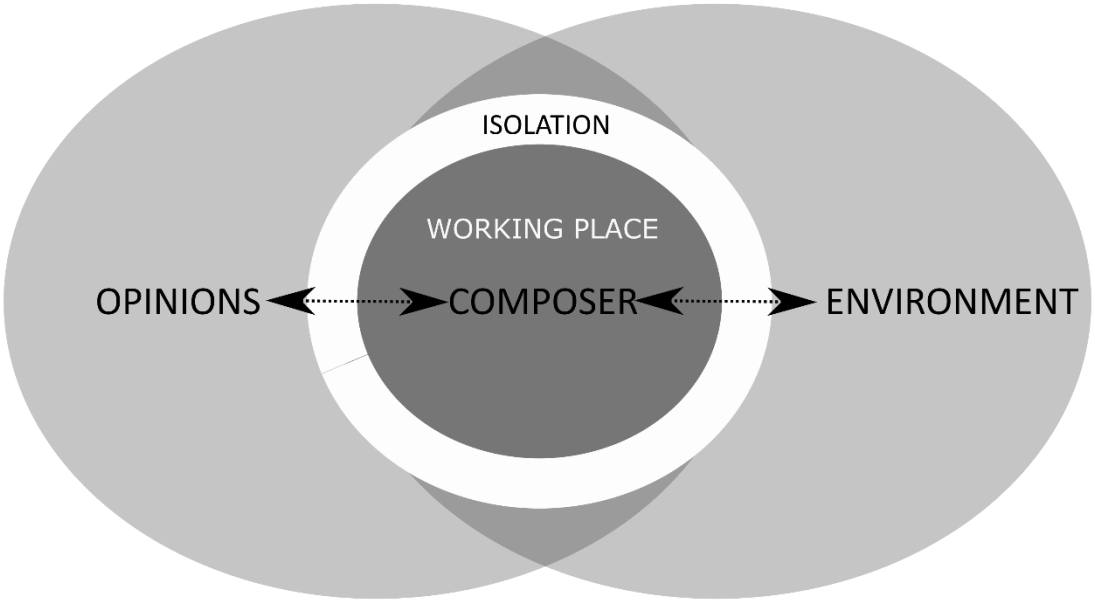


Figure 4. Environment and external influences scheme.

Regarding the working place, composers clarified that the place where they work can change and that many times they have to work in different places. ML said that even if he has a "special place" for working, he does not need it. He explained: "So many times I was somewhere and I needed a place to study and there I had an idea and I started composing. It could be a place without natural light but the idea came with the same joy." Accordingly, CA mentioned the difference between the ideal place and the real place. He said that he would like to have a "big nice place with natural light, birds and nature", but as he does not have it, just natural light is good enough for him.

All participants mentioned their preference for isolated places to work in composition. AF said that he has to isolate himself as much as possible in a closed place during the compositional process. Accordingly, CB mentioned that when he has to work intensively it is better to be "far from other things". ML stated that even if he composed music in places with confusion around him, he prefers silence and being alone. From another approach on isolation, CA said that he does not have concentration problems because when he is in the flow of his composing activity, he is completely absorbed and there are no distractions that may interrupt him. This situation may also be considered as isolation considering that the composer is completely absorbed by his activity in a way that he is not aware of what surrounds him.

Composers are always in contact with external influences from day to day life and they have to deal with it as it affects their isolation. The working place is located in an environment that includes the people composers are related to and the effect of said environment is crucial in the creative process because it may actively influence the compositional ideas. All composers mentioned that everything that surrounds them may influence the compositional process. CA exemplified it by saying that everything in the day to day life may affect the creative process, it could be "a discussion, something in the bus or when [he is] at a coffee shop and hears someone talking". AF mentioned that the environment could be a concert in which the composer may listen to or play a musical fragment that could afterwards appear as a compositional idea. It can also be the city where the composer works, as CB explained: "the music I do is the result of living in Berlin". It can also be – as ML mentioned – a feeling that composers have at the moment of working on a new composition: "[the material for a new composition] comes from my joy or the absence of it." Accordingly, JB said that if he is near "people and friends that make him feel good" he would have a better predisposition to feel well about what he is writing. Following this line of thought, it is possible to consider that people are part of their environment and their opinions will affect composers depending on how they deal with it.

Regarding external opinions, all composers are careful about it and in general, they do not pay much attention to it because it could trigger doubts that interfere in the success of the compositional process. On this regard, AF simply does not listen to opinions and CA does not show the work in progress so he does not have to deal with opinions. It was also mentioned that opinions may be welcome but from special people who composers trust.

Another consideration of external opinions is the moment when they occur. Generally, if it is during the compositional process, composers try to avoid opinions, which confirms the preference for isolation. Nevertheless, when the piece is finished, they are more open to receive suggestions and opinions that may improve the written music, as JB explained: "when the first final version is done, we can say that opinions and suggestions work as a revision, but done by other people, people I trust."

Habits

After the analysis of the external influences, it was possible to observe that the habits of day to day life of composers influence the process as a complement of their surroundings. AF explained that if he could not prepare the isolated ambience in which he will work on the compositional process organizing his daily life, he would not start the composition. Habits can also help to organize the working time, like ML, who has to take his son to school very early and he works from that moment until noon every day. On the other side, CA explained that he cannot afford the application of daily routine due to the fact that he does not have much free time: "If Sunday is free, he has to work on Sunday, if it is Friday night, Friday it is". He also uses dead time, when he is travelling to work or home, for preparation, to think about the composition and when the time for writing arrives, he has a significant amount of the preparation work solved. He explained: "the best way to solve a problem is not to be here [the working studio] and create images [of what the composition would be like]". PMA does not have a specific habit that helps him to be well-disposed towards composition. Nevertheless, he likes to establish a working routine that allows him to relax in terms of expectations because that way he knows that if one day he cannot write any usable material he will be working the next day and so on. Accordingly, JB explained that the new ideas come to light when he is "relaxed and well-disposed". In order to be in this state of mind, when he is going to start a new composition, he found that deciding in advance the period in which he is going to be dedicated to the compositional process allows him to have the extra-musical aspects of his life organized and in consequence be able to be isolated and concentrated on his creative work.

Unaware processing of material

The unaware processing of material is an aspect of the creative process that can be related with the incubation stage of the theory of creativity discussed in the literature review. This aspect comes to light in the moment when the ideas that were incubated during the preparation start to appear. During the whole compositional process there is an amount of material that is processed by composers without being conscious of it. The creative mind of composers continues functioning when they are not actively thinking about the actual composition. And this kind of thought is directly influenced by all the aspects previously discussed in this section, it is conditioned by the domain, the environment, external influences, and habits.

JB mentioned that after the period of preparation, when the moment of composing new music begins, ideas start to appear:

> Until that month [planned to be the period for composing new music], I am going to study lots of things. I read literature related to music, I listen to music, the sound, the timbre matter, the accordion matter, the musicians who I will record with. And the ideas that I like the most happen in that moment, when I say: 'I am going to write now'. Lately […], I just used the ideas that appear at the time I was prepared, I had seen harmony relationships of my interest and even if they were not registered, they were studied.

Accordingly, AF commented on how the preparation and unaware processing of material lead to the germination of ideas in his mind until the moment he decides to start composing a new piece:

> I do not have techniques […], in my case, it happens in my mind that [compositional material] germinates during a long period of time and in the moment, I decide to concretize these ideas I start and don't stop until I finish.

Another way in which the unaware processing of material is evident, is when composers leave a compositional problem unsolved to take care of it the next day. CB explained: "I go to sleep, taking that [the unsolved problem] with me and the day after, when I take the material again, it is already developed." Following the same perspective, JB explained that many times he leaves an idea that is not convincing for the next day and the first thing he does in the morning, after sleeping and many hours have passed, is to take this idea and continue from there. "Generally, this idea is modified."

11.2. Inspiration

As discussed previously, inspiration is a factor involved in the creative process that is difficult to identify and define due to its different connotations. Regarding this theoretical problem, composers believe that inspiration is a present element during the compositional process but consider that it may be defined in various ways. Based on this premise, it was possible to identify three approaches to inspiration: unexpected inspiration, inspiration vs work routine, and inspiration as a state of mind (to be inspired).

Inspiration may be considered a mysterious influence that affects composers' minds resulting in unexpected good ideas. This interpretation was generally rejected by the interviewees considering that, regarding participants' experience, it is something that happens rarely or never happens. As AF said, "A very romantic idea exists about inspiration… 'I was walking in the forest and heard the birds, and a melody emerged in my mind, and I wrote'. This never happened in my life, or nothing like that." From this point of view, composers have different approaches to the meaning of inspiration that allow them to deal with it. Consequently, JB stated that, as inspiration is difficult to define, he prefers to rely on other aspects that he can control: "I believe much more in learning, reading, instructing myself, educating myself, and then, with all that, trying to do something." He considered that inspiration is the work he does before the writing period. From this point of view, there is an agreement about inspiration and its relationship with work. ML considered that the compositional work is based on trial and error: "I make something, I think it is close, but I have to modify it, changing a bit the harmony and then I start liking it."

In contrast with this kind of work that he considers essential, inspiration appears when trial and error is reduced during the compositional process. He continues, "sometimes things go well, I think of that as inspiration, because I don't always have it. That's why I think hard work is essential, with trial and error you can also compose."

Accordingly, CB explained how the work routine is more reliable than inspiration:

> You can't come and say 'I am going near the sea and compose a magnificent piece', of course, you will probably not compose any magnificent piece. But if on a daily basis the creative gymnastic of experimenting and playing exists, suddenly something good appears […]. I think we must practice inspiration." On this regard, CA explained that he cannot wait for an idea to appear because, as he is a professional composer and he must respect deadlines, he cannot say: 'sorry, but inspiration didn't appear.'

Composers can “choose to be inspired” instead of waiting for inspiration. PMA explained that he can be a more inspired person if he is stimulated regularly, “if I were confronted with new opinions, new shows from different areas and reflected about it… All this would be a source of inspiration.” Following this approach, the music itself may be a source of inspiration during the compositional process. CA mentioned that when he has the first idea, the first written material inspired the subsequent developments of the composition.”

Finally, it is essential to highlight that inspiration must be supported by the aptitude for composition. As CA said, “you could have a good idea, but if you were technically bad you would ruin it. You could have an average idea, but if you were good technically working on it, that would make it work.”

11.3. The first stage of the compositional process: Initial idea and Source material

The aspects of creativity and inspiration actively affect the mind of the composer in the first stage of the compositional process. During this phase, composers deal with the conception of the source material that will sustain the whole composition. As mentioned before, there are four factors that stand out in terms of the analysis of the conception of the source material: goals and expectations, problem-solving, selection of material and sketches. It is possible to determine a chronology for the conception of the source material that is directly related with the stages of the creative process: Preparation, Incubation, Illumination, Elaboration and Verification (Figure 5).

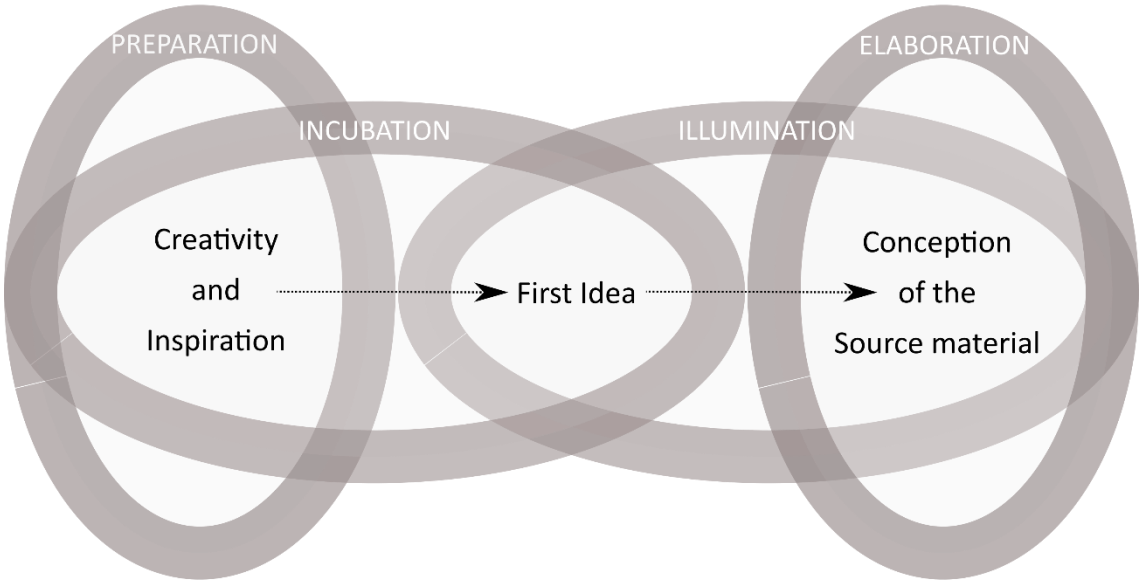


Figure 5. The relation between the creative process stages and the source material conception.

It is possible to consider that, during the preparation phase, creativity and inspiration lay the foundations for the incubation stage, during which the first ideas will appear, and therefore the illumination phase will begin. Subsequently, composers elaborate these first ideas into concrete material that will be used for the composition development.

In Figure 6 it is possible to observe that the aspects involved in the conception of the source material from the point of view of composers exemplify how the different stages of the creative process interact with each other and work simultaneously. The goals and expectations that composers can affect the preparation and incubation stages. The selection of material can be related to the unaware processing of material included in the incubation and illumination stages. It should also be taken into account that composers also select and discard material consciously in the elaboration phase.

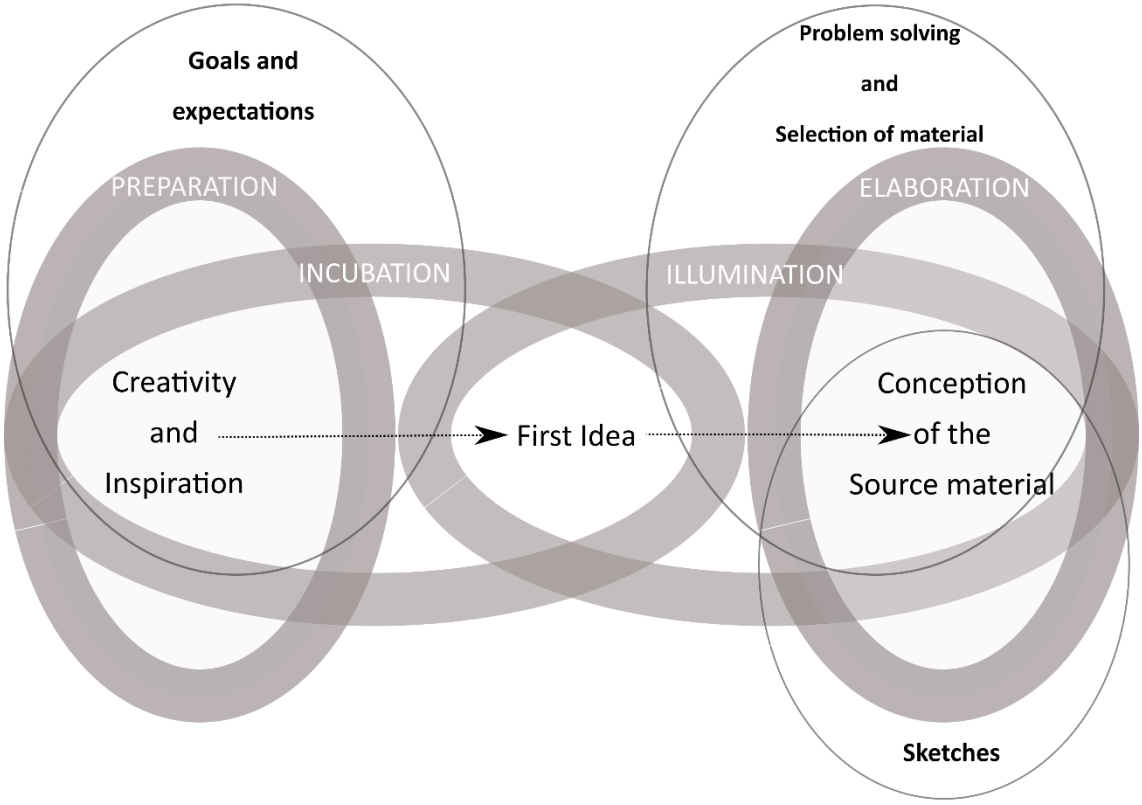


Figure 6. Relationship between the sub-codes of the initial stage category and the conception of source material.

Goals and expectations

Composers usually have goals for their compositions, and they are conditioned by expectations. They may expect to have great ideas and for the composition to be created perfectly. On this regard, ML explained that it is important to be careful about self-censorship:

> You must not put yourself in the position where you start to auto-censure your work because it was not marvelous and just accept the ordinary moments that all of us have. You have to accept it and live with it; otherwise, you enter into a stage of total paranoia.

He continued explaining that composers must accept that they will not always be great and inspired and recognize the fragilities and reduce that kind of expectations. He commented, "To me, it was very important, occasionally I am not happy [with the composition], but I have to do it, and then I do it." Participants agreed that it is important not to judge the music during the process of composition and to make the best effort until the pieces, or a part of it,

is finished to go back and be critical about it. ML said, “when I am writing, I am not thinking about that kind of things, but I am doing my best and always ahead.” PMA confirmed this approach by saying he expects to be in a state in which he is not influenced by “models or established canons that say how the music is supposed to be, or limiting myself by validity, quality or good and wrong considerations.”

Regarding compositional goals, most composers considered that having a goal before writing a composition is an intrinsic condition to the compositional process. CA explained that without a goal he could not write, therefore, if he does not have one, he has to create it in order to star the compositional process: “Without a goal, I can’t write. Sometimes it can be a simple idea, three words like gentle, tempestuous or accelerated movements or an image.” JB mentioned that when he is going to start a composition, he always has a purpose for the music he is going to write, for example, “the last time that [he started a period of composition he] had the goal to write the music for [his last album].” PMA usually has a clear idea of what he wants for a composition when he is going to start the compositional process: “If I start a composition it is because I have a very clear idea in terms of what I want from it.” ML affirms that it is strange to write a composition that has not a purpose like “this may work fine for the trio, this for piano solo or this would be nice for a wind instrument.”

Problem-solving

The moment of conceiving the first material for a composition can be seen as a problem to solve. As CA mentioned, “the act of composition is to solve a problem; you have to compose, you have a problem, the beginning of a piece is a predefined problem.” On this regard, JB talked about the existence of many problems that he will have to solve during the compositional process, problems that could be predefined but also emerge while the composition is being developed: “It happens many times that I don’t know what the problem is, which part I am going to solve first, there are many problems.” PMA said that he tries to “compose from an indefinable impulse that does not have an associated form or instrumentation”, he has to find the way to transform it to musical material and it can be considered as a problem to solve. If the starting idea for the composition is a conceptual base, the moment of developing the musical material would be a problem considering that the composer has to find the way to transform the concept into music.

Selection of material

One of the problems that composers have during the compositional process is that they have to select and discard material as it appears. During the development of the source material, the selection of material would be the process by which composers define the first ideas of the composition. Composers agreed on under what basis they select or discard the material. The primary way by which they decide to preserve a musical idea is their own judgment, if they like it or not. JB said that he keeps an idea when he likes it. "That is the only reason for a composition to happen." ML claims that he follows this approach during the whole compositional process. AF mentioned that the most efficient and effective way to select the material is if it is suitable from his point of view and CB said, "It is when I feel the magic." PMA explained that he could choose to keep material that he cannot rationally justify, but it sounds right for him: "sometimes there are conjugations of timbres, or notes, or the narrative when no rational thinking can justify that the music sounds good, but it happens, and it sounds good in fact."

Another way of deciding which idea to keep and which to discard is to evaluate its relevance in the composition. AF mentioned that he has to recognize when an idea, even if it is right by itself, does not work in the composition:

> You gain experience to understand what is more superficial. Sometimes, you may get excited with an idea that seems to be very interesting, but afterwards you realize that it is useless. It is just the idea that is nice, but it is not contributing to the piece. And you learn to perceive that you don't like that.

On the same perspective, PMA explained that the way to select the material depends on how much it meets the original idea:

> Sometimes I am perfectly capable of discarding material that is interesting […] because I want to compose according to what was the origin of the composition […]. Many times, I discard, but in relation to the current creation, I do not delete the material […], I save it for new things that may emerge from it.

Generally, composers keep the ideas that may not fit in the current composition in a specific place where they can go later and use them for new compositions. As ML said, "sometimes I have ideas that I don't use, but I do not discard them, they remain in a folder of ideas." On the contrary, CA said that he never saves ideas that he does not use because he believes that

if they have to reappear, it will happen naturally in new compositions: “I put everything out, it is ridiculous, but it is true. But if anything was good enough, it will reemerge again.” Even if it seems to be the opposite of saving the discarded ideas, it is possible to consider this approach as a different way of saving ideas in memory.

The fact of discarding ideas may be regarded as a positive process of finding the right material. As CA mentioned, “bad ideas are good ideas because they help to eliminate possibilities. You are always eliminating; composing is the art of elimination more than creation.” He also explained that the fact of eliminating the material for one day does not mean that the work done is useless, it means that the composer is going through the process of finding the right material:

> The day after you have the feeling that you did nothing, but you did a lot. You didn’t find the path but the following day you already eliminated all those possibilities. Thus, it is more likely that the next day you will find the path and in consequence, compose much more.

Sketches

A sketch is supposed to be a previous superficial design, generally written on paper, of what the final composition could be, but as it was possible to identify from participants statements, the sketches could have different approaches and forms. Following this line of thought, a sketch would be the concretization of the source material where the basic ideas that will sustain the composition are defined. This material can be registered in many forms, and it can be categorized into two groups, the conceptual sketches and the physical sketches. The conceptual sketches would be the mental conception of ideas – like visualizations – and material registered by non-musical means – like drawings or textual ideas. The physical sketches would be shaped by musical fragments like recordings, discarded material from former compositions and the material developed during the writing process of the current composition.

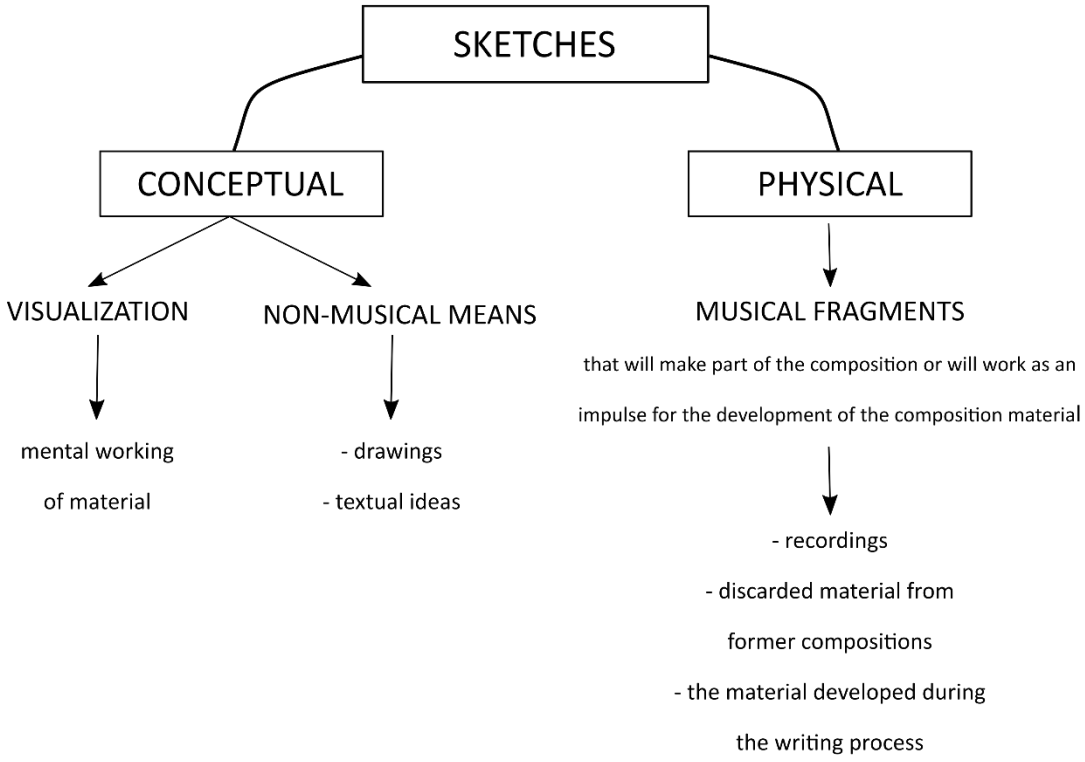


Figure 7. Categorization of sketches.

The conceptual sketches are related to the planning of the piece, the prior outline defined by how the composer imagines the composition result. As JB mentioned, "many times I have the composition in my mind, and it is after one day when I start writing it." Regarding this approach, the composers may visualize the music before writing and work the sketch mentally. CA exemplified this kind of process: "Sometimes, sketches happen when I'm coming home, and I am one hour stuck in traffic thinking: 'how am I going to do this…?'"

Structure planning, in terms of conceptual sketching, was mentioned by all composers. AF talked about a visualization of how the piece is going to be built:

> I have ideas like: 'I would like to have a relatively static layer that is maintained as the engine of the composition, then something floating above and another layer that is going to do something else. That kind of concept, a visualization of the structure and the pieces of it.'

Accordingly, PMA explained that the sketches do not have to be in musical notation but may be structural considerations or leading concepts that will conduct the composition: "In terms of sketches, what I end up doing is writing things that are not musical notation, I write things related to types of structures, ideas or concepts that will be at stake in the composition." On

this matter, CA mentioned that he usually makes drawings in black and white where he designs the structure of the piece representing the different moments of the composition:

> The previous planning is at the formal level, to know what I'm going to do in terms of structure […]. I make sketches that are designed to know where I am going to walk…black here means that something is going to happen, etc.

The physical sketches are represented by musical fragments that are registered and will be used to make part of the composition or as the initial material that is going to be developed during the writing process. As analyzed before, many times, composers save the discarded material from one composition to use it in a new one. The discarded material from a former composition is one of the possible formats that a physical sketch can have. In this regard, composers may consider a kind of sketch the actual composition, considering that when they write and then discard material, they are using the writing process of the final score as a sketching practice. Additionally, it is important to highlight that the sketches do not have to be made prior to the composition, they may be produced during the writing process throughout experimentation moments in which composers try to solve problems that may emerge during the development of the piece. As JB mentioned, the writing process may be considered as a sketch until the composer is comfortable with the result. Any part of the composition may be reviewed and modified, which makes it an unfinished fragment, and that way it can be considered a sketch: "When I have a phrase ready, but I am not happy about it, it isn't completely delineated, that is a sketch." PMA followed a similar perspective when he explained that the sketches could be a part of the writing process of the final score, considering that any material could be reviewed and even discarded:

> In terms of the concretization in notes what I do the most isn't a sketch, it is writing and then, maybe, putting it aside. It isn't writing in a superficial way and imagining the rest, I don't do that, I write in full, and maybe afterwards, I come back to intervene or to put it completely aside.

Following the same approach, ML commented that "normally [he does] not discard material, [he comes] back, erase, and change it" during the writing process. He also uses recordings that may be considered musical fragments that will support a composition. The same way CB makes improvised recordings that will be used as starting ideas for future compositions, "[he has] a lot of saved ideas from recordings of improvisations" that may serve as initial ideas for new compositions.

Finally, it is possible that a composer uses both kinds of sketches in the same source by using musical fragments that represent concepts like “colors”. CA mentioned an example of this situation:

> The piano, for me, is like a [painter] palette. Sometimes I sit at the piano and start to play harmonic progressions… I find chords that I like and then I have my collection of them in a paper at my side. I use the piano to search for colors.

11.4. Compositional Process

As mentioned before, the compositional process category includes aspects that affect composers’ activity when creating new music. These aspects could affect different stages of the whole development from the first idea to the final piece. Consequently, it is essential to emphasize that this category does not represent a successive stage in the creative process.

Trial and error

All participants considered trial and error part of the compositional process, and it may be analyzed from different perspectives. ML explained the necessity of “hard work” to be able to compose, taking into account that as he cannot always be inspired, he has to construct the music step by step and trying different options until he finds the best solution. He said, “I change little things, I change a bit of the harmony, and then I begin to like it more.” For PMA, trial and error can be considered the technique used to solve musical situations that may arise and that he cannot theoretically explain. He commented that many times it happens that there is “material that works and is valid” in the composition, but he does not know why. “And in these cases, it is purely trial and error” what he does to develop those parts of the composition. Trial and error may be approached by an elimination perspective. That would mean that it could be the means to write and then eliminate all the material that the composer considers useless. As CA said, “what you expect is that when you get to the end, the errors will have been eliminated and the trials will have been better than the errors.” Following this approach, AF explained that it may happen that once the composition is finished, he finds that “something that was supposed to work in the composition, is useless, always in the sense of removing and not increasing or replacing.” On this regard, PMA said that eventually, in order to write two pages, he has ten because of all the trials. Trial and error may be used to find

solutions in different musical elements as harmony, melody, rhythm and structure. Regarding harmony, AF may "spontaneously" try different solutions for a harmonic progression until he finds what is best for the melody. The same case was mentioned by CB: "during the compositional process there could be a chord that you say, 'this is not the one'. And then, you start looking for a solution until you find it. 'This is it, yes'." CA mentioned that trial and error "happen the most at the structure level."

> Bindings between composition parts have always been a concern for him: sometimes I spend a lot of time doing that [trial and error], I put one more bit in the measure, I have to put two more there. Even if proportions are right, that is not enough.

Trial and error may be considered as the first stage of finding a new idea like CB stated, "I think that the error at the beginning of the creative process is the first step to discover anything new." Furthermore, trial and error, as ML said, may be the means to evolve as a composer, "Many times after I write a piece I think, 'next time I have to do differently with this material'."

Techniques

Procedures and concepts, which are not conventional in terms of music theory and academic education, were mentioned during the interviews. Composers apply them in order to conceive the source material and develop musical ideas to achieve the compositional process goals (Figure 8).

These practices may be divided into two groups, the ones tendentially related to the creation of the source material, and those associated with the development of the musical material during the compositional process. The group division does not mean that the source material techniques cannot be applied in the development and vice versa.

Another subject that was common to all participants was the application of a "layer" approach in terms of construction of the composition, which can be regarded as an architectural development of musical ideas where the source material is the storage of the pieces that will be part of the layers' construction.

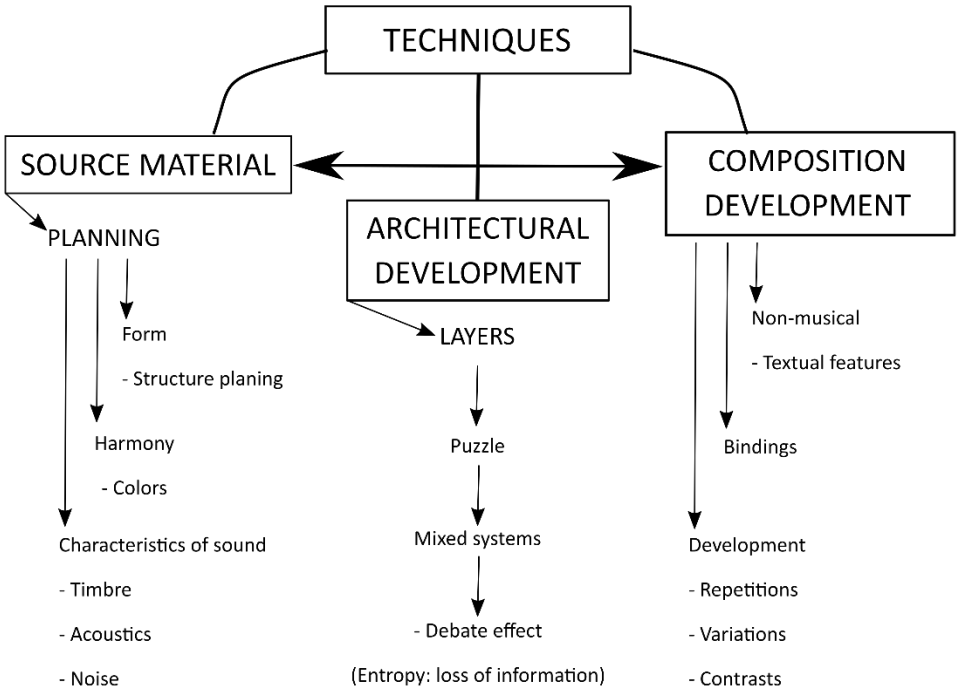


Figure 8. Techniques or procedures applied to develop the source material.

Regarding the source material, its procedures are primarily related to the planning of the composition or the parts of it, creating an outline of what the composition would be. For this purpose, composers may establish predefined harmony possibilities – "colors" – that will be used during the composition. As CA mentioned, he has "a chords collection [that he] knows how they work", which he considered as "colors" that may be used during the composition. The possibility of planning how the formal structure of the whole composition will be was also mentioned, which can help to be organized and coherent with the development of ideas during the compositional process. CA explained: "I think it [planning the formal structure] is related to the fact that I lose focus very easily, so I need to create a structure that limits me."

Another approach to creating the source material is the use of noise as a trigger of ideas for the conception of the source material. It could be the sounds that come from the environment, like conversations in a coffee shop or the background sound of a street. And the conceptual description of the characteristics of these noises may work as compositional ideas. CA exemplified this method when he mentioned that he bought a drone and used its movements as conceptual characteristics that the music would have. He described it: "when the drone goes up, I will do the same with the music… A calm section starts."

Regarding the recognition of noise as a possible element in the creation of the source material, composers may look for different timbres and acoustic possibilities of the instruments. PMA described this approach when he said that he thinks about "acoustic, timbre and resonance matters," and how he can deal with the instruments' possibilities analyzing these aspects before starting to conceive written musical ideas. An example of this approach may be the spectral analysis of a sound as source material, PMA said: "we did a spectral exploration, the harmonic analysis of the percussion elements and the cymbals."

In terms of the development of the composition, what composers can do, as CA mentioned, is limited to three features: repetition, variation, and contrast, which can be applied to the first ideas to develop a comprehensive source material. Another essential aspect regarding the advanced stages of the compositional process would be the way that different parts of the piece are connected. It is possible to apply this feature to the development of the source material considering that it may include possible connections between different musical ideas that are part of it.

Composers also use non-musical elements that could help to clarify a different aspect of the composition, which are usually textual comments. Regarding this matter, PMA explained that "sometimes [he uses] text and annotations to stimulate the musicians to be in a certain state of mind, a satiric way of giving people a poetic perspective." He also mentioned that he uses annotations or symbols to explain specific characteristics of sound and sometimes to make the music flexible in terms of giving more than one possibility to the musicians in the interpretation of a section of the piece. On the same approach, JB explained that sometimes "there is no other way to explain" what composers want. He may use text to give instructions in terms of dynamics or about how a part of the music should be executed.

The most common procedure that composers mentioned in the interviews is the layers approach by which they think of the musical ideas as different parts that interact with each other at the same time. CB describes how this method could work: "If a strong melody exists, it doesn't need to be repeated by other instruments, because it is strong and can walk alone. There is space to do the opposite in relation to it." In this comment, "strong" can be understood as a well-structured idea that works as a main layer that triggers the second, which may be the opposite thanks to the consistency of the first one. ML exemplified a similar situation but alternating between the two layers – melody and accompaniment. He said that he likes "to play rhythmically with the melody when the melody does not appear, when a

chord appears, then the melody is there, and the chord is out." AF also mentioned the use of layers and contrasts as a compositional method: "I would like to have a layer relatively static that is maintained as the engine of the section, and then something floating on top and then another […]." On this matter, CA compared the use of contrasting layers, "that may be overlapped". The contrast may be defined by the use of different systems at the same time as atonal "textures mixed with tonal or modal elements". He also stated that the use of contrasting layers from different systems allows the development of the structure of the counterpoint in ways that would not be possible with just one system because of the "entropy" that may exist when the composer uses combinations among many similar elements. He compared this situation with a debate:

> I usually say that it is like hearing a debate […]. It is funny when everyone starts to speak in Portuguese very fast, and at the same time, in the middle, you stop understanding. But if one speaks in Portuguese and the other speaks in another language with a different timbre and speed, you get to listen to both and distinguish them from each other.

Furthermore, CA explained that he usually writes by using melodies that interact with each other working the same way as "playing *Legos*". This idea is related to the description of the compositional process as solving a puzzle as mentioned by AF, "the process is to try to make the puzzle more complete at every step."

11.5. Implications of improvisation and jazz background in the compositional process

Jazz composers have a close relationship with improvisation, considering it an essential element of jazz. The existence of improvised sections and the fact that musicians will improvise and interpret the composition are elements that influence the composer during the creative process. AF described this reality saying that "what characterizes jazz compositions is that a part of the written music is used for improvisation." JB agreed with this statement when he said, "I can't think about composition without a moment of improvisation." Improvisation, in jazz, is also related to the interpretation of the written music. The musicians interpret their parts, making changes and adaptations according to their own way to approach music aided by improvisation as the supporting element of this process. AF exemplified this fact by saying that, for example, "the way the pianist will play an excerpt or will play a voicing is improvisation over what is written at the interpretation level." He continued

explaining that he may write “a chord sequence but encourage the musicians to be open to proposing alternative harmonies in real-time.”

Jazz composers often play their own compositions. In this regard, their experience as interpreters and improvisers is a powerful influence during the compositional process. For ML, improvisation is an important element during the compositional process considering that there are many pieces that he regards as improvisation from the beginning. The fact that musicians will improvise over the composition is a central issue to consider during the compositional process, as JB mentioned, improvisation could be the leading thread that influences the composition from the beginning: “I wanted music to make sense with the way I improvise. I didn’t want to listen to the *solos* and think that they were a different thing from the composition.” Following this line of thought, AF stated that many times he composes from the improviser point of view, looking at the composition as a platform for improvisation and consequently he would try “to make the part of improvisation interesting for himself” as a player.

AF also talked about the influence of improvisation in the compositional process when he claimed that “there are things that [he] tends to play on his instrument as an improviser and [he] transposes to the compositional level.” On the contrary, PMA considered that the fact of being a player could be a limitation during the compositional process: “drums is the last of the things I write, because, firstly, I want to think of music regardless of my connection to the instrument.”

Improvisation may also be considered as a compositional tool. As ML explained, many of the times that he has an idea he “experiments it, in different ways on the piano, until finding something he likes”. AF followed the same approach saying that he “could be into an incomplete phase during the compositional process and see what [he] can do spontaneously improvising from there.” Accordingly, CA mentioned that he might improvise on the piano to develop melodies or test the improvisation parts in the composition. Furthermore, CB stated that his compositional process is based on improvisation as he makes recordings of improvisations to look for ideas that he after will develop during the compositional process. Additionally, PMA said that sometimes he uses improvisation “to get results, to develop and to better understand the material.”

Regarding improvisation as an intrinsic element for interpretations in jazz, the collaboration of the musicians that will play the composition has a significant influence over the compositional process. JB tries to compose pieces in which there is the possibility for "musicians' improvisation to change the final result instead of expecting for the composition to change the improvisers." On this regard, PMA has a similar approach when he said that he wants "to get away from the idea that the music comes before the musicians" and the musicians' interpretation after because he "knows that it is the most common way to make music and the result is always superficial." He continued explaining that his compositions are subject to change with the musicians' interpretation. Thus, even if he considered the score finished, once it was played and worked out with the musicians, there emerges a new final version.

On the contrary, probably due to the fact that he usually writes for big bands, CA is cautious about musicians' suggestions. He commented: "I don't accept it at first because everybody has an opinion and if you are going to listen to that you are done."

11.6. Recurrent concerns

During the interviews' analysis, general concerns among composers were revealed. Most of the interviewees, in different ways, mentioned the concepts of Judgment, Confidence, and Honesty to describe particular worries that they have during the compositional process. These ideas are presented in the next table:

Concerns Composer	**Judgment**	**Confidence**	**Honesty**
CB	being naive as a child to allow himself to play with the composition ideas without fear	believing in the composition to deal with considerations about the validity	
CA	not having prejudgments – "as a child" – to allow all ideas to appear	being self-confident enough to avoid the influence of others' opinions	
ML	consider only "[his] own judgment during the whole compositional process."	being confident about the results of the composition as a consequence of experience	being honest by "giving [his] best."
AF		being self-confident enough to validate musical ideas	being honest to avoid "deceiving yourself."
PMA	not judging in terms of "good or wrong" during the writing process	being confident that it will be possible to reach the end of the composition	being "true" to the act of composition by isolating oneself from external influences
JB	not judging the composition in terms of other people's taste		being honest in order to deal with external opinions

Table 1. Composers' ideas about recurrent concerns.

Regarding judgment, composers have to deal with considerations regarding the validity of what they are writing. Consequently, the common way to do it is not to judge the written material during the writing process, leaving these reflections to specific moments and trying not to be influenced by external considerations or preconceptions. PMA commented that he tries to "avoid judgment considerations during the process" and evaluate the written material a posteriori. Regarding external influences, JB said that when he is writing he does "not judge if people are going to like" the composition, and ML mentioned that "the only judgment that interests [him is his] own." Concerning self-judgment, CA explained that it is essential not to have a bias: "If you are going to write a piece, it isn't done yet, so you don't have preconceptions; therefore, you must let all the ideas be important."

Composers also talked about the need of being honest with themselves. ML mentioned that he always gives his best during the act of composition and that way, he can be honest with himself and accept the music that he is writing without being influenced by outside influences. Following this line of thought, JB mentioned that during the compositional process he is going to be influenced by many factors and that fact leads him to be honest with himself and "assume that the composition is going to be completely selfish." AF talked about the importance of being aware of the fact that a composer may deceive himself in order to avoid dealing with compositional problems. He also points out that they must be honest with themselves to face these difficulties. In addition, PMA mentioned the need for being isolated during the compositional process in terms of "being true to the creative urge."

Moreover, composers should be self-confident about their work, which is a conditional factor as to avoid preconceptions and to be honest with themselves. As CA claimed, "a composer must be sure about the music he writes to some extent because if [he] cares too much about what other people say [he] may feel insecure and then [he] can't write." ML confirmed this statement saying that thanks to the experience he "gained confidence about the possible results" of the compositional process and PMA talked about "a conscience that says that [he is] going to reach the end of the composition. Accordingly, CB said that a composer must "believe in what he writes" and AF agrees when he mentioned that he has to "trust in [his] instinct" as a composer.

12. Developing a methodology for the conception of the source material

The aim of this research project was to elaborate a methodology that could be applied by jazz composers during the first stage of the compositional process. In the first part of this section, the conclusions regarding the results above mentioned, in terms of achieving this objective, are presented. Secondly, an analysis of the creative process of one original composition is developed in regard to the application of the presented methodology.

To develop a methodology that could be applied by composers to approach the first stage of the compositional process, a series of procedures and principles were defined as a result of the analysis of the data. It is a group of tools and concepts that composers may have available to approach in an organized and effective way the development of the source material that will work as a base for the development of a composition. This methodology will include a conceptual approach, a practical approach, and a set of principles that a composer should keep in mind during the process of creating the first musical ideas for the development of a new piece. Finally, a summary of all the elements that constitute this methodology will be organized into a graphic system that may work as a map of the paths that the elaboration of the source material could take.

In order to organize the elements that compose said map, a series of symbols were assigned to the different elements and its categories. Regarding categories, it was possible to divide the methods and principles into three groups: Conceptual Approach, Practical Approach and Principles. Furthermore, each element may be regarded in terms of three stages during the process of developing the source material: Preparation, Planning and Execution. Lastly, there were principles that may be regarded as general considering that they may be applied during the whole process. The symbols that represent these aspects are presented below:

Principles	**Conceptual Approach**	**Practical Approach**	**Preparation**	**Planning**	**Execution**	**General Principles**
						

Table 2. Symbols of the categories of the source material conception map.

The Principles category refers to ideas that may help to approach the different aspects of the constitution of the source material. The Conceptual Approach group includes the mental processes that may be applied over the compositional elements. And on the other side, the Practical Approach refers to actions that could be taken in order to create the actual musical material.

Regarding the stages that make part of the conception of the source material, Preparation is the phase when the composer is setting up the conditions that will allow the beginning of the compositional process. The Planning stage is represented by elements concerning the predefined elements of the piece as a part of the first ideas of the composition. The Execution stage refers to the action of creating the musical material, and in consequence, it is directly related to the Practical Approach.

Continuing with the application of the symbols it was possible to define combinations between categories and stages that were classified into the following associations:

Preparation Principles	Planning Principles	Execution Principles	Conceptual Approach To Preparation	Practical Approach To Preparation	Conceptual Approach To Planning	Practical Approach To Planning	Practical Approach To Execution
							

Table 3. Combination of symbols of the source material conception map.

Concluding with the presentation of the elements that constitute the source material conception map, in the following table, those features, along with a short description, are presented in the order of their appearance during the analysis process, and in terms of the categorization defined before.

Method Type →		Conceptual approach	Practical approach	Principles
Method name ↓	**Symbol** ↓			
Classical Approach		Non-cyclic parts (planning)		
Imaginative Approach		Imagining musical ideas		
Drawings		Drawings of the structure or form of the composition		
Colors Palette			Predefined chords or notes combinations	
Bindings			Secondary ideas that work as transitions between principal ideas	
Layer approach			A mix of different musical systems to avoid "entropy." Puzzle approach	

			Counterpoint: “writing by melodies.”	
Depository of conceptual ideas		Saving discarded conceptual ideas that could work as source material for further compositions		
Depository of practical ideas			Saving discarded written material that could work as source material for further compositions	
Past domain influence				Trying not to be “influenced by certainties.” Considering whether material sounds good or not according to the composers’ opinion
Present domain influence				Staying up to date with current music. In order to have more material in memory
Dead Time				Using dead time of the day to day life to develop or create musical ideas
Naïf approach				Trying not to judge the ideas as they emerge

Conceptual Goal		Choosing words or images that may be represented by music		
Practical Goal			Choosing a purpose for the composition	
Periods				Predefined periods of conception and reflection
Options approach			Working various options of the same material	
Possibilities elimination				"Bad ideas are good ideas."
Recordings			The use of recordings as a way to register ideas	
Detail approach			Small modifications may represent a significant difference	
Removing revision				Removing and simplifying instead of increase
Critical approach				Being critical about finished pieces

Characteristic of sound	→		Timbre, acoustics, noise, spectral analysis of sound	
3 Actions – Chain of ideas	→		Repetition, variation and contrast	
Improvisation approach	→		The use of improvised section or fragments as source material ideas Using improvisation to explore the source material Improvising over the same material during many days to see if a development emerges	

Table 4. Short description about the combination of the symbols of the source material conception map.

As it is possible to observe in the table above, the methods can be grouped according to their symbol correspondences:

- General Principles
    - Past Domain: Trying not to be "influenced by certainties" that come from studied techniques. Evaluating the validity of the material according to the composer's notion of what sounds good or not.
    - Dead Time: using dead time of the day to day life to develop conceptual like visualization of musical fragments and solutions or developments for ideas that are already defined.

    - Naïf Approach: accepting ideas as they appear, leaving the judgment of validity to a following period.

    - Removing revision: revising the material by considering to remove what is in excess instead of adding more material. It may also be a simplification in terms of making the musical ideas clearer.

- Preparation Principles

    - Present domain influence: Considering that composers' memory is related to the unaware processing of material, staying up to date with current music is essential to enrich the creative sources that will generate the initial ideas.

    - Periods: regarding the preparation stage, the periods that the composer will be dedicated to composition activity could be defined in advance.

    - Possibilities Elimination: Composers should not be frustrated by the fact of not finding the right ideas or material for the composition, considering that it can be regarded as the process of eliminating possibilities in the path to find the right one.

    - Critical approach: to be critical about finished pieces by registering observations of matters to avoid or repeat in further compositions.

- Planning Principles

    - Periods: in terms of planning, it is possible to establish specific periods to write and develop the source material and periods to reflect about the conceived material.

- Execution Principles

    - Periods: in terms of execution of the development of the source material, the period refers to the alternation of moments of writing without judging and moments of reflection.

- Conceptual Approach to Preparation

    - Depository of conceptual ideas: saving conceptual ideas that are not usable for the current composition to be used in further compositions.

- Practical Approach to Preparation

    - Depository of ideas: saving the discarded material that could work for further compositions.

    - Recordings: registering in recordings potential musical ideas, that may be used as source material during the execution period.

- Conceptual Approach to Planning

    - Classical approach: in terms of planning the structure of the whole piece or a section of the piece, applying a classical approach, in this case, refers to the use of non-cyclic sections. For example, instead of using a repeated structure for improvised solos, create a section that develops in time without repeating a cycle of music in the exact same way.

    - Imaginative approach: make images in the mind of how the music should be developed during the composition. The resulting ideas of the imagination could be registered in words or drawings.

    - Drawing approach: making drawings that work as a reference for the structures, the textures or the orchestrations that will be included during the development of the composition.

    - Conceptual goal: using words, texts or drawings as ideas that will be translated to music during the execution period.

- Practical Approach to Planning

    - Practical goal: defining a purpose for the composition in practical terms. For instance: what kind of instrument group the composition is going to be for, whether it the music is for an album or a project, whether it is going to be music intended to be played by specific musicians.

- Practical Approach to Execution

- Color palette: the colors represent possible harmony options by defining chords or combination of notes that will be used during the composition.

- Binding: Secondary ideas developed to work as transitions between the different source material ideas.

- Layer approach: conception of source material ideas as independent layers that will be combined, forming a whole during the composition. It has three specific subdivisions:

    - Mixed systems: the use of different systems (ex.: tonal, atonal, serial, textures) at the same time so as to avoid “entropy” between layers.

    - Puzzle approach: understanding the source material as pieces of a puzzle that is going to be solved during the composition.

    - Counterpoint approach: developing independent ideas that could work simultaneously during the composition.

- Options approach: developing many solutions for one idea without discarding them until a moment of reflection.

- Detailed approach: considering making small changes that may represent a big difference. For example, in terms of bpm (beats per minute) or the timing of transitions between sections of the composition.

- Characteristics of sound: developing source material considering non-musical aspects of the sound like timbre, acoustic qualities, noise, spectral analysis of sound sources.

- 3 Actions approach: developing the source material using variations, contrasts and repetitions of initial ideas. With this method it is possible to generate an infinite chain of ideas (Figure 9).

- Improvisation approach: Improvisation may be applied in different ways during the conception of the source material.

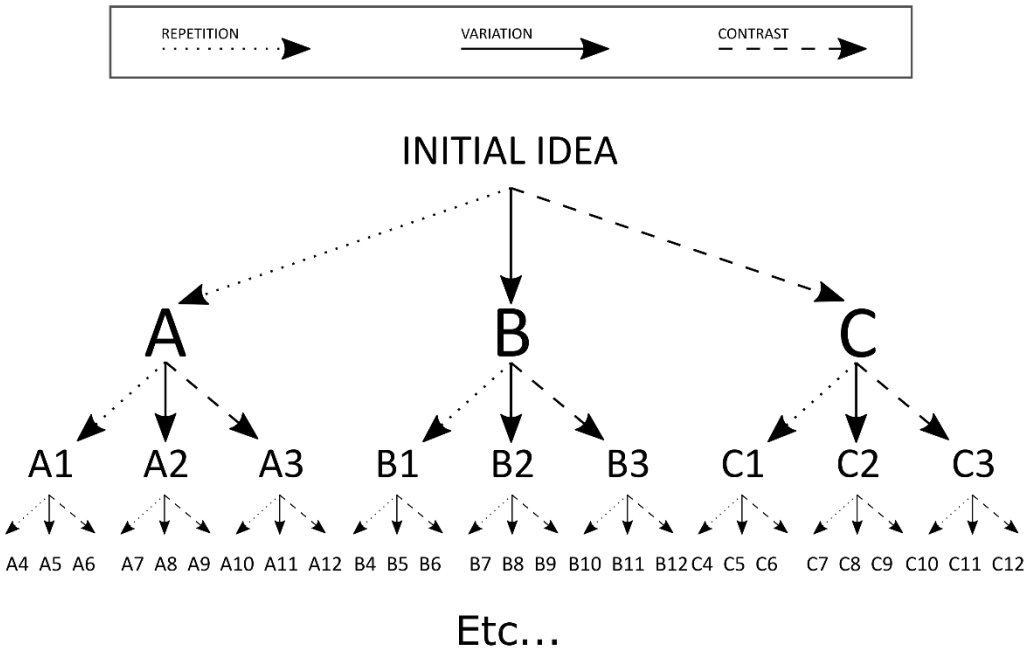


Figure 9. Infinite chain of ideas – 3 actions: repetition, variation and contrast.

In Figure 10, all the elements described hereinabove are presented in a graphic system that may work as a map or path by which composers could approach the process of conceiving the source material.

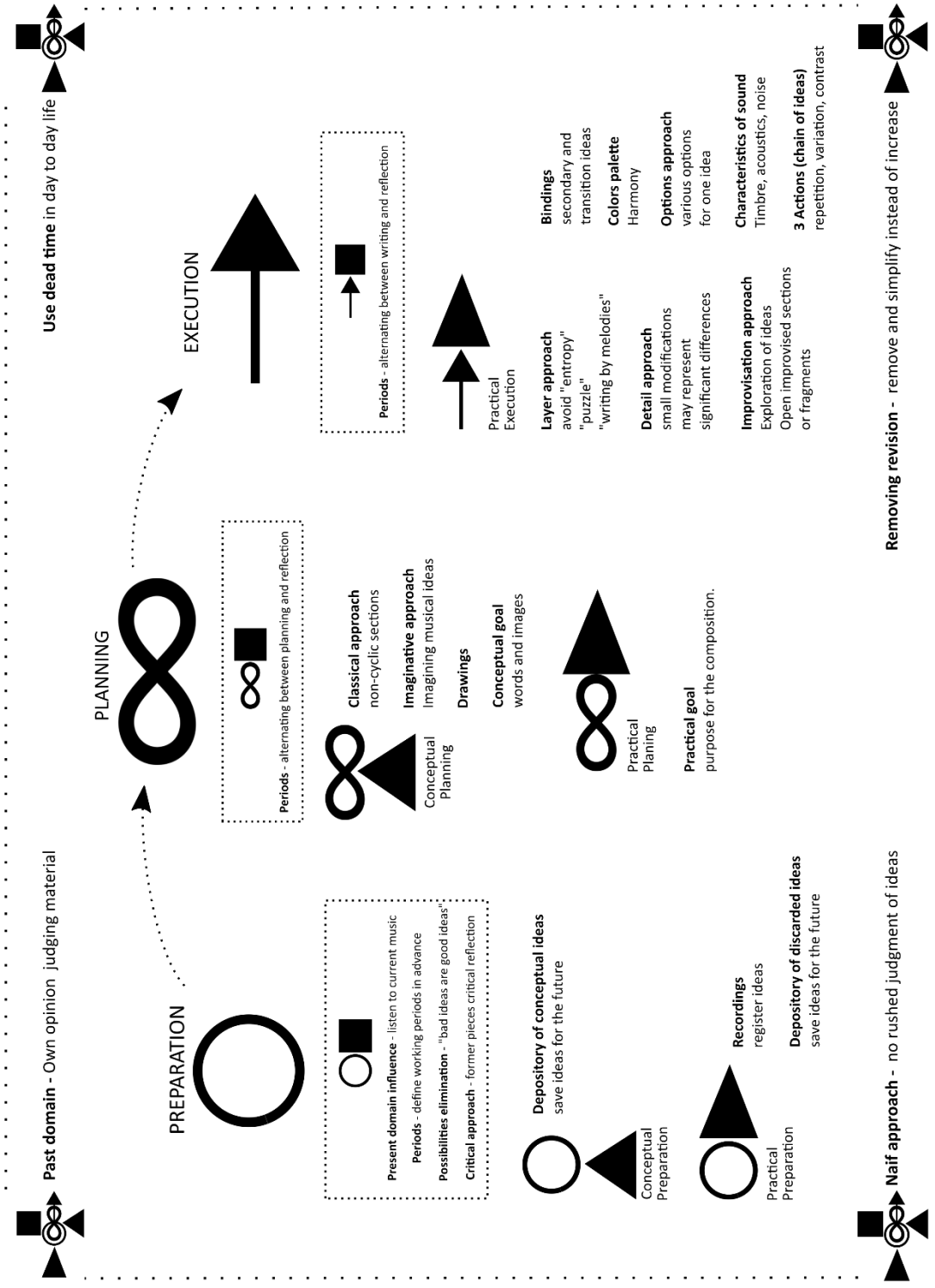


Figure 10. Complete map of the methodology for the conception of the source material.

13. Analysis of the compositional process of an original piece regarding the source material conception map

In this section, a description of the compositional process of one original composition is presented. Said composition makes part of a series of pieces that I composed during the Master's Degree in Music at Escola Superior de Música de Lisboa[3]. All compositions of this series followed a similar approach to the conception of the source material and its possible to assume that their features are represented by the analyzed piece. The process of conceiving the source material and the method to develop said material into the settled ideas of the final piece are analyzed following the application of the map described before.

13.1. A short introduction to the analyzed piece

The analyzed composition is called *Solo#4* and it is part of a series of pieces that were conceived as *guitar solos* but then arranged and finalized as group compositions. During the master's degree, I developed two projects in which I explored different instrumental configurations. Firstly, the autotelic project was based on a piano-guitar duo and the composition named *#Solo,* which would be the first piece of the *Solo* series, was included in the repertoire. Later on, I composed a series of compositions for jazz quintet in which the solo#3 piece was included. After the recording of the album of this project, *Variaciones*, I thought that it would be a good idea to include a composition that could work as an introduction of the album presentation concert. At that moment I was registering video recordings of ideas that I had on the guitar and there was one, which was supposed to be a guitar solo piece. As it was the registered idea that I liked the most I decided to develop it into a quintet short composition, expecting that would work as the concert introduction. After the performance of the piece, I thought that it would be a good idea to continue the composition in terms of extending it and ameliorating the development of the idea during the whole music. Finally, after this creative path, the final version of the composition was achieved.

[3] The Master's Scores of all pieces are presented in the appendixes

13.2. The creative process of Solo#4 regarding the conclusions of the research study

Concerning the source material conception process of *Solo#4*, the preparation stage consisted of the use of recordings that were part of the practical procedure by which the first ideas for the composition were first registered. During an eight-month period, there were six recordings – made in 6 different moments of compositional work – starting with the first ideas and progressing until the first final version of the piece was finished. After the first final version was performed, the second period of composition was faced in terms of extending the composition. It is possible to consider that two source material conception processes, which can be represented in two different maps, were applied until the last final version was finished.

The first source material conception process can be represented by the next map:

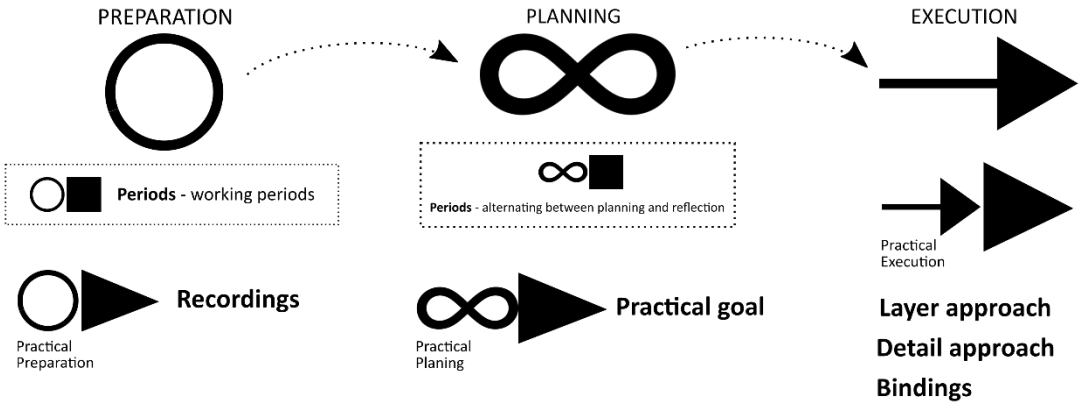


Figure 11. Solo#4 first source material conception process map.

During this process, the preparation stage consisted of the recording of the first idea that would later become the A part, followed by new registers of ideas that worked as the foundation for parts B and C. The first recording, was a loop of three chords arpeggios played into a 5/4 measure (11).

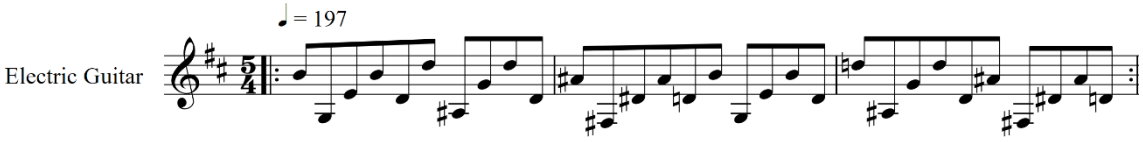


Figure 12. First recorded idea.

It is possible to observe that the sequence of three chords restarts halfway through the second measure, whereby it must be repeated two times to complete a loop in 5/4 measure. This element was evaluated during the process in order to arrange the harmonic rhythm. Additionally, the roots of the chords appear in the second eighth note and there is an ostinato in the D note that is shared by the three chords. These are basic ideas that were maintained until the final version of the piece.

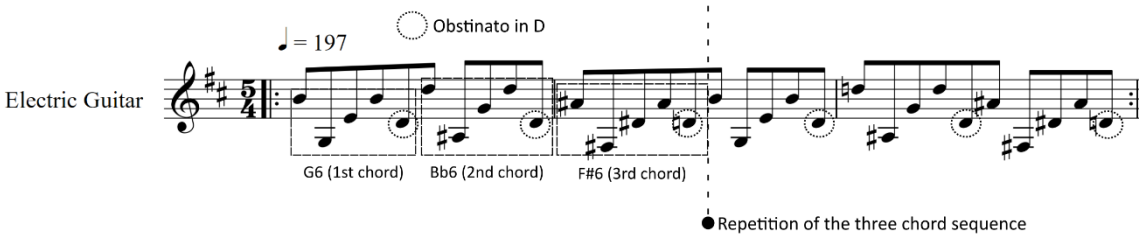


Figure 13. Analysis of the first recorded idea.

The second register of the source material was made the next day and the A and B parts were developed. The harmonic rhythm was changed and a chord was added (A6) in order to prevent the sequence from repeating at the half of a measure and to extend the first three chords idea. Furthermore, the B part served as a development of what would be a section of 12 measures, despite the fact that at this moment there was an inconsistency in the harmonic rhythm of B part due to the fact that there was a chord changing in a half measure – like the first idea – and the last measure needed to be in 5/8 to close the sequence.

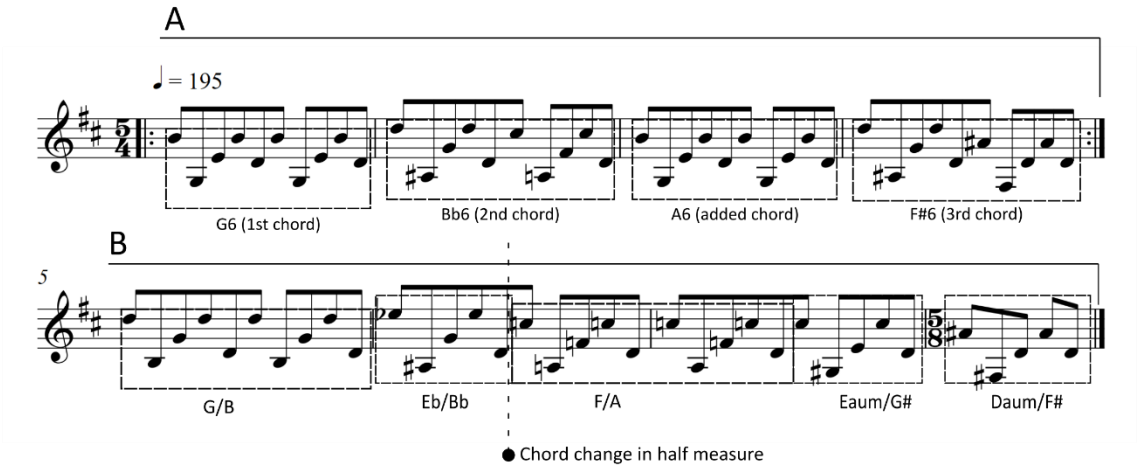


Figure 14. Analysis of the second recorded idea.

The third recording and composition session was carried out after 39 days and a C part was conceived. This part functions as a development of the B part following the descending bases in the chord progression. Additionally, in this case, the harmonic rhythm was proportional and did not present problems.

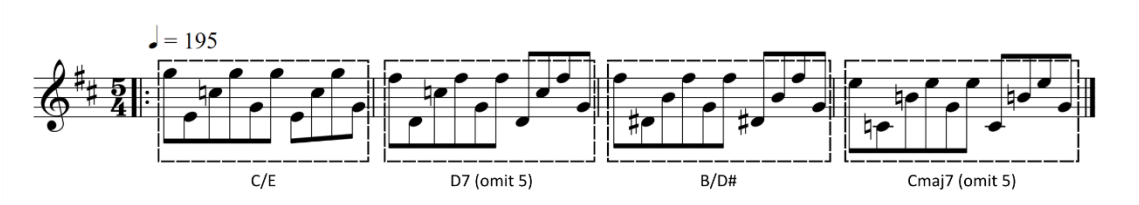


Figure 15. Analysis of the third recorded idea.

Furthermore, during this session, a conceptual idea, which was applied in the second source material conception process, emerged. This idea was the possibility of creating a D part made of a combination of the chords from the A and C parts.

During the fourth session, which happened 20 days after, two ideas of a first phase of a potential melody were executed over the A part. Both of them were discarded from the first version of the piece and saved until the last source material conception when they were recovered to be included in the composition. Both ideas were very similar except for the outline of a segment and the different endings.

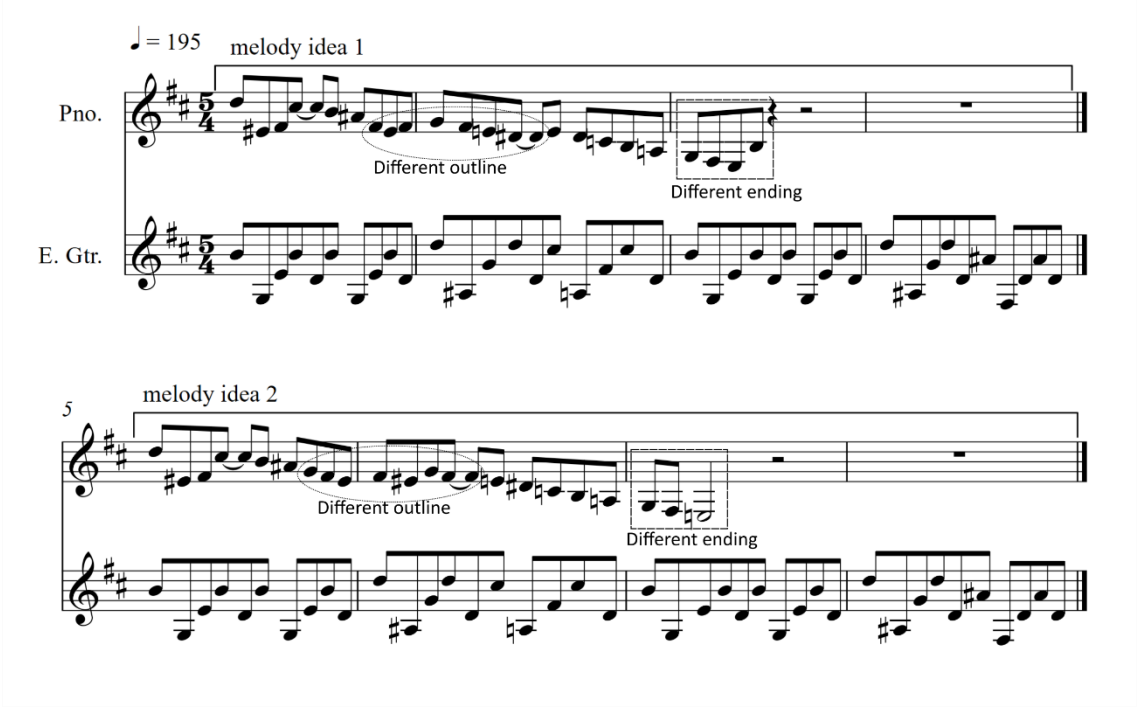


Figure 16. Melody ideas that were discarded for the first version of the piece.

During the last session of the preparation stage, which happened one week later, the C part was adapted, and the idea of the combination of parts A and C was reinforced with a first recorded version. In Figure 16, a comparison between the two versions of part C is presented, and in Figure 17, the first version of the A and C parts combination can be noted.

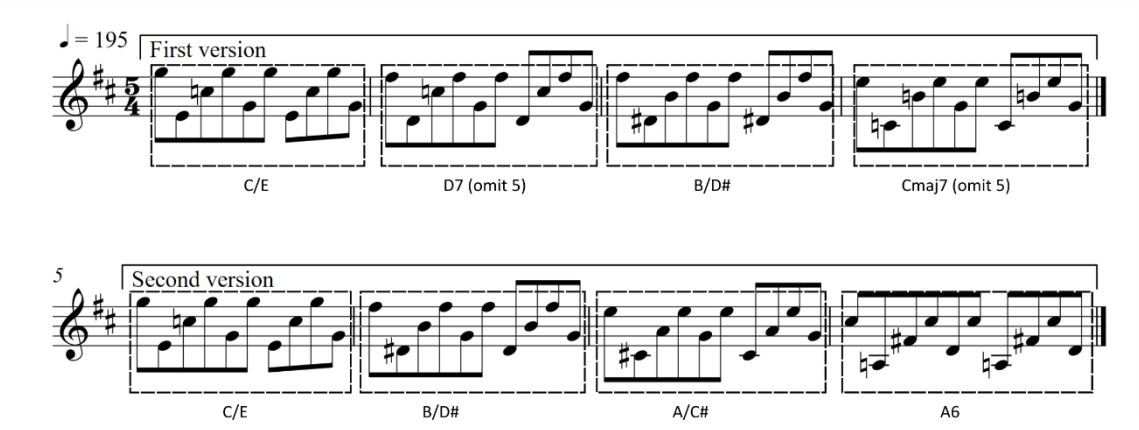


Figure 17. Comparison of the two versions of part C.

In the figure above it is possible to observe that both versions are very similar but what was the third chord became the second, which makes the chromatic descending stronger, considering that in the second version the full chords are transposed chromatically and in the first one it is only the base that descends that way.

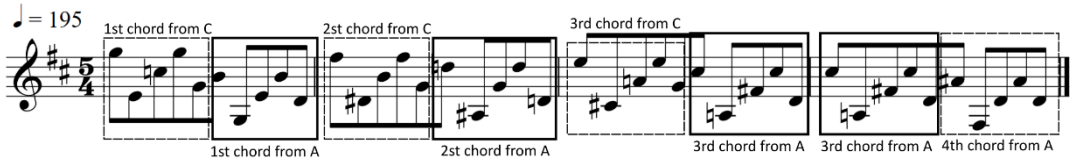


Figure 18. The first version of the A and C parts combination idea.

Figure 17 exemplifies how a conceptual idea (Conceptual Preparation) emerged before becoming a recording of an idea that would be used in the next stage of the process (Practical Preparation).

Regarding the planning stage, the use of a practical goal was applied to take into account that the objective of writing the first version was to include an introductory composition for a specific concert. Moreover, during the conception stage, a contrasting part emerged and the first intention was to be played by the group while the guitar improvised after playing the A, B and C parts in solo.

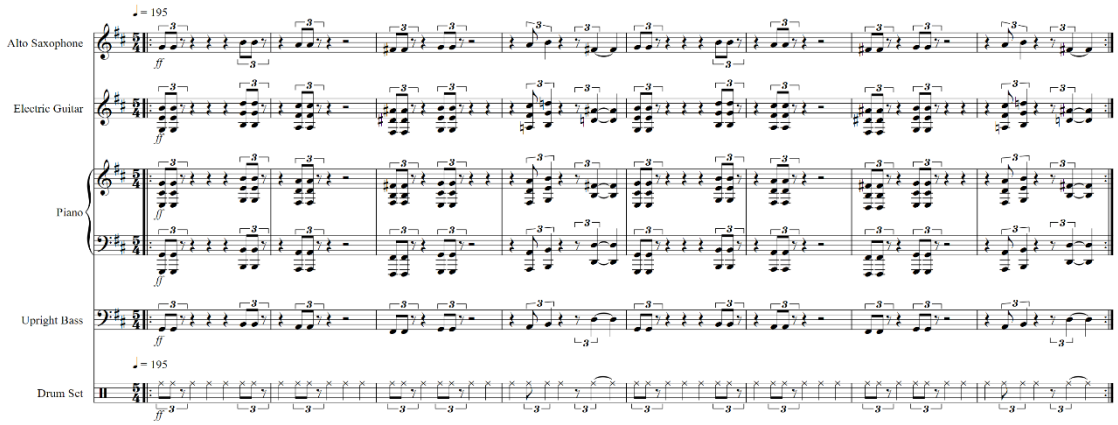


Figure 19. Contrasting part of the first version of *Solo#4.*

Later on, a layer approach was applied, where the guitar part was played at the same time as the contrasting part. Then, the contrasting layer was modified by a detailed approach, making small changes in order to improve the junction between the guitar and the group parts.

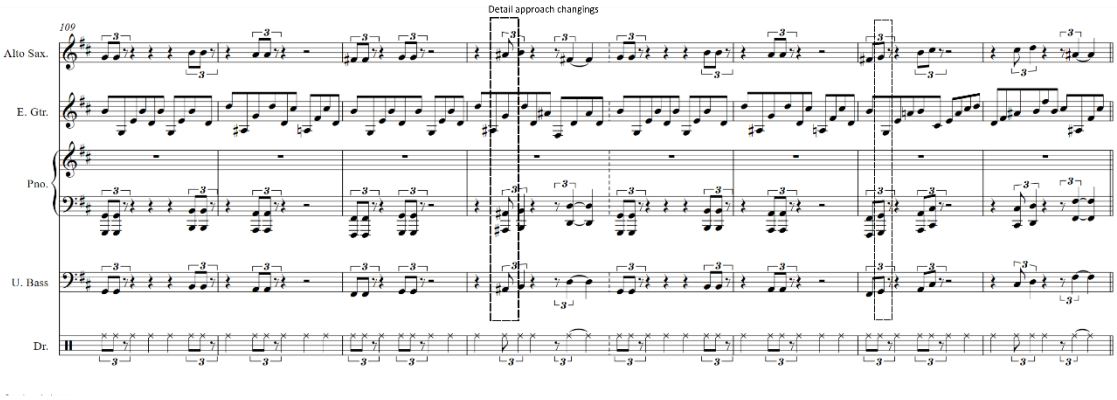


Figure 20. Detailed approach to the contracting part of the first version of *Solo#4.*

Finally, the use of the binding approach was applied by integrating melodies that worked as links between parts A and B, and between chord in part C.

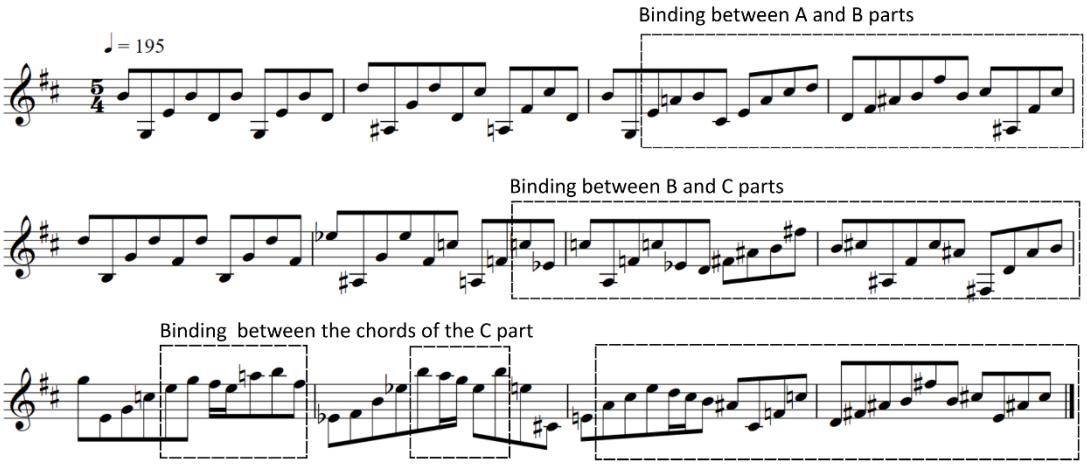


Figure 21. The final guitar part of *Solo#4* with binding melodies.

Regarding the second source material conception process, the map would be configured differently from the first one:

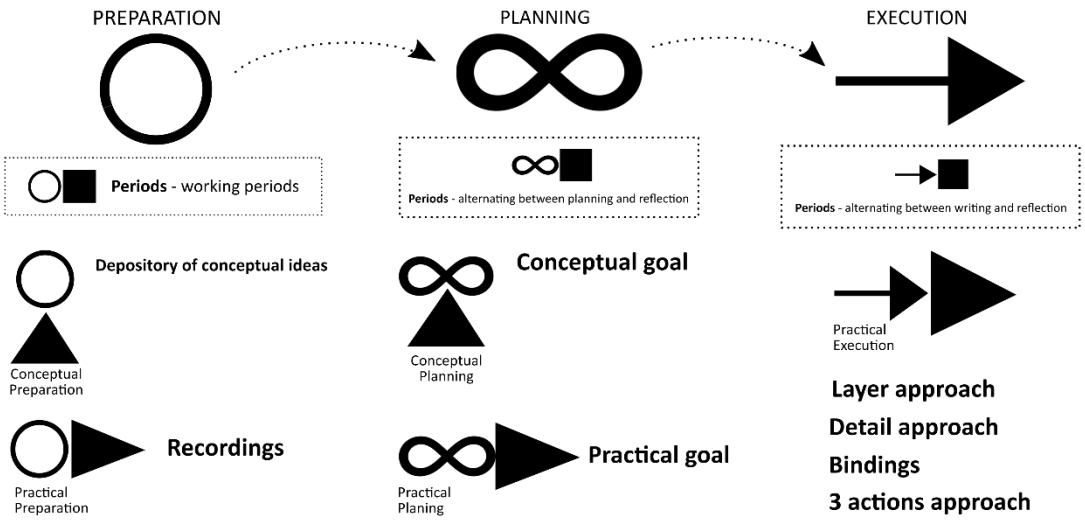


Figure 22. Solo#4 Second source material conception map.

In this case, a part of the preparation stage happened during the execution of the first source material conception, when the idea of combining the A and C parts, and the possible melody conception were discarded but saved for further potential compositional processes. Throughout this stage, the conceptual idea could be considered to combine parts, and the practical idea could be the recording of the melody presented before (see Figure 16). Additionally, the application of periods of work and reflection was evident taking into account that the B part was changed following the harmony that was registered the first time of its conception (see Figure 15).

Regarding the planning stage, the conceptual goal was to develop the former composition including the melody and new parts with different orchestrations. The practical goal was to complete a composition that at this moment was considered an unfinished first version. Finally, concerning the execution stage, various features were applied, including the Layer, Detail, Bindings and 3 Actions approaches.

The first action during the execution stage was to outline a definitive part D (Figure 23), which was defined by combining the A and C parts, including one chord of the B part and three bindings between chords. The final idea of the D part was conceived and recorded one month after the concert in a different way from the first idea (see Figure 18).

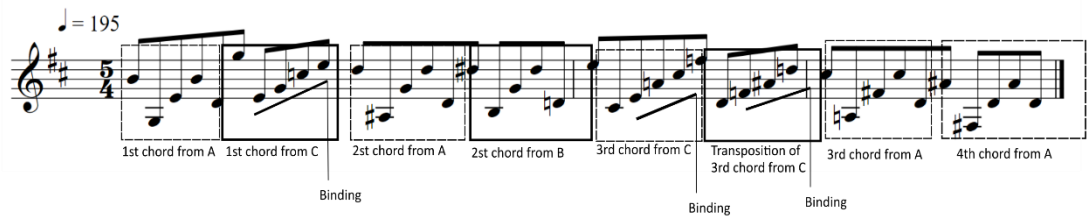


Figure 23. Definitive part D of *Solo#4.*

Continuing, an orchestration of the D part was made by creating a rhythmic contrasting background:

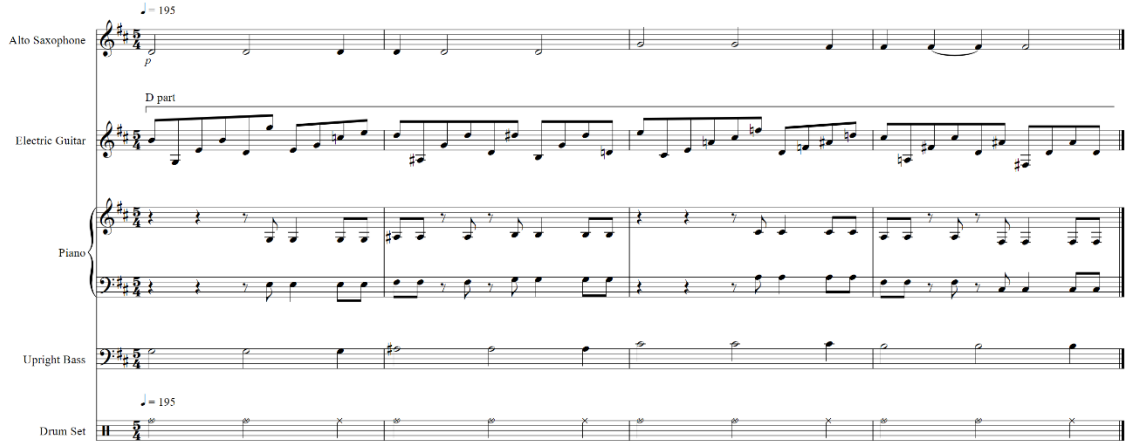


Figure 24. Contrasting orchestration of the D part.

Later on, the two phrases of the melody recorded before were used for the D part and joined using the piano rhythmic idea. In addition, a baseline was included:

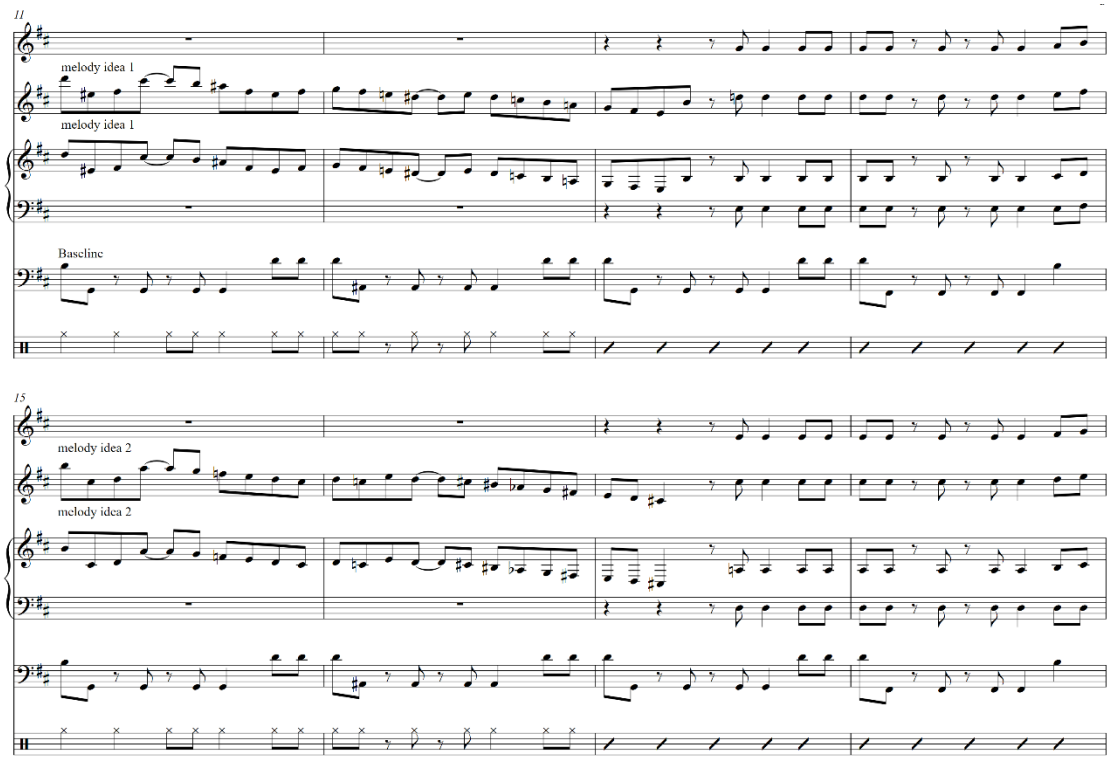
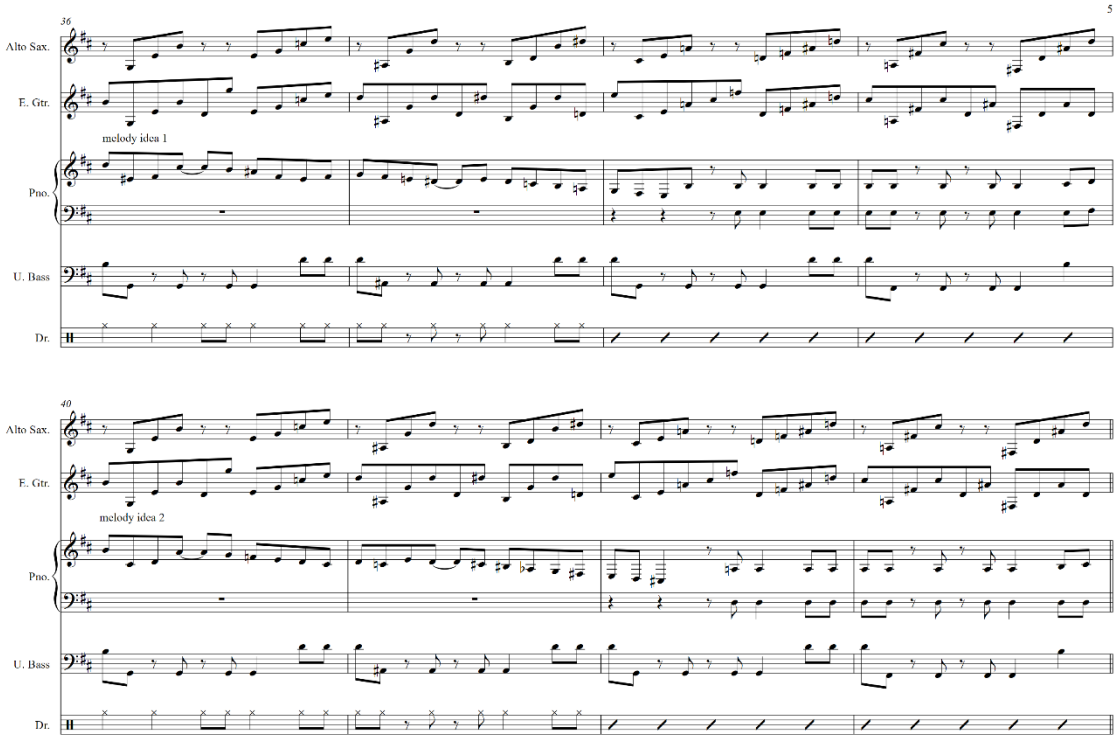


Figure 25. Part D melody with baseline.

Finally, a layer approach was applied combining the new ideas to create a las melody exposition and finishing with the piano rhythm in *tutti:*



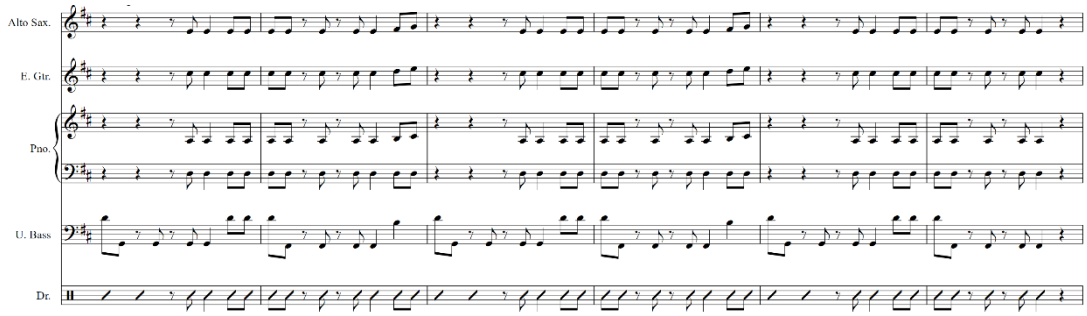


Figure 26. Final layer approach.

14. Conclusions

Regarding the conception of the first ideas and material of a new composition, many aspects revealed to be crucial for a better understanding of the creative process of music composition. Concerning the implication of the theory of creativity, it was possible to identify that being aware of the influence of the domain could help composers to approach the gestation of the first material for new compositions. For a better understanding of this influence, the concept of the domain was divided into the past and present categories. Additionally, a third type was defined as the personal domain, which represents the music created by the actual composer in the past.

The results allowed to develop a map that represents the main features associated with the conception of the source material, which is divided into three stages: Preparation, Planning and Execution. Furthermore, conceptual and practical approaches to the preparation and planning stages were identified but only practical to the execution phase. The delineated map, made of a system of symbols, was found useful by composers to approach the compositional process as well as it serves as a guideline for the analysis of the creative process in the first stage of composition.

Regarding the preparation stage, the most relevant subject was the depository of ideas, which includes the discarded ideas from the previous compositions that may be used as source material for future compositions. Said depository of ideas could be conceptual, including thoughts and ideas that composers save – in their memory or in writing – in the form of images, texts or words; and it could also be practical, covering physical registers of ideas that could be in the format of written musical fragments or recordings. Additionally, it was concluded that awareness of the factors that make part of the preparation stage, can be used as a tool that helps the composer to be systematic over the registration of potential ideas.

Concerning the planning stage, it was deduced that the fact of having a goal for the composition is essential in the development of the creative process. Said objective could be conceptually represented by the use of drawings, images and words, or may also be established by a practical goal like preparing the music for an upcoming recording or concert.

The execution stage, during which the actual source material is defined, includes different techniques. Among these features, there were different approaches identified in the way that an idea is transformed into actual material and also developed after it. The “layer” approach

referred to the creation of musical layers that would work as the pieces of a “puzzle” that must be solved during the development of the composition. There was also the detailed approach, by which the composers can make small changes that may represent a big difference in the way that ideas are materialized. The improvisation approach, which is directly related to the jazz background of composers, includes the use of improvisation as a tool for exploration and developing musical material. Furthermore, the options approach represents the registration of different possibilities for solving the same musical problem avoiding being in a haste to discard ideas that could potentially be useful afterwards during the compositional process.

Finally, the map included general principles that may influence the three stages of the source material conception process, among which what stood out was the importance of not rushing the judgment about the ideas; the significance of taking the composer’s own opinions about the music as the deciding factor of what sounds good or not and the ideas that would be maintained within the source material; and the relevance of removing and simplifying material instead of increasing in order to develop ideas.

Concluding, it is essential to consider the results taking into account that the sample should be larger, including composers from different countries and it would be interesting to enlarge the field with composers from backgrounds other than jazz. Nevertheless, the results seem to be reliable, and the conclusions could be of the interest of composers, musical educators and people interested in the creative and compositional process.

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