

Experimentation as a learning method: developing a path for a creative study about the harmonic potentialities of the electric bass

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Abstract: Organologically classified as a melodic instrument, the electric bass has tonal and ergonomic characteristics that enhance its use beyond this designation. In this perspective, an increasing number of bassists seek to use the electric bass as a harmonic instrument. However, the lack of research on this approach hinders its development beyond individual initiatives. Based on an alternative tonal concept to consolidated practice, called LCCTO (Russell, 2001) and guided by a research design structured according to the concept of Affordances (Gibson, 1977) and the Perceptual Learning theory (Gibson & Pick, 2000), this investigation adopts experimentation as a learning method for performing vertical harmonies on the electric bass. The development of this path involves, (i) the construction of a harmonic vocabulary for the instrument and (ii) the creation of musical works from this vocabulary. The result of this work intends to contribute to the construction of a new paradigm for the practice of the instrument, for the academic discussion about it and, consequently, bring pedagogical implications concerning the academic program for bassists and the teaching methodology for this harmonic content. Regarding the latter, the proposed research design, as well as the harmonic vocabulary, structured as a book, may point to an initial path for further debate.

The results achieved so far point positively to the potential of using experimentation for the development of a, here called, Harmonic Approach to the Electric Bass. The experiments already concluded provided a number of 1153 chords playable on the instrument, which has been organized as a dictionary, as well as extensive material resulting from articulations (simultaneous execution) between these chords and the different scales proposed in the LCCTO. Also included in this material resulting from the experiments, are the Creative Applications, organized as musical studies, which reflect, through composition, the use of the contents already obtained.