

## MUSIC PERCEPTION AND READING IN BRAZIL: PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHIC STUDY

### *Percepção e leitura musical no Brasil: um estudo bibliográfico preliminar*

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#### **Abstract**

The study aims to present preliminary bibliographical research about the education process that involves perception and reading musical systems, considering the Brazilian University context. This is the first stage of the research project “*Cantador*”, promoted by the Federal University of Maranhão. The methodology is bibliographical research, using relevant bibliographic bases of the area, based on the definition of specific research terms, with an assigned time limit of 15 years, texts in Portuguese. The results of the searches were submitted to a selection process, considering the proximity and relevance to the current research, getting the number of 15 reference texts, organized by criteria such as authorship and journal of publication, which will be analyzed in detail in the sequence of the project. According to the data collected, the proposed theme is concentrated in some journals and events, and currently receives attention from few Brazilian researchers.

#### **Resumo**

Esta proposta tem como objetivo realizar um estudo bibliográfico preliminar sobre o ensino de percepção e leitura musical no Brasil no âmbito do ensino superior. Trata-se da primeira etapa do projeto de pesquisa “*Cantador*”, da Universidade Federal do Maranhão. Quanto à metodologia, se caracteriza como pesquisa bibliográfica, realizada por meio de bases bibliográficas representativas à área, a partir da definição dos termos descritores específicos, com delimitação temporal atribuída de 15 anos, considerando-se textos em língua portuguesa. O resultado das buscas passou por um processo de seleção, observando-se a proximidade e relevância à atual pesquisa, com o estabelecimento de 15 textos submetidos à leitura, organizados por critérios como autoria e periódico, que serão analisados detalhadamente na sequência do projeto. De acordo com os dados coletados, percebe-se que a temática se concentra em periódicos e eventos específicos, e recebe atenção de um grupo reduzido de pesquisadores brasileiros na atualidade.

**Keywords:** *Music; Musical Perception; Solfeggio.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Música; Percepção musical; Solfejo.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In a music teaching and learning process, one of the dimensions to be explored – regardless of the nature, the focus of the contents or the level of professionalization – consists of coordinating the perceptive and auditory capacity with the musical technical domain. This occurs from musicalization with children to adults, including formal education stages such as basic education, professional education in music and higher education courses.

I am a professor of the Languages and Codes / Music Course, at the São Bernardo Science Center, at the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), and one of the curricular components that usually focuses on the questions here presented is called “Musical Perception”, a set of four disciplines (I – IV) allocated in the initial periods of the Course. In other music courses in Brazil there are variants in the name of the discipline, however, practices and contents follow a similar line, regardless of the title. This set of disciplines usually occurs from the beginning of training, in most cases in four semesters, although we can find different disposals.

When revisiting my experience in the Course – since 2020 I have taught Musical Perception I to IV – I noticed, from a quantitative point of view, a tendency for these disciplines to have a higher failure rate in relation to the other curricular components. From a qualitative perspective, I perceive an interest in the content, on the other hand, a discomfort with these components in a considerable number of students. I also realize that the current curriculum in the Course, established in 2017, is not focused on providing a diversified listening experience in relation to Brazilian music, and considering my previous experiences predominantly focused on the area of historical musicology, the idea of discussing these issues arose, organized as a research project.

The project was registered at UFMA with the title “*Cantador*: Brazilian repertoire as a resource for musical perception and reading”, has no external funding and is expected to last for three years, starting in June 2023. It is structured in eight steps, as will be described:

- 1) Bibliography review: research of journal papers, events annals and monographic works that uses as a proposal the development of musical perception and reading, especially the ones centered in Brazilian music.

2) Study of didactic materials and solfeggio methods: reading and cataloging of published materials, followed by structural analysis to understand the categories addressed and didactic sequences proposed in each' method. Comparative study of methods in order to seek the most appropriate didactic sequence for the incoming material to be proposed as a result of this research.

3) Collect and classification of Brazilian music melodies: research and collect melodies that attend to the criteria defined in the previous steps, considering the didactic sequence to be proposed for the resultant material. The melodies will contemplate a variety of stylistic matrices, genres and musical contexts.

4) Study on copyright considering the possibility of using musical excerpts that are not classified as public domain.

5) Edition and preparation of partial didactic sections: the melodic excerpts intended to compose the didactic material resulting from this research will be edited in MuseScore, exported as *png* image, and organized in partial didactic sequence in a text software.

6) Test: the edited partial chapters will be submitted to tests in the disciplines of Musical Perception I, II, III and IV, in related disciplines and in internship activities of the Languages and Codes/Music Course in UFMA, and eventually in other teaching contexts, as the opportunity appears.

7) Evaluation of the tests and final edition: based on the results obtained in the tests, the content could be reorganized, as well as changes in the didactic sequence, inclusion of melodies, and whatever else is detected as necessary to be carried out during the testing phase. In this step, we'll finalize the edition, request the ISBN registration and organize the result in e-book support. If the demand for a printed version is detected and there is a development agency interested in the publication, could be also printed in a physical book.

8) Publication and distribution: will initially occur as an e-book, that will be available through UFMA's channels, free of charge. If the printed publication occurs, the distribution criteria and will be defined with the development agency that will finance the project.

Currently, the "*Cantador*" project is in its initial stage, dedicated to the bibliographic review, which is the object of this text.

## METHODOLOGY

This text, as the first stage of the “*Cantador*” project, aims to identify and discuss the bibliography related to musical reading using the voice, or the solfeggio, as well as the perceptive possibilities that characterize these practices in teaching activity considering the music in Brazil. Therefore, this study is characterized as a bibliography review.

The search for the texts was carried out through the *Portal de Periódicos da Capes* and Google Scholar. Initially, random descriptor terms related to the theme were applied, to identify which of the tested terms would present effective results. The most satisfactory results, considering the objectives of the study, occurred with the use of the terms “perception + music” and “solfeggio”. Other combinations of terms, such as “reading + music”, for example, provided an expanded search, which sometimes coincided with the titles from the previous terms, plus texts with themes farther from the proposal of the “*Cantador*” project, as many focused in reading applied to a musical instrument. As the focus would be the practice of reading using the voice, the solfeggio, the latter were not considered in the present study. The delimitation assigned was 15 years, therefore, texts from 2008 were considered. We considered only texts in Portuguese.

Based on the results obtained by the application of the description terms “perception + music” and “solfeggio”, we read the abstracts and classified as relevant or not to the proposal, as well as the indication of the main journals and most significant authors who dedicated themselves to the theme. After this initial classification, the selected texts were fully read. The results can be checked in the sequence.

## RESULTS

The search on the *Portal de Periódicos da Capes*, considering the delimitation of 15 years and written in Portuguese, applying the terms “perception + music”, generated a total of 326 publications, distributed as follows: 319 papers and 7 dissertations. When filtering by subject, focusing only on titles classified as “Music”, “Music Education” and “Reading Musical Scores”, the result was reduced to 17 titles. Of these titles, only 4 directly dialogue with the theme. Changing the term to “solfeggio”, the result was 14 papers, and of these, only 1 is closely related to the theme.

In Google Scholar, when applying the same filters of 15 years and Portuguese language, with the terms “perception + music”, 29,100 results were presented, without classification in categories. All the most relevant results were concentrated on the first pages, and little by little they were moving away from the theme, so it was decided to consider only the first 10 pages, totaling 100 publications. Four titles of possible interest to the theme were identified. By changing the term to “solfeggio”, 4,470 results were presented. Due to a similar behavior to the previous one, the same criteria as the first 10 pages were used, among which 5 titles of possible interest were found. The preliminary search results are demonstrated as follow (Table 1):

**Table 1** – Search Results.

Search tool	Description Terms	Quantitative	Relevant
Periódicos CAPES	perception + music	326	4
	Solfeggio	14	1
Google Scholar	perception + music	29,100	4
	solfeggio	4,470	5

**Source:** Author’s elaboration.

The data summarized above are not exactly a comparison, but a synthetic statement of the searches carried out to help the reader. Even though the criteria related to the time frame and descriptor terms were maintained, they are bases with different mechanisms and logics.

Among the 14 texts initially selected for the full review, there is one dissertation, two published texts in events annals of the *Associação Brasileira de Educação Musical* (ABEM), four in the *Revista da ABEM*, three in *Opus*, and the other four in other publications. We read the texts and observed the relevance of the themes considering the proposal structured in the “*Cantador*” project. Based on this criterion, the preliminary bibliographic reference of the project was established, characterized by the five texts listed below.

## DISCUSSION

The preliminary bibliographic search carried out in this paper, even separated by 15 years from one of the texts selected, written by Otutumi (2008), finds that the vehicles for disseminating this type of theme remain very close to what existed at the time. The author informed that “*Revista da ABEM* and the annals of conferences of this association have been the main means by which works in the area of Musical Perception are disseminated. . . , followed by *Revista Opus* and the annals of ANPPOM, *Revista Em Pauta* and *Hodie*” (Otutumi, 2008, p. 38).

The difference between the pre-selected texts (according to Table 1) and the texts that dialogue directly with the current proposal can be explained due to the fact that most of the listed studies are focused on the stimulus-response relationship or on discussions with greater distance from an approach practice. In the case of the “*Cantador*” project, the proposal is in a different direction, centered on music as a cultural experience for the acquisition of reading skills based on perception. Regarding a contextualized approach, we point out the report by Caregnato (2015):

What I have observed, as a researcher and teacher of the discipline, is that the current model of teaching Musical Perception has contributed a few to the formation of truly autonomous musicians, capable of listening to themselves and producing music critically, of establishing bridges between the concepts learned in classroom and the real world and to acquire knowledge that is perennial and not simply forgotten after the last test of the discipline. This form of teaching also does not seem to promote student mobilization and involvement with the subject matter. The influences of what has been characterized as a traditional teaching model seem rather to contribute to students developing repulsion or fear for the Musical Perception discipline (Caregnato, 2015, p. 96).

Regarding this traditional way of teaching Musical Perception, Otutumi (2013) identified five recurrent points in studies in the area:

(1) Predominant use of Western or European classical music repertoire, with an emphasis on tonality (and consequently a few use of Brazilian popular music repertoire); (2) Fragmented teaching of music; (3) Use of dictation and solfeggio as the main tools of the classes (with fragmentary practices and the piano as a reference instrument); (4) Musical Perception for training; (5) Teacher corrects by list of answers, privileges absolute pitch, in a performance that continues traditionalism (Otutumi, 2013, p. 171).

An aspect to be observed is that a considerable part of the teachers who dedicate themselves to musical perception practices, at least in the Brazilian context, were formed from the perspective described by the researchers, which demands reflection.

Considering this, Freire (2008) dedicated himself to discussing and comparing traditional reading and solfeggio teaching systems, whether fixed, movable or by interval relations, and concluded:

It can be verified that the traditional methods of teaching solfeggio, when related to the Brazilian musical context, present several elements of interference. Fixed solfeggio systems present as an interference element the inaccuracy regarding the use of accidentals, a situation in which the same syllable can represent several different sounds. Movable solfeggio systems, in turn, present as an element of interference: the fact that the same syllable can represent several different heights depending on the tonality, in addition to also presenting conflict with the instrumental practice (Freire, 2008, p. 124).

Based on these findings, the author proposed the “fixed-extended system”, in which no syllable would represent more than one note, with the intention of “valuing the particularities of each note, as in the fixed system, and also valuing the tonal functions, as in the movable system” (Freire, 2008, p. 125). This proposal is characterized using Guidonian syllables to represent natural notes, plus derived syllables to represent notes with accidentals.

In this study, it was not possible to identify other authors who discussed or applied Freire's proposal, which demands additional studies for verification following the review stage. It should be noted that in the “*Cantador*” project there is still no methodological definition on the possibilities of solfeggio and reading techniques, it is just an initial note, in a review nature, for the further development of the theme.

Among the 14 texts observed, there is one that comes close to the idea of the “*Cantador*” project, as it indicates, among other aspects, the use of national repertoire as a strategy for teaching reading and solfeggio. The authors, based on criteria indicated in the text, arrived at a result of “150 selected pieces from popular Songbooks, collections of Brazilian national pieces and music teaching methods” (Viana Júnior, Fernandes, Nogueira & Silva, 2014, p. 6). Apparently, the text indicates an initial stage of the authors' research, we did not obtain information about later stages. Following the bibliography review, the results will be verified in order to find out if the referred project has evolved and if it has produced additional results.

From this small sample initially selected, we will review the complete bibliography of the project based on the analysis of the works indicated in the reference lists, research of texts by the reviewed authors correlated to the theme, and direct searches in the journals that most frequently publish texts on the subject.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the preliminary bibliography review carried out as the basis for the “*Cantador*” project, it was possible to verify some reference researchers, as quoted in this text, as well as the relevance of some vehicles of scientific publication to the theme, among which the periodicals *Opus* and *Revista da ABEM*, an association from which we also highlight the annals of regional and national events. Despite the initial search having generated a significant number of results, considering the parameters mentioned above, the approach proposed in the “*Cantador*” project, focused on music as a contextualized cultural experience, differs considerably from perceived academic trends.

As a result of this preliminary search, in the next actions of the bibliography review of the “*Cantador*” project, a detailed search will be carried out in the reference lists of the indicated works, in the cited journals and annals, and in the publications of the authors referenced in this study.

One of the aspects pointed out by Otutumi (2013, p. 171), about the use of sometimes decontextualized repertoire, in our perception tends to cause distance by not providing a connection between the proposed content and the students' previous sound experiences, and this is precisely one of the central points of this proposal. From the “*Cantador*” project, we will collect melodies used in the Brazilian music repertoire, without restrictions regarding styles, genres and musical contexts, for later organization into didactic sequences to be established during the research. There is an expectation that the use of Brazilian repertoire will be able to contemplate the identification of who will use the material that will be produced by recognizing some of the melodies, and the possibility of expanding the knowledge of Brazilian music in the case of confronting hitherto unknown melodies by the student.



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