

METHODS FOR TEACHING HARMONY AND COUNTERPOINT IN SECONDARY MUSIC SCHOOLS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Abstract. *The school subjects Harmony and Counterpoint are part of the secondary music school curricula in the Republic of Serbia. The issue of adequate teaching methods to be applied in teaching these school subjects has sprung from the following factors: continuous education, prescribed teaching materials and an insufficient number of classes allocated to each of the aforementioned subjects. Regarding the fact that teaching methods define the manner in which students learn, acquire skills, habits and knowledge thus forming their own personalities, and realizing that these methods are the manner, tools and forms of teaching, this paper analyzes the present state of affairs in the secondary music school education as well as the application of relevant methods for teaching Harmony and Counterpoint. The paper proposes some potential alterations of the applied teaching methods with the purpose of achieving more efficient and creative approaches to teaching Harmony and Counterpoint in secondary music schools.*

Key words: *Harmony, Counterpoint, secondary music school, teaching methods, forms of instruction*

1. INTRODUCTION

As the most organized form of education and instruction, teaching presupposes a selection and practicing of various methods. An adequate choice of teaching methods and their appropriate application contributes to the quality of teaching and accomplishment of all prescribed tasks. Teaching methods determine teaching procedures and the activities expected to be performed by teachers and students.

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Trnavac and Đorđević define teaching methods as a purposeful and systematically applied manner of managing students' work during classes, which allows for acquiring knowledge and skills and their practical use. At the same time these methods contribute to the development of their academic skills and interests, their own view of the world and consequently qualify them to be valid participants in the real world (Trnavac, Đorđević 2002). According to Vilotijević, "a teaching method is a scientifically verified manner in which students, guided by their teacher, acquire knowledge, skills and habits and develop their mental and physical skills" (Vilotijević, Djurić and Vlahović 1996, 36).

Theory acknowledges numerous interpretations that use these concepts, starting with the pedagogical concept and the basic premise of teaching in an institution, all the way to an individual teacher's teaching style as well as the social and instruction forms applied in certain phases of teaching.

2. HARMONY AND COUNTERPOINT AS SUBJECTS IN THE SYSTEM OF SECONDARY MUSIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

Secondary music school education is directed towards the following goals: the development of crucial competences necessary for students' further education and their active participation in civil society, the development of musical skills and accomplishments in the field of music techniques and interpretation, the development of creativity and motivation for studying, critical thinking, as well as for teamwork, self-assessment, self-initiative and expressing their own opinion. These goals include gaining the skills for public performance along with the preservation of the tradition and culture of the Serbian nation and minorities, development of intercultural aspects, respect for and preservation of the national and world cultural legacy, instruction in solving musical problems, communication and teamwork.

These officially prescribed goals of the secondary music education are accompanied by those referring to the development of personality: cherishing of positive human values, instruction about the importance of health and safety, respect of racial, national, cultural, linguistic, religious, gender and age equality, tolerance and appreciation of differences, development of nonviolent behavior and zero tolerance to any kind of violence, raising consciousness about the importance of sustainable development, protection and preservation of nature and environment and ecological ethics, as well as the development of the sense of solidarity, understanding and constructive cooperation with other people (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 88/17, 27/18 – other law, 10/19 and 6/20).

Secondary music schools in the Republic of Serbia train students in several programmes: Classical Music, Jazz Music, Serbian traditional singing and playing, Church Music – Orthodox major, Church Music – Catholic and Protestant major, Early Music, Music Theory and Music Production with Sound Editing. Harmony and Counterpoint are mandatory school subjects to be attended by students in all programmes and with an identical number of classes, with the exception of the programme for Music Theory, Music Production and Sound Editing, which have twice as many classes since these school subjects are major mandatory courses.

Table 1 Harmony and Counterpoint in the secondary music school curricula

Programme	Number of classes	
	Harmony	Counterpoint
Classical Music	I (2) + II (2) + III (1) + IV (1)	III (1) + IV (2)
Jazz Music	I (2) + II (2) + III (1) + IV (1)	III (1) + IV (2)
Serbian traditional singing and playing	I (2) + II (2) + III (1) + IV (1)	III (1) + IV (2)
Church Music – Orthodox major	I (2) + II (2) + III (1) + IV (1)	III (1)
Church Music – Catholic and Protestant major	I (2) + II (2) + III (1) + IV (1)	III (1) + IV (2)
Early Music	I (2) + II (2) + III (1) + IV (1)	III (1) + IV (2)
Music Theory	I (2) + II (2) + III (2) + IV (2)	III (2) + IV (2)
Music Production and Sound Editing	I (2) + II (2) + III (2) + IV (2)	III (2) + IV (2)

Organizing teaching materials and the optimal time necessary for their realization are determined by the structure of the teaching curricula. As for the school subject Harmony, it is taught to the students from the first to the fourth grade of secondary music schools. Its curricula requires mastering the harmonic rules and musical logic when creating homophone chorus fractures, as well as studying and mastering audio harmonic practice and analytical interpretation of the examples from relevant reference texts (Nagorni Petrov 2022). Teaching of the subject Counterpoint in the third grade qualifies students to acquire knowledge in the area of the historical development and technical characteristics of the Renaissance counterpoint, as well as the skill to recognize the Renaissance musical forms and composing procedures, in accordance with the school subject curriculum. Teaching of this school subject in the fourth grade is aimed at learning about the Baroque music, its rules, techniques of composition and the most prominent traits, as well as recognizing the Baroque musical forms (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia¹, no. 88/17, 27/18 – other law, 10/19 and 6/20).

Considering that theoretical school subjects prove to be more important in the programmes Music Theory and Music Production with Sound Editing, this paper further analyzes the teaching methods applied in teaching Harmony and Counterpoint in these two programmes.

3. TEACHING METHODS OF HARMONY AND COUNTERPOINT IN SECONDARY MUSIC EDUCATION

The teacher, students and teaching materials represent the main actors in education, and together they form a methodical triangle (Vilotijević 1999). In accordance with their activities and the type of class organization, there has been traditionally applied the frontal instruction (or lecture-style instruction). The instruction circumstances require the choice of appropriate teaching methods, adapted to actual classroom situations and pedagogical and psychological interests of students, with the purpose of accomplishing instruction tasks.

The very structure and curricula of the school subjects Harmony and Counterpoint taught in secondary music schools define the following methods: oral presentation, interaction with teachers, work on the text, written exercises, illustrations and demonstrations, and practical tasks (Filipović 1977; Đorđević and Ničković 1990)¹. The methods applied

¹ Relevant pedagogical literature offers a number of definitions that determine the meaning and importance of the methods used in teaching. Views of teaching methods and their definitions differ regarding the standpoints and theoretical approaches of authors in question. The majority of the authors agree that the methods used in teaching are extremely important since they determine the quality of teaching and have an influence on the knowledge acquired by students.

in teaching Harmony and Counterpoint might slightly differ. These teaching methods are used with the purpose of developing and encouraging expressive, mental and creative skills of students.

Examining the current situation, we can conclude that the following teaching methods are used in teaching the school subjects Harmony and Counterpoint (Trnavac and Đorđević 2002):

- **verbal methods: monologues** (description, narration, story-telling), **dialogues** (popular lectures, discussion) and textbook assignments;
- **observational methods** (demonstration);
- **student-conceived practical tasks** (practical assignments, laboratory work)

1) One of the oldest teaching methods is **direct instruction (monologic method)**, which is often described as the "traditional" approach to teaching – teachers convey knowledge to their students primarily through lectures (ex catedra), by which teaching materials, teachers and students are related². Direct instruction is important for teaching since it provides systematic, exemplary and dynamic teaching environment (Đorđević and Ničković 1990). In applying this method, the teacher assumes the role of the main actor in teaching, that of an accomplisher. Yet, this method may be used by students, as well.

Direct instruction includes the following forms: lecturing, storytelling, description, explanation, argumentation and reasoning (Vilotijević 1999). *Explanation* is considered an appropriate tool for teaching new materials. This form of lecturing “is applied for interpreting unknown or unfamiliar words, concepts, rules, definitions, procedures, art works“ (Vilotijević 1999, 221). Explanation helps teachers clarify the causal relationships between various concepts, starting from what is already known to their students.

Acquiring skills and knowledge in the analyzed school subjects is based on both theoretical and practical work. Therefore, this method of direct or verbal instruction, which is most frequently applied in teaching Harmony and Counterpoint, should be combined with other teaching methods such as illustration and demonstration.

Dialogic teaching involves ongoing talk between teacher and students, prepared in advance³. Through dialogue, teachers can, in an unconventional and efficient manner, facilitate and elicit students' synthesis of their knowledge of Harmony and Counterpoint and encourage them to relate it to their knowledge of other school subjects (Radičeva 2008).

This method involves questions and answers⁴. Particularly important is asking clearly formed questions, based on students' previous knowledge of Harmony and Counterpoint and their intellectual skills⁵. Dialogic teaching is especially useful for reviewing, revising and testing achieved knowledge, as well as introducing new materials. School curricula prescribe *repetitorium*, which augments the course by reviewing material learned in classes of Harmony and Counterpoint, facilitating further studying and learning (Trnavac and Đorđević 1995; Vilotijević 1999, Živković 1979). *Repetitorium* is applied in classes of Harmony and Counterpoint with the purpose of reviewing smaller or larger segments of material, as well as for revising all the important points of the subject.

² This method is also known as achromatic (from Greek *akreatizane* – assumed to be listened to, oral, in the form of a lecture).

³ Together with the monologic method, the dialogic method – erotetic method – belongs to verbal methods.

⁴ “Besides questions and answers, the structural element in the dialogic method is frequently an impulse (by speech, an object, or mimicry), often used when a student provides an incomplete answer so that they should be encouraged to complete it” (Vilotijević 1999, 228).

⁵ Contemporary didactic science has posed numerous questions related to the application of the dialogic method: affirmative, alternative, apperceptive, absolute, meaningless, short, unequivocal, indirect, auxiliary, evolving, rhetorical, suggestive, equivocal, etc.

2) Observational methods (playing short exemplary pieces, listening, playing and singing assigned short compositions, harmonic and counterpoint analysis of assigned examples of music notes) elicits the *actual* application of the acquired knowledge. Namely, the theoretical knowledge is thus shown (illustrated) via a visual experience and transformed into an actual sound image (demonstration) representing the final stage of the mental process. Students are thus trained to convey their theoretical knowledge and transform it into the skill of harmonizing cadence, short modulations, devised harmonic tasks on the musical instrument (Ibid. 1979). However, this method is not often used in classes of Harmony. Students deem it difficult and rather unpopular. "The school subject of Harmony, taught in music schools, can be approached in two ways. The first one is of creative nature, involving students' own harmonization or harmonic improvisations, whereas the other one is the analytically descriptive one, contained in the harmonic analysis" (Hodžić 2015, 279). Introduction to analytical harmony is one more attempt at training students in this new skill. The present curricula prescribe a small number of classes to be devoted to this particular segment, leaving students insufficiently skillful and knowledgeable about it (Nagorni Petrov, 2017).

In classes of Counterpoint, students are taught through examples of music notes assigned in textbooks, students' written tasks for both vocal (singing) and instrumental (playing an instrument) counterpoint. Hence, a correlation with other school subjects is achieved: Solfeggio, Choir, Piano, Musical Instruments. Equally important is listening to certain Baroque polyphony compositions for better recognition of the forms and dominant counterpoint techniques. The clear correlation is shown with the school subjects Listening to Music and Musical Forms.

3) Student-conceived practical tasks are the methods that require that students complete Harmony and Counterpoint tasks as part of a specific assignment that combines practiced harmonic elements, their creation in the form of the assigned melody of soprano, bass, marked (coded) bass, contour double voice. Everything about this is taught during the introductory or first classes of Harmony (Živković 2006; Petrović 2011). A harmonic task is part of everyday activities during the Harmony classes. Doing various, problem-solving or free harmonic tasks encourages the development of students' creative thinking and raising of their consciousness of the significance of studying Harmony and applying it in practice (Dutina 2016).

The Counterpoint assignments for the students of the third grade include single-voice counterpoint melodies (*cantus firmus* and *florid* counterpoint), double voice and triple voice of the imitation stave, analytical analysis of the counterpoint procedures related to the assigned compositions of the main Renaissance composers, as well as playing an instrument and singing of the assigned examples, which contributes to the correlation with other corresponding theory school subjects. The Counterpoint assignments for the students of the fourth grade include double voice and triple voice polyphony stave, double voice invention and triple voice fugue, as well as the recognition of the most prominent Baroque musical forms (Stojanović and Milošević 2020).

The assignments can be done:

- **As classwork, in class** (individual work, in pairs or small groups). This method aims at achieving a higher level of individual engagement of each student in Harmony classes, either by their individual accomplishment of a task (harmonization) or by offering their suggestions and ideas about a potentially different harmonization. The main disadvantage of this method is the passive conduct of the majority of students. It is advisable to uphold old and tested didactic

principles of relevancy and moderation, and start with short and simple harmonic tasks (Kiš Žuvela 2015).

Unlike Harmony, Counterpoint classes have always been structured so as to include students' individual work, which is probably the case at present, as well. However, improvements visible in contemporary teaching have brought about novelties, such as pairwork or groupwork. For instance, the Renaissance free double-voice stave is preferably done in pairs (two students participate, the one writing the upper voice and the other writing the lower voice). Groupwork is chosen for the analytical observation of one selected polyphony from the Baroque period (invention and fugue). Classes might be more creative by using various music games, tests, error correction exercises with the purpose of developing critical thinking among students (Stojanović and Milošević 2020).

- **Homework** (doing homework that reviews one particular segment done in class or all relevant material). Doing homework that further improves the already acquired knowledge is part of everyday teaching of Harmony and Counterpoint. The teacher in charge of these school subjects is responsible for the following:

- Assigning students particular and individual tasks (to harmonize the assigned soprano or coded bass in Harmony; to produce a free double-voice stave, invention or fugue, on the assigned topic in Counterpoint)
- Selecting adequate (appropriate and suitable) tasks from relevant and prescribed textbooks.

Teachers are also essential in grading and correcting homework, suggesting better solutions, criticizing and praising the work of each individual student (Živković 1979).

- **Examination** (written, annual, final). Written examinations encompass all acquired knowledge and skills. Taking written, annual and final exams is a natural continuation and accomplishment of all teaching methods (Ibid. 1979).

4. IS IT POSSIBLE TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL TEACHING METHODS INTO TEACHING HARMONY AND COUNTERPOINT?

New findings in the field of pedagogy have offered the possibility of including novelties and necessary changes into the traditional secondary music education. The advance of information and communication technologies has obviously exerted its influence on the education system and practice. Mastering new teaching technologies enables the application of various teaching methods which in turn make teaching more interesting and comprehensible (Vidulin-Orbanić and Duraković 2012). Teaching can be improved by the introduction of appropriate media and multimedia. This will contribute to the individualization of learning and students' academic improvement, "intake of information orally and visually, unlimited repetition of relevant contents, organization of cooperative and interactive studying, managing learning and studying, timely feedback, easier access to different sources of knowledge, easier insight into various approaches to one problem, improvement of the quantity and quality of knowledge" (Vlahović 2001, 309).

The teacher applies direct instruction when teaching in order to interpret, explain and demonstrate all the necessary segments pertaining to the school subject. It is preferable to occasionally introduce students' discussion and debate in order to encourage them to participate more in class. Efficient learning can be achieved by constant application of other teaching methods such as individual work, groupwork, pairwork (Belković 2009).

The choice of a particular method depends entirely on students' needs and their actual abilities to solve certain problems related to the materials being taught.

Teaching of the school subjects Harmony and Counterpoint can be greatly improved by using illustration. It includes relevant signs, tables, graphs, diagrams, plans, maps, schemes, sketches, drawings, etc. These are meant to better explain the teaching materials transferred orally or in discussions, and to emphasize and clarify the most significant points. Therefore, certain complex concepts and harmonic procedures are thus easily memorized, becoming simpler and more comprehensible. This method requires an additional oral and/or written explanation. Moreover, the illustrative method involves the visual sense as an addition to spoken words. The visual illustration is to be supplemented by the sound illustration (sound recording, playing exemplary pieces of music on a musical instrument by a teacher), and students are to be invited to participate in the performance by singing and/or playing an instrument (Vilotijević 1999).

CONCLUSION

The school subjects Harmony and Counterpoint are taught as mandatory subjects to the students attending all programmes in secondary music schools in the Republic of Serbia. Teaching of Harmony (four school years) and of Counterpoint (two school years) includes the following teaching methods: direct instruction (monologic), dialogic teaching, observational method (playing short exemplary pieces, listening, playing and singing assigned short compositions, harmonic and counterpoint analysis of assigned examples of music notes), student-conceived practical tasks completing Harmony and Counterpoint tasks. The aforementioned teaching methods and their application in classes of Harmony and Counterpoint contribute to the acquisition and improvement of relevant knowledge, skills and habits.

The traditional manner of teaching the school subjects Harmony and Counterpoint requires the inclusion of various novelties, additional materials, and changes in the application of teaching methods. The use of "contemporary" technologies and the combination of the already existing teaching methods facilitate the acquisition of the teaching materials by encouraging students to recognize their advantages, practical application of learned materials, as well as infinite possibilities for expressing their own creativity.

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NASTAVNE METODE HARMONIJE I KONTRAPUNKTA U SREDNJIM MUZIČKIM ŠKOLAMA REPUBLIKE SRBIJE

Nastavni predmeti Harmonija i Kontrapunkt ugrađeni su u obrazovni proces učenika svih odseka srednje muzičke škole na teritoriji Republike Srbije. Kontinuirani obrazovni ciklus, propisani nastavni sadržaji kao i nedovoljan broj časova za njihovu realizaciju otvaraju pitanje primene nastavnih metoda u nastavi predmeta Harmonija i Kontrapunkt. Polazeći od toga da nastavne metode definišu način pomoću koga učenici stiču i usvajaju znanja, umenja, navike i veštine i time izgrađuju svoju ličnost, kao i da predstavljaju načine, sredstva i oblike postupanja u nastavnom radu, predmet analize je trenutno stanje unutar srednjeg muzičkog obrazovanja i primena relevantnih metoda u nastavi predmeta Harmonija i Kontrapunkt. U radu se ukazuje na moguće izmene i dopune u procesu primene metoda rada i dostizanja efikasnije i kreativnije nastave predmeta Harmonija i Kontrapunkt u srednjim muzičkim školama.

Кljučне речи: *Harmonija, Kontrapunkt, srednja muzička škola, nastavne metode, oblici rada u nastavi*