

Bachelor of Culture and Arts

2021

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HOW TO AND WHY TEACH COUNTERPOINT IMPROVISATION TO CHILDREN ON THE CLASSICAL GUITAR


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How counterpoint improvisation can be taught to children on the classical guitar, by creating a first draft of a pedagogical and didactical teaching concept is explored as the main objective of this thesis.

Primarily literature-based research methods combined with the personal experience of the author in the field of (counterpoint-) improvisation, as well as in teaching children classical guitar and classical guitar performance are being used in this thesis.

Advice and help was received by Carlo Benzi, Tuukka Terho and Steven Bolarinwa. In this thesis it is argued for a progressive skill-based teaching curriculum based on play and group-based pedagogy to teach children systematically counterpoint improvisation on the classical guitar. The concept of a skill-based curricula is explained in the beginning together with the definition of the target group of children towards which this counterpoint improvisation teaching is aimed. A light is shone on the current state of improvisation studies at Finnish music institutions, whilst future plans of the ministry of education on the subject matter are being taken into account as well.

The reasons for early counterpoint improvisation studies are given and the concept behind counterpoint is explained. A number of historical counterpoint improvisation practices are selected as the main teaching goals for children to learn. They are analyzed, explained, broken down into skills needed and skills that are going to be learned whilst practicing them. For each counterpoint practice possible games and exercises are proposed, it is shown how and why the author intends to implement group and play based pedagogy to teach counterpoint improvisation to children on the classical guitar.

The thesis is intended as a theoretical foundation for future empiric studies with children on the subject of counterpoint improvisation to go on from, with the goal of creating a play-based method to teach counterpoint improvisation on the classical guitar.

KEYWORDS:

improvisation, counterpoint, children, play based pedagogy, classical guitar, teaching

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MITEN JA MIKSI OPETTAA KONTRAPUNKTIIN PERUSTUVAA IMPROVISOINTIA KLASSISTA KITARAA SOITTAVILLE LAPSILLE?

Tämän kirjallisen opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on luoda pohjaa ensimmäiselle pedagogiselle ja didaktiselle opetuskonseptille, jotta löytyisi vastaus kysymykseen, kuinka kontrapunktiin perustuvaa improvisaatiota kannattaisi opettaa lapsille klassisella kitaralla. Opinnäytetyö on tarkoitettu teoreettiseksi perustaksi tähän aiheeseen liittyville tuleville empiirisille tutkimuksille,

Tässä opinnäytetyössä käytetään ensisijaisesti kirjallisuuspohjaisia tutkimusmenetelmiä ja hyödynnetään kirjoittajan henkilökohtaisia kokemuksia klassisesta kitaransoitosta, kontrapunktiin perustuvasta improvisaatiosta ja sen opettamisesta lapsille.

Improvisaation opetuksen nykytilaa suomalaisissa musiikkioppilaitoksissa tarkastellaan ja esitellään suomalaista progressiivista taitopohjaista soitonopetuksen opetussuunnitelmaa, joka perustuu leikkiin ja ryhmäpohjaiseen pedagogiikkaan ja jossa opetetaan lapsille systemaattisesti klassisen kitaran improvisaatiota. Taitopohjainen opetussuunnitelma ja sen kohderyhmä, jolle tämä kontrapunktiin perustuvaa improvisaation opetus on suunnattu, määritellään. Kirjoittaja huomioi myös Suomen opetusministeriön esittämiä aiheeseen liittyviä tulevaisuuden suunnitelmia. Syitä kontrapunktiin perustuvan improvisaation opetuksen tarpeellisuudelle perustellaan ja vastapisteen taustalla oleva käsite selitetään. Kontrapunktiin perustuvan improvisaation opetuksen tavoitteiksi lapsille on valittu useita improvisaation historiallisia käytäntöjä, jotka on selitetty esimerkein. Improvisaation toteuttamisessa tarvittavat taidot on kuvattu, samoin ne taidot, jotka opitaan kontrapunktiin perustuvaa improvisaatiota harjoitellessa. Jokaisen kontrapunktiin perustuvan käytännön opettamiseen ehdotetaan mahdollisia pelejä ja harjoituksia. Lopuksi kerrotaan, miten ja miksi kirjoittaja aikoo toteuttaa ryhmä- ja leikkipohjaisen pedagogiikan opettaakseen kontrapunktiin perustuvaa improvisaatiota lapsille klassisella kitaralla.

Tulevaisuudessa kirjoittajan tavoitteena on luoda konkreettinen leikkipohjainen opetusmenetelmä kontrapunktiin perustuvan improvisaation opettamiseksi klassisella kitaralla.

ASIASANAT:

improvisaatio, kontrapunkti, lapset, leikkipohjainen pedagogiikka, klassinen kitara, opetus

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1. Introduction

Why should children learn counterpoint improvisation, why is improvisation a relevant topic in classical music and what are the specific chances and obstacles when children learn counterpoint improvisation on the classical guitar, and how to organize the improvisation studies into a reasonable studying curriculum? These are questions that hopefully will be answered in this thesis and are part of my research question.

Why did I choose this argument? First of all, as a student teacher of classical guitar I realized that improvisation is a strong claim in most classical guitar curriculums but on the other hand I couldn't find any instructional material to teach classical improvisation on the guitar in a systematic way. On the other hand, I contracted a passion to learn improvisation myself studying a bit of Flamenco guitar. Whilst preparing my classical guitar repertoire I got strongly involved in baroque music and the art and its form of improvisation, counterpoint improvisation, which is the heart and center of classical music and which in my view could give a lot of inspiration for contemporary teaching. So, I decided to combine for my thesis my interests and the need for instructional material to teach children (counterpoint-) improvisation.

In the following thesis I am going to expand and explore the idea and concept of the counterpoint in far more detail. For the start I just want to give a very short and simple definition of the counterpoint, taken from Johannes Menke.

The counterpoint describes how vertically one note is to be organized against another note, it is not the art of artful polyphony, but the art of organizing multi-voiced music, achieving to a certain degree what is also understood as theory of harmony. (Menke, 2015, pp. 10–11)

1.1 Overview

Before starting with the thesis I shortly want to map out the route, that I want to take in this thesis to reach the answer for my research question, which is also the title of the thesis “How to and why teach children counterpoint improvisation on the classical guitar”.

I will shortly explain the content of each chapter:

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.2 Research Question

1.3 Skill based vs. age-based system

1.4 Defining the target group

In the introduction we are going to clearly define the research question and describe the goal of this thesis. This will be followed by my reasoning why I choose a system for teaching counterpoint improvisation on the guitar in which the progress is skill based and not based on the students' age. In the last part of the introduction, I will define the target group to which I am tailoring the didactical system to.

2. The current state of improvisation studies in Finland's music institutions

In this chapter I will give a brief overview of the plans of the ministry of education regarding the future role of improvisation teaching in music institutions in Finland. I am also going to show a few examples of current guidelines set by institutions for improvisation teaching. Concluding I am going to compare this to what the perceived reality of improvisation teaching looks like.

3. Why (counterpoint) improvisation

3.1. The concept behind the counterpoint and why everyone can learn counterpoint improvisation

3.2. Why improvisation with clear rules/counterpoint improvisation vs. free improvisation should be thought

In the third chapter the reasons for teaching and learning improvisation, specifically improvisation with a clear set of rules like counterpoint improvisation are going to be laid out, as well as the basic concept behind the counterpoint, explaining why everyone should be able to learn counterpoint improvisation.

4. Counterpoint and didactical system

4.1. Defining the goals of the didactical method and the therefor necessary skills based on historical practices

4.1.1. Diminutions, Imitations and Variations

4.1.2. Organum Parallelum, Tvisöngur, Gymel and Faux bourdon

4.1.3. Two voiced contrapunctus simplex, contrapunctus diminutus and syncopated contrapunctus diminutus

In this chapter we are going to divide our didactical system into a three-step curriculum consisting of “basic counterpoint improvisation level” and “advanced counterpoint improvisation level A and B”.

The main subject of this thesis will be the “basic counterpoint improvisation level”. We are going to define the clear goals for this “basic counterpoint improvisation level”, based on a selected group of historical practices. Following we are going to analyze the skills needed for these historical practices, as well as the skills that the children are going to learn through practicing the historical practices. Towards the end of each paragraph on the historical practices I will explain how much of these practices I believe can be learned and studied with children. An example on how these practices could be taught in a playful manner will conclude each paragraph.

5. Play based and group-based pedagogy as a fundament to teach children counterpoint improvisation

In this last chapter we are going to elaborate on why play and group-based pedagogy might be the ideal ways to teach counterpoint improvisation and why they should be the fundament for a practical teaching method that has to be developed though future research on this field is necessary.

1.2 Research Question:

The Research question of my thesis is: “How to and why teach counterpoint improvisation to children on the classical guitar.”

My thesis is considered a first approach to solve the research question which in a second step consequently to this thesis should be followed by empirical research in which the here presented thesis should be tested in real life pedagogical settings with different participants and probably modified to become a more practicable and efficient teaching system according to the results of the empirical studies.

This bachelor thesis is to serve as a possible launching pad into a rather unexplored field of music and instrument pedagogy. I hope to highlight the benefits of and the reasons for including the field of counterpoint improvisation into music education and instrument

pedagogy in a structured and methodical way from early instrument studies on and hopefully give already a peek on how to achieve this.

Before going into the details, I want to address and clarify a few definitions or questions resulting from the research question and its phrasing.

First of all, I would like to mention that with using the verb teaching I wanted to inform the reader that this thesis is going to be written through the lens of the teaching part, whilst with mentioning the children I wanted to include the learning part, whose specific needs and motivations are a central part of the thesis.

Children addressed in the thesis do already have some experience with playing the guitar, therefore the suggested teaching approach should not be seen as a way or method to teach classical guitar to children through counterpoint improvisation, although it seems obvious, that the children are going to improve their basic instrumental (and musical) capabilities just by exploring their instrument and its possibilities whilst improvising.

Whilst it seems impossible to find a comprehensive definition for improvisation, that would cover the term in all circumstances, a definition given by Edward Neeman perfectly describes the concept of improvisation I followed in this thesis:

“Improvisation is the creation of something new in the moment of performance. It exists exclusively in the present, both as a creative impulse and as a musical experience; the power of its immediacy cannot be fully captured for future reinterpretation. It can be distinguished temporally from composition and interpretation; composition is about planning for the future and interpretation is about determining the meaning of music created in the past. While nonimprovised interpretation can strive after an “ideal existence” that perfectly captures the original intentions of the composer, improvisation is impermanent, concerned only with the “concrete existence” of each single performance.” (Neeman, 2014, p. 39.)

Although Neeman’s dissertation is talking mostly about open improvisation this general definition of the term fits the theme of my thesis well, with the only restriction that in this thesis we are talking about teaching improvisation following the rules and concept of the counterpoint. My view on the counterpoint will be explained in detail in the later chapters. This thesis should give teachers the necessary tools to understand counterpoint improvisation on the guitar enabling them to teach it from the ground up in all its details. It should give teachers also a first idea on how to possibly map out an individual long-term curriculum for students to learning counterpoint improvisation on the guitar.

With my thesis I want to build a fundamental theoretical didactical system to teach counterpoint improvisation on the guitar – describing what should be learned in which order, what pedagogic approach should be used to teach the subject, and why counterpoint improvisation and the different steps to arrive at it should be learned.

I am well aware the major critique point of this thesis could be that the practical part with possible exercises for children should be longer. However, I could not find any practical method for studying counterpoint improvisation on the guitar with actual exercises, nor could I find any teaching system that is up to date with contemporary pedagogy, also there is no such thing as a structured curriculum for improvisation studies on the classical guitar that would work in the context of the established Finnish music education system.

There was also the factor that I did not have enough children students of the right age for a long enough time at my disposal to try out many practical teaching methods and I did not want to falsely claim teaching methods to work when I had no way of testing them.

For these reasons I decided to use this thesis to first lay down a theoretical, with a coherent inner logic, whose system can be used as a first plan to explore the unknown reality of “teaching counterpoint improvisation to children on the classical guitar”. This theoretical framework has then to be, as already mentioned tested against reality in empirical studies with multiple groups of children.

The benefit of drafting a theoretical framework first is that it narrows down the research field for future empirical studies. A theoretical framework formulates a selected number of assumptions that can be tested and based on the results confirmed, changed, or rejected and maybe exchanged for new ideas based on the newly gained information. With this in mind I tried to create a theoretical framework on “How and why to teach counterpoint improvisation to children on the classical guitar”, which can be changed and adapted, and which at the same time incorporates already as many possibilities of implementation in the practical use (by mentioning some possible games to learn improvisation) as possible.

Additionally, the theoretical framework is important to understand the current situation of (counterpoint-) improvisation studies in music education in Finland. It allows us to envision clearly which goals should be reached and how and why we want this subject to be taught in the future. Plans for teaching this subject can be drafted subsequently accordingly to the current circumstances and the envisioned future

In future I would like to build a detailed methodical system, going more in depth on what exercises can be used to achieve the goals presented in this thesis. But to design a practical teaching method for counterpoint improvisation pedagogical interventions and empirical studies as well as more time is needed.

Before continuing I want to explain that I decided to include all genders in my writing by using the form he_she in my text. The “_” should encompass all genders apart from male and female for which the English language has still no grammatical representation.

1.3 Skill based vs. age-based teaching systems

In this thesis I am going to break down the counterpoint into its most basic building blocks to create some exercises or games, which can be played with young students. My goal is to create the exercises and games in such a way that they can also be executed and played by young players in the very beginning of their guitar studies, maybe together with older more advanced players, such as older students or teachers.

Consequently, to the breaking down of the counterpoint into its most basic building blocks we are going to determine the different skills needed for practicing and mastering these various building blocks. These building blocks will build on each other with the final goal of reaching step by step the capability of free counterpoint improvisation on the guitar.

Based on the skills needed to progress, the skill set achieved by the students and the progress that was made the educator can take an educated guess on when to progress to the next building block. By doing so a flexible learning and teaching system is created. This system can be adapted to each student individually, as well as to student groups, according to their skills and progress.

A skill-based system prevents us from having to define precise age groups for each new steppingstone in learning how to improvise. Having to do this would severely reduce the flexibility of this teaching system and therefore reduce its adaptability to the diversity of real-life teaching and learning environments outside experimental frames.

A skill-based system respects the individuality of each student. Comparatively learning systems founded on the idea of a homogeneous advance of children's capabilities depending on their age ignore the uniqueness of each child's or person's genetic differences, their possibilities and choices of development and their socio-cultural background (consisting of material, social, cultural, economic and contemporary history-based circumstances) as well as the environment in which the young students live, develop and learn, their fields of interest and motivations and the accessibility to and the inheritance of cultural capital of the child and its environment. (cf. Siegler u. a. 2016, 15–18.)

The still widespread idea in psychology and developmental psychology of how and at which age children homogeneously develop and progress in their skill set is the result of scientific findings obtained through test and experiments made nearly exclusively with white children from middle class families in Europe and the USA without reflecting this limited target group (cf. Borke et al., 2019, pp. 33, 34, 220). As people living in these contexts form only approximately 5% of the entire world population (cf. Arnett, 2008; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010). The psychological characteristics of this specific group of people has

been proven through multiple studies not to be applicable to the majority of the world's population. These concepts of age dependent development cannot be seriously considered a basis for any pedagogical, didactical teaching and learning system with the claim to be applicable to the different learning and teaching environments of the globalized 21st century in which children from all cultural backgrounds, with their different individual resources learn together and should get equal opportunities in learning and studying to pursue their dreams.

To provide a fair and motivating teaching system - that is fitting for every young student and that therefor can be adapted to each student's individuality with the goal to teach any child counterpoint improvisation on the classical guitar - the didactical decision when a student will be able to progress to more difficult aspects of the counterpoint improvisation has to be skill based and not age based.

Nevertheless, age should not be completely ignored for didactical decisions. Despite the individuality of a student, his/her competences, the student's personal development are in the center of didactical planning, which means that the counterpoint improvisation lessons and the approach to teaching counterpoint improvisation has to be modified and tailored to the student. This also means that in most of the cases one should play different games and explain backgrounds to exercises differently to a 7-year-old than to a 9-year-old for example.

1.4. Defining the target group

All this be said, pedagogy as a field is defined by its dichotomy of emphasizing evermore the uniqueness off everyone's individuality and trying to adapt to it, whilst at the same time having to search for common rules and generalize. Otherwise, it would not work as field of research and science and a basis for various didactical methods that educators can draw from and rely on. Therefor I will draw specifically for this thesis a general starting age, at which I believe the teaching of counterpoint improvisation on the classical guitar can be started.

It has to be said, that since there has not been any research in the practical field on my thesis with a test group of students big enough to draw any definite conclusions to its effectiveness and applicability, the following statement of an appropriate age to start learning counterpoint improvisation, might therefor reveal itself to be wrong. All things considered, I believe a good starting age for many children to learn counterpoint improvisation coincides with the first years of elementary school in Finland, so around the age of 7 or 8. At the necessary skill level of playing guitar the child has to be already capable of playing melodies. The reasons for that are the following:

- Motoric skills and strength/dexterity: It is very easy to understand why the motoric skills as well as strength and dexterity are important for a child to learn counterpoint improvisation. As counterpoint improvisation is going to be a new learning experience for the children it will be tiring and demanding a big portion of the children's focus. It is important that the children can focus on the improvisation task, in whatever form it is presented to them and not be distracted by "mechanical" problems in the execution of the exercises on the guitar. If the children still have to focus on the single execution of movements to play a melody or if their hands hurt because they do not have enough strength in their fingers and hands, it will drastically reduce the possibility and the fun of learning new musical skills as they are still busy learning the basics of guitar playing. Most sources addressing a good age for children to start studying classical guitar in general define it on whether children of a certain age have the strength in their hands to properly plug the strings with the right hand. Even more crucial is thought to be the strength needed in the left hand to press down the strings on the fretboard with the left hand. ("What is the Best Age to Start Guitar Lessons?" n.d.) I however believe that fine motor skills and therefore the control over small movements with the hands and body are far more important for guitar playing than strength is. Younger children mostly lack the fine motor skills in the hands and body to use shifts in the weight between the fingers. This results in them needing more strength for the same movement than an older and more advanced guitarist needs for the same movement. The fact that children need to compensate fine motor skills with strength, which they have less of compared to adults for example, makes the guitar a very unthankful instrument for smaller children. However, from my own experience I can tell, that if children enjoy playing, are instructed well on technique from the beginning and are supported by their parents in daily practice the strength to play the instrument, for an entire lesson of 45 min is developed within a few months sometimes just in a few weeks.

The fine motor skills take longer to develop, I reason though that the level of fine motor skills to play without difficulties easy melodies is definitely achieved by children at the time they start with elementary school, especially if they started to play the guitar some time before starting to learn how to improvise, which is anyways the assumption for this thesis. Also, children's studying of writing and drawing in preschool and elementary school will further advance their fine motor skills helping them with playing the guitar.

Instrumental skills:

Learning how to improvise is doubtlessly going to have a positive impact on the child's technical abilities on the instrument and more basic forms of improvisation surely can be used earlier in teaching the very basics of guitar playing to a child. This program however is not meant to teach the child how to play the instrument, meaning learning the technique. The goals of this program are for children to start learning, exploring, understanding, and using musical language. Here for it is important that the child has already learned the basics of (classical-) guitar playing and is continuing to learn and study it alongside the counterpoint-improvisation studies.

I have to particularly stress the importance, that the child partaking in this program already knows how to play simple melodies, because as is shown in later chapters this is going to be the bases of a lot of the fundamental practices in learning counterpoint improvisation.

This means, that studying counterpoint improvisation is going to start between one and two years after the child has started to study classical guitar, depending on its development on the instrument.

Unfortunately, I could not find any scientific study showing the average age at which children start studying (classical-) guitar (in Finland or in the rest of the world). This would be an important factor to consider when figuring out a medium age at which children could start studying counterpoint improvisation.

So, I examined different sources for the recommended starting age for playing the guitar to have at least some empirical basis for my age suggestion when children should approximately be ready to start studying counterpoint improvisation.

As a result of my research I found many differing answers from professional sources like "Musika", the "Turku Suzuki School", the "International Schools of music Finland" and prof. Heinz Teuchert that give a starting age for guitar playing between the year 3-8 with a strong overlap at the age of 5-6 years. (Ketonen and Turku Suzuki School, n.d., "Preinstrumental Lessons," n.d., "What is the Best Age to Start Guitar Lessons?," n.d.)¹

Now different sources give different ideas on when a child should start guitar lessons. Whilst all of the sources are based on the authors personal experiences, there remains the problem that none of these sources are based on scientific research

¹ More details on these sources and their reasoning can be found in the appendix 1

trying to find the best age and/or the average age at which children start leaning the guitar.

Considering all the above, including the points made in “Motoric skills and strength” I still believe the First Elementary School years to be a good start to study counterpoint improvisation. For one although it is hard to establish an average age for starting to play the guitar, most sources seem to agree a good start for playing the guitar would be around the late Kindergarten till preschool. Children starting at that age would have enough time to learn the basics of melody playing on the guitar to be able to start then with the first accompanied counterpoint exercises with the beginning of elementary school.

This thesis' assumption that children start playing the guitar during their last years of kindergarten can somewhat be considered supported by a publication of the AEC from the year 2007 (Association Européene des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen) on the music schools in Europe in which on page 53 it is stated that children in Finland start playing string and piano instruments between the ages 4-6. Of course, since there is no specification on the guitar as an instrument itself, this still leaves quite a big timespan in which most children could start playing the guitar.

Even if a child started later to play the guitar, as we are assuming here, maybe with 6 ½ or 7 years, it still should not be a problem. I reckon that since the fundamental motoric skill and strength of the hand increase really fast in these stages of a child's development, it will take the later starting student proportionally less time to get to a level where he_she can play simple melodies on the guitar. Therefore he_she might start with the first counterpoint improvisation exercises only with a small delay compared to students, who started to play the guitar at a younger age. Of course, compared to a younger student, for an 8- or 9-year-old the teaching style will have to be adapted and changed to fit the child's developmental needs. But since this method is skill based the only thing that will have to change is the approach to the different exercises and tasks.

The important factors that prove a child's suitability for starting to learn counterpoint improvisation are the following. Most of these selected skills will be developed enough by the time many children start elementary school.

Deduction skills, understanding of (abstract) concepts: as well as be capable to figure out and understand new systems. This skill is especially important to counterpoint improvisation, as children will have to understand to a certain degree the underlying

concepts and system of improvising in a certain style or way before being able to improvise in said style or way. Whilst children might be very capable of understanding and learning new systems before going to school, there is still a lot of individual progression in the development of understanding concepts in early childhood (first concepts include, time, space, causality, numbers and sizes as well as human thinking and acting (cf. Siegler et al., 2016, pp. 239–268). The progression made by children in all of the before mentioned fields, independent of their inherent strengths and weaknesses strongly depends on their environment and the social-cultural necessity and value to learn certain things (cf. Borke et al., 2019, pp. 33–34). However, it can be reasoned that through the Finnish early childhood education system most children should be able to understand the basic systems and abstract concepts of the beginners' level improvisation exercises, by the beginning of elementary school. The reason for this is that the early childhood education system in Finland tries to prepare all the children for school focusing primarily on developing the children's thinking and learning skills by giving also special assistance the ones with difficulties. By making sure that most students can follow elementary school teaching from the beginning the early childhood education system therefor also develops the cognitive capabilities of children necessary to start learning counterpoint improvisation. (*National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2018.*, pp. 39–41.)

- Interactive, social skills: As for counterpoint improvisation polyphonic playing skills are crucial and polyphonic playing skills will have to be first trained. Playing multiple voices will be split up and shared between the student and the teacher and/or another student. Therefor it is crucial, that the young musicians are capable and understand from the beginning of the lessons how to work and play together with others (meaning both playing a game and making music together). Children who have gone through preschool have been taught on how to interact in a group through play-based pedagogy in preschools. As explained in the national core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2018 preschool children also learn how to create imaginary worlds together through (drama-) improvisation or fairy tales. This understanding on how to create a narrative in and with a group in different forms of expression (like musical, visual and physical expression), that children develop in preschool is going to greatly facilitate the cooperative studying of the counterpoint improvisation with the teacher and/ or the other students, which is needed right from the beginning to of the program. (*National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2018.*)

- Familiarity with play-based pedagogy and developed playing: As mentioned earlier one of the vehicles I plan to use for teaching counterpoint improvisation to children is play based pedagogy. Children by this age are very familiar with this form of teaching and learning music as it is implied throughout the early childhood education from kindergarten to preschool (*National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2018*). Also by this age children have a very well developed playing behavior (Siegler et al., 2016), which should open up a lot of possibilities to teach children through play based pedagogy.

Attention span: For however short the teacher can keep single exercises and independent of the amount of creative switching and interchanging exercises that can be built into a single lesson, the child will need the capability to focus on a specific task (even if it is presented through a game) for at least a few minutes a time, as well as be capable of figuring out and understanding new systems.

According to the Finnish “national core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2018” children undergoing pre-primary education (for example in the form of preschool) learn the basics of reading, writing, math, music, visual arts and they develop their cultural understanding (cf. *National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2018*). They are also getting familiar with the concept of studying as a (long term) activity with different stepping stones with the sole purpose of mastering a new skill as they have a four hour studying day at preschool (“Preschool education,” 2020). This means that according to the plan of the Finnish ministry of education and culture even children with learning difficulties (as they will start preschool earlier and get more help to even out as much as possible their disadvantages) will have reached in most cases a good and long enough attention span to follow elementary school lessons, because of various degrees of preparation achieved through pre-primary education (Ministry of Education and Culture, Varhaiskasvatuksen, perusopetuksen ja vapaan sivistystyön osasto (VAPOS, n.d.). The children’s intrinsic curiosity to learn new things and abilities will have been already fostered through individual curricula in the pre-primary education which are meant to foster a child’s inherent strengths whilst trying to enhance its skills and competences where they might be lacking. Because of the children’s received preparation for school studies in pre-primary education I believe that children are ready and have in general a long enough attention span to start learning the basics of counterpoint improvisation with the beginning of the elementary school.

After having explained my reasons for a skill-based teaching system and the starting age of about 7 years to study counterpoint improvisation, I would like to move on to the next chapter.

2 The current state of improvisation studies at Finland's music institutions in the field of classical music studies

With this chapter I want to analyze the role improvisation currently plays in classical music education in Finland, to see what role a clear structured improvisation curricula like the one I am trying to develop would take up in the entirety of the classical music education system. This chapter also tries to analyze the necessity for a structured improvisation curricula in the classical music education system by comparing how important improvisation is in theory or on paper for the music institutions and how effective the improvisation teaching is in practice in fulfilling the goals for improvisation studies set by the music education system.

Following the numbers of the association Européenne des Conservatoires, Accadèmies de Musique et Musikhochschulen there are currently 11 institutions of higher education in Finland, that offer professional music training, one music specific university, the Sibelius Academy (Bachelor and Master of Music, plus a Doctoral degree in Music, as well as the degree for general education music teacher), two multi-faculty universities offering music teacher education in Oulu (Bachelor and Master of Arts, as well as the degree for general education music teacher) and Jyväskylä (Bachelor of Culture and Arts, Music Pedagogue, as well as the degree for general education music teacher) and eight universities of applied sciences offering the degree of music pedagogue and musician (Bachelor of Culture and Arts) of which three currently also offer the Master of Music.

These eight institutions are the following (Tuovi Martinsen, Head of International Relations at the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki., 2016.):

- Centria University of Applied Sciences (Centria University of Applied Sciences, n.d.)
- Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Metropolia, n.d.)
- Oulu University of Applied Sciences (OAMK, n.d.)
- Savonia University of Applied Sciences (Savonia University of Applied Sciences, n.d.)
- Tampere University of Applied Sciences (Tampere University of Applied Sciences, n.d.)
- Turku University of Applied Sciences (Musiikkipedagogi (AMK), 2020)
- Novia University of Applied sciences (YRKESHÖGSKOLAN NOVIA, n.d.)
- Karelia University of Applied Sciences, which lost the ability to offer the title of Music pedagogue in 2014 and regained it in 2017 after a legal dispute (KARELIA-AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU, 2020) (*PÄÄTÖS ammattikorkea- koulun toimiluvan muuttamisesta*, 2017)

Besides these institutions there are 10 conservatories in Finland plus many music schools across the country. One common feature that traditionally a lot of these various music institutions share are learning matrixes lately rebranded as skill boards.

Following the words of my Finnish guitar professor Timo Korhonen, these skill boards represent at their core the goals, the music institutions want to achieve with their teaching. Finland is following a vision for a renewed national music education curriculum for 2030 (Core Group Visio 2030, n.d.) and most music institutions are covered by the act on Basic Education in the Arts and are therefore subsidized by the central government. The teachers of almost all institutions are appropriately qualified and follow the national core curriculum for teaching (Aarnio, 2021). As a consequence, most skill boards of music education institutions share almost identical main goals for their students to achieve with their studies.

These skill boards are usually divided in levels or stages of studies, which contain a variety of smaller goals concerning the various subjects of music. These subgoals build on the achievements made by the students in the previous level represent the skills students should develop during the different stages (levels) of their studies. Reversely, this means that these skill boards display, what can and should be taught at their institutions functioning as a rough teaching curriculum. Most skill boards, if not all, clearly mention improvisation as a subject to be taught right from the beginning of a student's music studies. Because of the similarities of the skill boards, I decided to show the content of three music institution's skill boards as typical examples of the status that improvisation at least nominally has in Finnish music institutions from the beginners' level to the level of higher music education degrees.

Following are the skill boards for classical guitar of the Avonia Music Institute of Espoo, the Itä-Helsingin Musiikkiopisto (the Eastern Helsinki music institute) and the skill board of the Turku university of applied sciences.

I chose to depict just skill boards for classical guitar, as this is the instrument, I mainly am concerned about in my thesis. I can affirm that improvisation has according to the skill boards of the here presented institutions the same role in other instruments curricula as it is depicted in the skill boards for classical guitar.

Avonia's skill board was suggested to me by my guitar prof. Timo Korhonen as a standard role model, after which a lot of music institutions draft their skill boards.

Itä-Helsingin Musiikkiopisto, is a renowned music school. It was here where Géza and Csaba Szilvay developed in the 1960s the, from a music pedagogical perspective groundbreaking, easy and simple but very effective colourstrings method, to teach young (originally only string) players, which subsequently led to the foundation of the international minifiddlers. (Colourstrings Ry, n.d., International Minifiddlers, n.d., Aarnio, 2021).

Finally, I will present the skill board of classical guitar at the Turku AMK's Arts Academy, which is the institution of higher music education, where I am currently studying, this skill boards will be used to show that even in higher music education at least on paper improvisation is an important part of music and instrumental studies.

Unfortunately, this last source is from the guitar class section of the Turku AMK'S Arts Academy's intranet, which means that its authenticity cannot be verified by outsiders if they do not get a special access to the material. I chose to use this source anyways as it is the only sources from a higher music education institution (a university of applied sciences), that was readily available to me as a student of said institution.

As the thesis is written in English, I will translate the relevant Finnish parts of the skill boards into English bellow the shown excerpts. I am also going to include the goals for a few subjects, that I believe, can be put under the big umbrella term improvisation, such as free accompaniment, as I reason that in the case of free accompaniment one is improvising the accompaniment instead of the main theme. Another included term is the aural playing as the skills needed or developed by it are very important to improvisation, aural playing is also one of the things which I hope to improve in teaching counterpoint improvisation.

At last, I also displayed the skills for composing mentioned in the skill boards, as especially the harmonical skills and the voice leading skills needed for composing are the same, as the ones need for counterpoint improvisation with the only difference that in improvisation one needs the capability to recall these skills faster and therefor probably in a more simplified form.



Oppilaan nimi:

Opettaja:

Päivitetty:

asiaa ei olla vielä käsitelty soittotunnilla	0
asiaa käsitelty soittotunnilla	1
omaksuttu jonkin verran	2
omaksuttu hyvin	3
omaksuttu kiittävästi	4
omaksuttu erinomaisesti	5

KITARANSOITON PERUSTASO

OPPIMAAN OPPIMINEN JA HARJOITTELU

SÄVELTÄMINEN JA IMPROVISOINTI

Säveltäminen

Oman pienen sävellyksen säveltäminen

Oman sävellyksen nuotintaminen

Harmonian säveltäminen yksinkertaiseen melodiaan

Improvisointi

1-5 äänellä

Improvisointia kuvan, tapahtuman, tarinan, mielikuvan perusteella

Improvisointia asteilla I-V

Improvisointia sointukulun päälle

Oma variaatio jo harjoitellusta kappaleesta

Vapaa säestys

Erityyisiä säestyksiä (komppeja)

Melodioiden säestäminen soinnuilla korvakuuloilta

Sointuasteet ja käännökset

Säestäminen bassoäänellä erilaisia rytmejä käyttäen

Transponointi

Figure 1: Skill board for guitar, basic studies (Avonia, n.d.)

At the Avonia Institute of Music the students are divided into two groups. The first one studying the basics of guitar playing. At the end of this, students should have the following skills in and around improvisation (Avonia, n.d.):

Composing:

- Capability of composing an own small piece
- Capability of notate/ write down an own composition
- Capability to harmonize simple melodies

Improvisation:

- Capability of playing an improvisation with 1-5 voices
- Capability to improvise on the bases of a picture, a happening/ situation, a story, or a mental image
- Capability to improvise on the scale degrees I-V
- Capability to improvise on a chord progression
- Capability to improvise own variations of an already studied/known song

Free accompaniment:

- Knowledge of different types of accompaniments
- Capability to accompany a melody with chords by ear
- Capability to use Chords and their Inversions
- Capability of accompanying with a bass and different rhythms

PERUSOPINTOJEN TODISTUS

Opiskelija saa perusopintojen todistuksen omaksuttuaan perustasolle määritellyt ta

Taitomittari 0

SYVENTÄVÄT OPINNOT

Oppilas laajentaa ja painottaa opintojaan musiikkiopiston opetustarjonnan pohjalta. Lopputyö voi muodostua erilaisista kokonaisuuksista tai keskittyä tiettyyn syvennettyyn osaamiseen. Ammattiopintoihin pyrkivien oppilaiden opinnot ja opintosisällöt laaditaan pääsykokeita silmällä pitäen.

SÄVELTÄMINEN JA IMPROVISOINTI

Säveltäminen

Musiikillisten ideoiden ja ratkaisujen tuottaminen
Säveltäminen sähköisten työvälineiden avulla
Tekstuurien käsittely
Erilaisia sävellystapoja (instrumentti/sisäinen kuuleminen)
Sävellystekniikat mm. prolongaatio, variaatiot, kaanon ja Bachin inventiot
Soitinnus
Nuotintaminen

Improvisointi

Ohjataan harjoittelemaan ja tuottamaan omia musiikillisia ideoita ja ratkaisuja

Figure 2: Skill board for guitar, advanced studies (Avonia, n.d.)

After the first group students are going to progress to the second group, here students have to adapt the following skills in and around improvisation (Avonia, n.d.):

Composition:

- Capability to form own musical ideas and solutions
- Capability to compose with electric tools
- Capability to handle musical texture
- Capability to use different composing methods
- Capability to use instrumentation
- Notation skills

Improvisation:

- Guidance to practice and produce own musical Ideas and solutions (Avonia, n.d.)



Itä-Helsingin musiikkiopiston opetussuunnitelma

9. Arviointikriteerit perusopinnoissa ja syventävissä opinnoissa

Perusopintojen arvioinnin tavoitealueet ja kriteerit

PERUSOPINNOT		
TAVOITTEET	HYVÄN OSAAMISEN KRITERIT	ARVIOINNISSA HUOMIOITAVAA
Esittäminen ja ilmaisu		
Säveltäminen ja improvisointi		
TAVOITTEET	HYVÄN OSAAMISEN KRITERIT	ARVIOINNISSA HUOMIOITAVAA
Opettelee oman musiikin tekemistä soittamalla ja nuotintamalla	Oppilas toteuttaa itse keksittyjä uusia musiikillisia ideoita yksin tai ryhmän jäsenenä.	omien melodioiden /sävellysten tekeminen
Oppilas oppii hyödyntämään omaa korvakuulo-osaamistaan	Oppilas kykenee kuulonvaraisesti poimimaan tutun melodian, rytmin tai/ja harmonian ja soittamaan sen omalla soittimella ja mahdollisesti muokkaamaan sitä eteenpäin.	Osallistuminen eri pajoihin (rytmi, sävellys, improvisointi)

Figure 3: Table with the objectives and criteria for evaluating the basic studies (Itä-Helsingin musiikkiopisto, n.d.)

Arviointi opintojen aikana perustuu opetussuunnitelmassa kuvattuihin perusopintojen ja syventävien opintojen ainekohtaisiin tavoitteisiin

Oppilaan lukuvuosittain arvioitavat opinnot suunnitellaan yhteistyössä opettajien kanssa. Opinto- ohjaajana toimii oppilaan pääaineen opettaja.

Perusopintojen opintojen päättyessä oppilas saa todistuksen. Todistuksen liitteessä annetaan sanallinen arvio oppilaan edistymisestä ja osaamisen kehittymisestä opintojen aikana. Sanallisessa arvioinnissa painotetaan oppilaan oppimisen vahvuuksia suhteessa opinnoille asetettuihin tavoitteisiin.

Laajan oppimäärän arvioinnin lähtökohtana ovat oppilaan syventävät opinnot ja hänen niille asettamat tavoitteet sekä itsearviointi. Lopputyö arvioidaan osana syventäviä opintoja. Arviointi perustuu seuraaviin arvioinnin kohteisiin (esittäminen ja ilmaisu, oppimaan oppiminen ja harjoittelu, musiikin hahmottaminen ja säveltäminen ja improvisointi) ja kriteereihin (kaavio).

Figure 4: Text field explaining the objectives and criteria for evaluating the basic and advanced studies. (Itä-Helsingin musiikkiopisto, n.d.)

This skill board of the eastern Helsinki music institution is a bit different.

As it is mentioned in the title this is a presentation of the assessment criteria in basic studies and advanced studies. The first table describes two main objectives in composition and improvisation in the field of the basic studies.

The two objectives are to be able to learn how to create own music by playing and notation, and for the student to learn how to use their own hearing capabilities. Two criteria for good competences are mentioned.

For students to achieve the first objective they should be able to realize own invented musical ideas alone or in a group. To achieve the second goal students should be able to internalize known melodies, rhythms and/ or harmonies through hearing and then be able to play them on their instrument and be able to modify them consequently.

There are two things mentioned to be considered for the evaluation.

In regard to the first theme the capability of students to create own melodies and or compositions is an important factor for the evaluation as for the second point participation in different workshops, talking about rhythm, compositions and improvisation should be considered.

Before moving to the second table, I quickly want to mention that in the text below the first table it is again mentioned that the capability of improvisation is one of the evaluation points for the Final exam in the higher music education programs.

Syventävien opintojen arvioinnin tavoitteet ja kriteerit

LAAJA OPPIMÄÄRÄ: SYVENTÄVÄT OPINNOT				
LAAJAN OPPIMÄÄRÄN OPSIN TAVOITTEET JA KRITERIT				
TAVOITTEET	KRITERIT			
Opintojen tavoitteena on	Säveltäminen ja improvisointi	Riittävä osaaminen	Hyvä osaaminen	Edistynyt, soveltava osaaminen
Ohjata oppilasta tuottamaan omia musiikillisia ideoita ja ratkaisuja	Säveltäminen, sovittaminen ja improvisointi	Oppilas on perehtynyt improvisointi- ja/tai sävellysprosessiin.	Oppilas on saanut valmiiksi oman tuotoksen.	Oppilas on syventänyt ja laajentanut improvisointi- ja/tai sävellysosaamistaan.

Figure 5: Table with the objectives and criteria for evaluating the advanced studies (Itä-Helsingin musiikkiopisto, n.d.)

The second table talks about the objectives and criteria for the so-called advanced studies, following the basic studies.

The aim in the advanced studies regarding improvisation is to guide the students to produce and develop their own musical ideas and solutions.

Furthermore, the table now shows what different evaluations of the improvisation skills actually stand for. Sufficient skills mean that the student is familiar with improvisation and/ or the composition process, good skills means that the student the student has own output in composition and improvisation and advanced skills mean that the student has deepened and expanded improvisation and / or composing skills. (Itä-Helsingin musiikkiopisto, n.d.)

Aural playing		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
Aural playing	Imitating basic rhythms on open strings			
Aural playing	Understanding the direction of melody, without looking at fingerboard hand			
Aural playing	Playing after example			
Aural playing	The basics of the harmonic functions I-V			
Improvising		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
Improvising	After a basic scale			
Improvising	Free improvisation or own composition			
Practical test		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
Four scales (transposing of an easy melody, (e.g. Aurinko, Ostakaa makkaraa, Pienen pieni veturi)				
Harmony functions I-V/V7-I (accompaniment of two melodies, e.g. Elefantimarssi, Pienet sammakot, Popsi popsi porkkanaa, Ritiritiralla, Jaakko-kulta)				
Improvising (a short melody / free improvisation / own composition)				
Basic Level 2		in addition to Level 1		
Aural playing		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
Aural playing	Accompanying a simple melody with chord functions I and V			
Aural playing	Imitating a simple melody			
Improvising		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
Improvising	Improvising on a simple scale			
Improvising	Free improvisation or own composition			
Free accompaniment		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
Free accompaniment	The most common time signatures in accompaniment			
Free accompaniment	The most common keys in guitar repertoire			
Free accompaniment	Choosing the style of playing			
Practical test		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
8 scales				
Cadences with functions I-IV-V (aural accompaniment for two melodies)				
Improvising with scales/cadences and/or free improvisation				
Basic Level 3		In addition to Level 1 and 2		
Aural playing		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
Aural playing	Learning a piece by ear (e.g. From a recording)			
Aural playing	Chord accompaniment by ear (easy songs)			
Improvising		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
Improvising	Free improvisation with teacher or in an ensemble			
Improvising	Own variation on composition the student has learned earlier			
Improvising	Improvising on a scale (major, minor, pentatonic)			
Free accompaniment		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
Free accompaniment	Patterns in different styles			
Free accompaniment	Harmonies in functions I—IV—V in the keys already learned			
Free accompaniment	Transposing			
Practical test		Needs more work	Ok	Great work
12 Scales				
Cadences with functions I-IV-I 6/4-V7-I (aural accompaniment for four melodies)				
Improvising with scales/cadences and/or free improvisation				

Figure 6: Skill board for the guitar studies at TUAS, basic levels 1, 2 and 3 (Korhonen, n.d.)

I will not translate the Turku AMK table, as it is not necessary. Interesting is, that in the Basic level 3 free improvisation with a group is mentioned, which is a skill not mentioned in the other two skill board (Korhonen, n.d.).

The impression I get from looking at these skill boards is, that improvisation is across all the boards recognized to be an important part of musicianship, that has to be taught. On paper it seems to be a skill that should be an ever-present theme in the music curriculum, as every new level on the skill boards demands an improved skill in improvisation. If this system was functional, one would imagine students of classical music instruments in the higher musical education to be confident or at least used to improvise. However, all the experiences with improvisation I have made in classical music field (in Finland and abroad) showed me that

most classical music students are afraid to improvise, especially in front of each other or worse in front of an audience, even if it is just free improvisation, whereby definition no mistakes can really be made.

This should not be the case, if students of classical instruments were introduced systematically and with a regularity, which is needed in music to develop actual skills, to improvisation from the beginning. Now of course my personal experience cannot be taken as proof for a systematic failure. However, there are other indicators, which point towards a lack in concentrated afford and a missing systematic teaching method in the music didactics in regard to classical improvisation.

For all western classical music instruments, there is a huge variety of methods and didactical approaches, which sometimes even contradict each other to develop the “right” technique and sound on the instrument. And one can almost be sure that a student of whatever classical instrument or singing will come across a few of these different technique methods or schools in their studies, especially when reaching the higher music education. The same can be assumed about every music student studying various didactical books of schools, that use etudes, studies or other focused pieces to forward the students musical and technical abilities, a typical example in classical guitar are the Fernando Sor studies (Sor et al., 2009), or his “Méthode pour la Guitarre” (Sor, n.d.) or the Giuliani (Giuliani and Grimes, 1995) and Napoléon Coste studies (Coste, 1904). To make it short in the field of classical music there is a huge interest in, and market for technique and didactical schools and methods, which is why every other year new schools and methods, and ideas appear regarding it. These schools reach from historical ones, some originating back to the renaissance era, like Luys Miláns “El Maestro” for Vihuela (which is still in use for classical guitar today) (Milañ and Jacobs, 1971) to contemporary ones, like the “Moderne Gitarrentechnik” by the current professor at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Rostock prof. dr. Thomas Offerman (Offermann, 2010) (Offermann, 2015), without there being really any eras of classical music without prominent schools or methods.

Compared to this vast library of knowledge there is a huge lack, almost an absence of methods for classical improvisation on specific instruments. Practical teaching methods, which build a player from the ground up to become a capable improviser, especially on the guitar are basically nonexistent if one leaves methods for jazz and free improvisation out. This shows that at least on an international level, classical improvisation with clear rules has not gotten much attention and is for sure not something that is seriously taught on a regular level. Of course, one could make the argument, that since we are talking specifically about the status of improvisation in Finish music education one can still not expect a huge number

of instrumental methods and didactical books on improvisation, since Finland alone is such a small country.

But if it were so that the lack of a big number of concrete instrumental improvisation methods on the free market was just due to the fact that only a small country like Finland is truly interested in improvisation studies, then for sure there must be at least a huge variety of improvisation courses and workshops or masterclasses at music institutions especially in higher education, were students would have years of experience studying improvisation on their instrument and therefore a good number of them should be interested in deepening their skills and knowledge in (classical) improvisation, especially if the subject till then would have been taught regularly, well and systematically, like most other aspects of music education in Finland.

Except for the Sibelius academy no other institution of higher music education in Finland showed any sign of possible structured improvisation studies (apart from the Jazz and Pop departments). One exception is a course at the Turku AMK that was held in the year 2020/21 by prof Uli Kontu Korhonen, on free improvisation, but since that was a newly created course for a rather small group of students on free improvisation, I would not recognize that as a sign for structured improvisation lesson at the Turku AMK. Probably there are a few courses like this at other universities of applied sciences, that I could not find, since I do not have access to all the universities of applied sciences' courses because I do not have access to their intranet. However just the fact that there are no signs of workshops, masterclasses, regular courses, concerts, or debates on improvisation related themes on the other universities of applied sciences' platforms is a clear indicator, that improvisation is not as much of a relevant or important part of the studies there, as it should be according to education plans.

It seems that at a first glance, that at the Sibelius Academy there is more to be found on their homepage concerning improvisation, especially in comparison to the universities of applied sciences. Two things are anyhow to be noted here about improvisation in the classical music departments. First, although there are more offers on the subject of (classical) improvisation at the Sibelius Academy, improvisation can still not be considered an essential well-organized, structured and regularly occurring part of the classical musicians training at the Sibelius program (there are more offers for folk musicians and of course jazz musicians). This is proven by the fact that there are only two study programs at the Academy which seem to include improvisation, that is the Accordion class (upload date on the academy's homepage 04.11.2019) and the Organ class (Upload date 11.11.2019) and improvisation is only mentioned in one study guide, the one for church music (upload date 13.01.2021). ("Results for search term: improvisation," n.d., "Results for search term: improvisointi," n.d..)

At this point I want to shortly admit, that the organists and church musicians have to be excluded from all the critique towards the classical teaching system regarding improvisation, as Rebecca S. Kossen explained in her thesis “An investigation on the benefits of improvisation for classical musicians”:

“Often literature that laments the decline of improvisation within classical music neglects the rich tradition of organ improvisation that continues today and has flourished for centuries. Church organists are expected to provide voluntaries, postludes, interludes throughout a service. Some of the requirements of church organists were and still are to be able to embellish a vocal or an instrumental melody, improvise polyphonically and perform free improvisation; the early form of this improvisation being preambles, toccatas, fantasias and preludes.” (Kossen, 2013, pp. 6–7.)

This statement gets underpinned by the previous show cases in which organ players and church musicians seem to be the only ones getting regular improvisation training at the Sibelius academy (“Results for search term: improvisointi,” n.d.).

Neeman confirms in his dissertation, that:

“The only current continuous improvised tradition of music in the West is preluding on the organ, and the organ manuals that deal with the subject focus not on the nature of improvisation but rather on skills such as harmonization and phrasing patterns—the basic tools from which a prelude can be built.”(Neeman, 2014, p. 9).

Continuing, a look at the “general info” category under the search term “improvisation” or “improvisointi” at the Sibelius Academies’ homepage reveals that since 2020 there has been a drastic increase in articles written, projects and workshops, as well as events launched all around the subject of improvisation (“Results for search term: improvisation,” n.d., “Results for search term: improvisointi,” n.d.).²

This trend shows, that although there is still a lot of problems with the methodical teaching of improvisation in classical music, there has been a sudden and almost disproportionate increase in interest in the subject of improvisation in the academic field in Finland starting around the year 2020. This gets only confirmed by the news that the Sibelius academy is creating a minor study program for improvisation at the master degree level, also because of the reason of the increased interest in the subject matter of improvisation (“Helsinki: Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki,” n.d.). All of this might also be closely related with the implementation of the new core curriculum for Finnish music institutes, which focuses highly on creativity and improvisation (Aarnio, 2021).

This was stated in an article by Petri Aarnio from 02.06.2017 published in the Finish Music Quarterly,

² A more detailed description of the research results on “improvisation” and “improvisointi” at the Sibelius Academy can be found in the appendix 2

“a new core curriculum is in preparation for the Finnish music institutes, focusing on musical creativity and improvisation. It will also allow theory of music, ensemble playing and instrument tuition to be brought closer to one another. Also, governments guidance will be reduced, as music institutes and by extension their students can be given more leeway in how to evaluate learning and progress.” (Aarnio, 2021.)³

The fact, that there is an ever increasing interest in how to teach improvisation, by the public, the state (through the new national core curricula) and by the music education institutions (proven by the increased activity on the subject matter of improvisation in the last two years at the Sibelius academy and the constant appearance of the improvisation in the skill boards for specific instruments) in (classical music) together with the reality of a total lack of system and method on how to teach this subject and a seeming unpreparedness of the general classical music educational field, puts the subject of this thesis in the spotlight.

Since the main task of this thesis is exactly to find the answer to how to create a didactical system for a field of improvisation, the counterpoint improvisation, that is very specific to classical music, setting clear goals along the way to lay the foundations for a systematic teaching method for counterpoint improvisation on the classical guitar, which probably could also be adapted or reworked for other instruments.

Historical reasons for a lack of counterpoint improvisation studies in the 21st century

I reason, that one of the causes for this lack of improvisation studies in music education is based on a historical issue. The issue being that most of western classical instrumental musicians, who are now the teachers at the music education institutions have not received themselves proper classical improvisation training, as most likely even most of their educators were not firm in this subject anymore. Classical improvisation forms have been a dying art form since the romantic era, with the rise of importance of the repertoire, the changed status of the composer and his _her work, which became less modifiable and the codification of earlier more fluent parts of our music language, like the counterpoint which used to be the part which held improvisations together. (Menke, 2015, pp. 9–17, Kossen, 2013, pp. 9–11.)

Rebecca S. Kossen explained the historical decline of the art of improvisation in classical music in her thesis “An investigation of the benefits of improvisation for classical musician” the following way:

“The Romantic era brought with it a rise in reverence for the composer and their work.³³ As attitudes changed, performers became more reluctant to change or add to what the

³ FMQ is partnered with the Sibelius Academy, the society of Finnish composers and the Finnish Musicians Union and is supported by a grant from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture

composer specified and from here began our modern obsession with studying different editions and trying to discover precisely what the composer wanted. Bailey writes passionately about how the rise of the conductor has taken control over the way that classical musicians and audiences engage with music and eliminates the possibility of improvisation. Hamilton suggests that the modern classical pianist's practice of playing by memory was what replaced improvisation in recitals; musicians seeking to maintain the perception of a spontaneous and free performance despite the lack of improvisation.

Recording

Hamilton, Levin and Lionel Salter³⁵ point out that the advent of recording aided in the demise of improvisation. They argue that it led to audiences and performers becoming accustomed to hearing a piece being performed in a particular way and introducing an element of chance in one's performance increases the risk of failing to adhere to the audience's expectations in this way." (Kossen, 2013, pp. 9–10.)

The aspect which is most important here is, that historically speaking the flexible system of an ever-changing and evolving music language, which began in the late medieval era and continued till the end of the classical period. It had to be adaptable to a constantly changing environment. For example, orchestrations had to be constantly changed since instrumental ensembles and later orchestras did usually not have all the instruments at their disposal. This music language got replaced by a more structured music system, which was more and more concerned with keeping up certain standards and the creation of a repertoire, which rightfully so tried to preserve pieces, which were considered important, or were particularly liked by the audience from fading into obscurity. One could state that the Romantic era and the following 20th century created a far more conservative music language, in which the art of adapting and creating new music on the spot started to lose its importance and its place got taken by the art of flawlessly executing repertoire.

The historical aspect of the problem in improvisation studies shows, that part from the problem of having to create a system on how to teach a rather complicated multifaceted subject we have also to keep in mind, that we need to create a system, that can be taught by a generation of music educators, who themselves mostly don't have sufficient training in this field, to create a new generation of (classical) well-trained more versatile and adaptable musicians, for whom improvising comes natural and is an integral part of being a musician. As I will show subsequently, breaking down the counterpoint to its absolute fundamental basics and starting to teach it to children throughout a long curriculum (running parallel to the already in place instrumental technique and repertoire studies, as well as the theory and solfège classes), that is skill based and allows to build new (counterpoint) improvisation skills on top of the core basic skills achieved earlier, we would give current music teachers the time to develop their own (counterpoint) improvisation skills together and simultaneously with the first classes of young musicians they are going to teach in this new method. And since we are talking about well-trained musicians studying the a new field of music together with

their young comparatively untrained student, which are also from the perspective of their motoric, mental and cognitive skills most likely less developed, one could take the informed bet, that the current teachers, who are otherwise at an advantage in the musical field might progress, due to their general superior musical skills way faster in learning counterpoint improvisation, than their students, letting them always be a few steps ahead in this journey of simultaneous teaching and learning counterpoint improvisation.

After having displayed, as best as I could the importance of classical improvisation in the current music education system in Finland and having laid out the importance and necessity of having a working system to teach improvisation from the perspective of the current state of music education in the field of improvisation, I would now like to move to a core aspect of my thesis.

3 Why (counterpoint) improvisation?

In the last chapter we have proven that a didactical system that starts at a student's young age, with clear goals and ways to achieve them is needed in the Finnish music education system to teach improvisation to classical instrumentalists, if the new focus on improvisation of the new core curriculum for music education is to be taken seriously.

Before continuing I want to give a short definition of the counterpoint, to make sure that we all have the same understanding of the subject, as we go on. In the coming chapters the subject of the definition of the counterpoint is going to be further elaborated and explained.

The Encyclopedia Britannica describes the counterpoint the following way:

“**counterpoint**, art of combining different [melodic](#) lines in a [musical composition](#). It is among the characteristic elements of Western musical practice.

The word *counterpoint* is frequently used interchangeably with [polyphony](#). This is not properly correct, since *polyphony* refers generally to [music](#) consisting of two or more distinct melodic lines while *counterpoint* refers to the compositional technique involved in the handling of these melodic lines. Good counterpoint requires two qualities: (1) a meaningful or harmonious relationship between the lines (a “vertical” consideration—*i.e.*, dealing with [harmony](#)) and (2) some degree of independence or individuality within the lines themselves (a “horizontal” consideration, dealing with melody).“ (Jackson, 2020.)

In this chapter now I want to systematically approach the question why counterpoint improvisation should be taught and therefore why I believe counterpoint improvisation offers a possible solution for the lack of an improvisation teaching system. I am going to approach the question “why counterpoint improvisation should be taught”, the following way, first I will offer

a short overview of arguments for teaching improvisation in general, then I am going to lay out the route concept of the counterpoint and how it can be expanded to fit a contemporary music teaching scenario and why I reason that this concept is the prove that everyone can learn counterpoint improvisation. In the last part I am going to compare counterpoint improvisation with the more common free improvisation, and I will explain why I believe that specifically the teaching of counterpoint improvisation, starting at a young age would be particularly beneficial for good improvisational skills.

So, why is teaching improvisation in music important? Rebecca Shanthi Kossen mentions quite some aspects that can be learned through improvisation. I am going to filter out just the ones that can be considered general benefits of learning how to improvise.

“Improvising does put the performer in the position of the composer. It assists them in gaining a deeper understanding of how the music works; its structure, harmonic progressions, chord voicing, rhythmic devices. (...).”(Kossen, 2013, p. 10.)

By understanding the musical progresses better and being able to somewhat take the view of the composer a musician will become more aware of the possible intentions of a composer, giving him/her more knowledge to create a in depth interoperation of their repertoire. Also being able to improvise, will give a musician a sense of security in playing and performing. This is independent to their level of preparation, since they are actually capable of “speaking” and “understanding” the language of music and are not just reciting something learned by hard or read from a music stand.

As improvisers do have to internalize building blocks of music (like cadenzas or modulations) by practicing them and using them over and over, they are going to develop their aural skills of “prehearing” or “audiation” as Edwin Gordon explained it. “Audiating” is the capability of the mind to deduct the coming part of a musical sequence and hearing it before it is played, by having heard just a previous part of the sequence (which sounded familiar) and subsequently completing it anticipating the musical experience of said musical passage. By “summarizing and generalizing from the specific music patterns just heard a way to anticipate or predict, what will follow.” (Gordon, 1997) Musicians that are auditing are able to “sing and move in mind, without ever having to sing and move physically”. (Gordon, 1997.) The skill of auditing is learned the best through improvisation (especially improvisation with groups) as the improviser has to be always ahead in their mind of what is being played at the moment, therefor having to learn where and how the music usually moves. H.A.B. Crawford argues that improvisation “is the best form of ear training available and it cultivates the habit of “pre-hearing” which is a vital factor in true listening”(Crawford, 1928). Another benefit that comes from learning how to improvise and therefor developing ones pre-hearing skill, is that as the

Jazz saxophonist Jamie Oehlers explained in an interview with Rebecca Kossen the prehearing of a chord “will aid a performer in memorizing a complete idea” (Kossen, 2013, p. 13).

Since the brain of an improviser is used to deduct the subsequent sound from the previous one, the memory of a piece is not only held up by the pure capability or remembering all the parts of the music piece, but it is also aided by the internal (harmonical) logic of the music, which is more easily traced by a trained improviser because of the capability of prehearing what from experience and inner musical logic should follow the just played music, therefore the prehearing skill might fill possible gaps in memory. And this skill brings us back to an enhanced feeling of security of a musician, that is trained in improvisation, as they know the music language and are capable of using it independently of the score they hardly can get completely lost.

Another important aspect is explained in an Interview between Rebecca Kossen and the Jazz pianist Tom O’Holloran where he points out:

“I think you need to practice intuition as well. You sort of practice being in the moment. A lot of people have written about how it is akin to meditation and all those kinds of concepts of being in the now and being in the moment. That sense of letting the thinking disappear and finding self-two and turning off self-one. Rather than critically thinking “What am I doing? Is this right? Does it sound any good? What are people thinking,” it’s about letting go to self-two which is more intuitive creative and free, kind of like being at play... like a child at play. (...).” (Kossen, 2013, pp. 59–61.)

This point is very close to the earlier benefit I mentioned of learning how the musical language works, but it adds the fact of letting go of one’s own ego while playing, an aspect that can be very hard for many classical music students, as in classical music study one might be fearful to letting completely go as there are so many thoughts, rules and details in the music, that one ought to bring out in an interpretation. But by doing so there is the danger that one gets lost in the details and forgets to tell an own overarching story.

Closely related to this point is also, that whilst improvising we are not only improvising the notes, melodies and harmonies, but we also improvise the dynamics, characters and moods in the music we create, we therefore create and work on our own musical persona, we practice how we personally transfer moods, characters and feelings into music, and with that we finetune also our technical skills needed to bring out these musical aspects.

This creation of an own musical persona can be very important in the classical field, were because we mostly play written music our bound to what is fixed in the score, namely notes, melodies, harmonies, and dynamics and to a certain degree character. To stand out as classical musicians we cannot change the note/musical text, but we can stand out by our

interpretation of the written music symbols, but to do that we need to have a musical persona.

Another benefit that results from improvisation, is that a musician becomes more attuned to creative solutions for musical problem, but also technical problems can be solved better with creative solutions based on improvisation. In an interview with the Author Parmela Attariwala for her Article “Time to change the Curriculum” Lori Freedman, a Montreal based clarinetist, composer and improvisation coach explained his approach to technical issues extensively:

”When I was growing up and studying the clarinet ever so righteously, there were certain kinds of solutions. “You have this problem? Okay, do this.” And they were prescribed and pretty general. ... You have a problem with a run: dot it up, play around with the rhythm a bit, play it forwards and backwards. These kinds of things seem to be fairly standard exercises to iron out problems. But I found that taking it a few steps further—in that when I located what the real problem was, what the real problems are—I make up pieces around them. I improvise pieces around them. And that brings music to a technical problem. ... Technically, I was far behind understanding what to do than musically in my life. If I can’t make a note speak high in the clarinet register and I get the wrong tone—the undertone—I go for the undertone. But [I’ll] make a whole piece around that. And then one can’t do it wrong anymore. ... In going for the wrong thing, [the problem] corrects itself. For example, on the bass clarinet, it’s really hard to make a clear tone around high C when you’re a beginner. What I try to do is encourage the clarinetist to go for the undertone, the unwanted tone. And pretty soon they can’t get it. They can only get the pure tone. ... It helps bring musical reason for doing something technically difficult.

So it becomes a teaching aid for technique?

Yeah, for me. And it gets the technical challenge out of that zone. It becomes a musical challenge. ... Technical is the tool: the mechanics of playing that thing. Musical is other stuff like direction, flow, subtler things. ... [In improvising around a technique], you’re exercising the thing. You’re practicing *and* you’re exercising the brain. You’re not being a robot.”(Time to Change the Curriculum, Heble 2016, 122.)

Again, closely related to the previous point is the fact that especially for young instrumentalists, improvisation gives them the possibilities to explore their instrument, to find out what it can be used to, other than using the obvious and traditional playing technique. Also, since there are no scores to read one might be more indulged into listening to one’s own body while playing, therefor finding out what changes in the physical relationship between the body and the instrument do to the music. Matt Brubeck, a cellist, and teacher for jazz and creative improvisation at York University explained this nicely in an interview with Parmela Attariwala, he said:

” In the learning-music-off-the-page model, you’re playing a note because it’s written there, and therefore, you associate with the other notes written around it—like the physical gestures to get to it. But if you play a note without associating how it’s written, then you are making up—for yourself as a musician—what you have to do with your hands or your breath or

whatever; what you have to do to get to that note. So, getting to a note in classical music means getting there in a specific context associated with music notation. And I see improvisers pride themselves in making connections between any two notes they can think of. So, in that sense, I think it helps *any* musician understand the geography of their instrument: what is physically necessary. You may determine that some things are impossible. There are things that are really awkward across clarinet breaks, for example. You understand how to get from point A to point X, and you don't need notation to do that. I can imagine that would help *with* notation practice because you've figured out ways to do things physically." (Time to Change the Curriculum, Heble 2016, 123.)

I want to finish with an argument made by Brubeck in the same interview, he explained how being a capable improviser makes a musician also from the market's perspective a more versatile musician and therefore more attractive, giving one more and different opportunities, enabling a musician to diversify his/her career paths:

"The ability to improvise meant that ... I became the "go to guy" in the San Francisco-Bay area if they needed someone who could play off the page. So, it just meant that all sorts of strange gigs came my way. And it meant that because I was a freelance classical player at the time, I witnessed the slow transition of my career going from four, sometimes five different orchestras—their different seasons and driving all over—to more centralized work. ... My major break was playing in a Berkeley Shakespeare Company—an outdoor play big band that required a bit of improvisation. Ralph Carnie, who had done some work with Tom Waits, was also in that band; and then Tom needed a cello player for one of his records. So that's one of the things that got me on the map

As you know, in the classical world—and this is very pragmatic—I definitely think that it can diversify people's career paths to have improvisation in the arsenal of things that they can do. ... String players have it easy compared to people who specialize in bassoon. But there are only so many orchestral gigs out there". (Time to Change the Curriculum Heble, 2016, p. 120.)

This means that being able to improvise can give a musician more security in finding jobs and enlarging his/her networks for future opportunities. Of course this is not directly relevant for children however, a few of the children starting guitar lessons are going to continue on the path to become professional musicians and the developed improvisation skills could become crucial for these future musicians in the launch of the future career. The improvisation skill could therefore be seen also as a future insurance for young musicians, when it comes to possibilities in launching their careers.

3.1 The concept behind counterpoint and why everyone can learn counterpoint improvisation

At this point I should explain my view on the concept behind the counterpoint, why I believe that everyone can learn it and why I believe that it can be extended to a bigger picture of music.

The following can be seen as an expansion on the earlier given definition of “counterpoint”, found in the Encyclopedia Britannica (Jackson, 2020).⁴

One of the earliest definitions of the term “Contrapunctus” is to be found in the treatise “cum notum sit” published under Johannes de Muris in the *Ars Contrapuncti*.

The *Ars Contrapuncti* also includes the treatises “Quolibet affectans”, which is dated by “Brussels 4144” a pre-1400 Italian source to be written around 1390 and “De diminutione contrapuncti”, which together with the treatise “Cum notum sit” dates into the fifteenth century. (Cook, 2021, Mengozzi, 2010.)

The definition given here is the following:

“Et prius de contrapuncto sit hec prima conclusio: Contrapunctus non est nisi punctum contra punctum ponere vel notam contra notam ponere vel facere, et est fundamentum discantus. Et quia sicut quis non potest edificare, nisi prius faciat fundamentum, sic aliquis non potest discantare, nisi prius faciat contrapunctum.” (De Muris, n.d., p. Cum notum sit.)

Which is translated by Johannes Menke in his book “Kontrapunkt I: die Musik der Renaissance” the following way:

“This is the first theorem on the counterpoint: The counterpoint is nothing else then putting one dot against another or one note against another, and this is the fundament (fundamentum) of the multiple voice based music (including homophony and polyphony) And as one cannot build anything without a fundament, one cannot sing with multiple voices if one has not previously done a counterpoint.” (Menke, 2015, p. 69.)⁵

Johannes Menke continues to explain what the term *Contrapunctus*, an abbreviation on “punctus contra punctum” actually meant. *Punctus* was referring to the notation used in the 15th hundred, in which notes were symbolized simply by dots (which later became the note heads) placed on lines. In the (early) counterpoint another voice was invented by giving each note on the first voice a correlating and simultaneous note on the second voice, creating a note (*punctus*) against (*contra*) note (*punctum*) system. The “*contra*” represents the vertical moment in music in this context and is therefore the fundament for every music with multiple voices (in the western music), including polyphony and homophony, notated, or not written

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⁵ This text was translated by the author of this thesis from German into English.

down music, music with two or more voices. The counterpoint is the framework, which later gets embellished with ornaments. It is important to understand that this does not solely mean polyphony or notated music, the counterpoint is at its core just the basic teaching of how notes fit together. The author of “cum notum sit” uses the analogy with architecture (when he talk about it being the fundament of multiple voiced music), which will get used multiple times in music history regarding the counterpoint.

When Johann David Heinichen uses the word “fundamental-notes” (Fundamental Noten) like on page 589 of his treatise of 1728 “The basso continuo in composition” (Der Generalbass in der Composition, Dresden 1728 (Heinichen, 1728)) it is based on the thought that these fundamental notes are rooted in a principle of music (namely that the counterpoint is the fundament of all multi voiced music) and these fundamental notes therefor are founded on top of this said principle. As a building needs a fundament to stand on, so does multi voiced music need a counterpoint at its base. As a fundament the counterpoint determines and defines what is going to be built on top of it and is therefore also created first in a composition. This shows both a hierarchical aspect as well as a temporal aspect. The counterpoint is not only a way of writing out or elaborating a composition, it is the instruction on how to make a composition and it also functioned as the justification for all multi voiced music in western music. (Menke, 2015, pp. 69–71.)

As the counterpoint is the fundament of classical multi voiced music I want to expand this concept of the counterpoint for this thesis a bit, to make it more suitable to a 21st century multicultural environment to teach children and also to cover the effects this concept can have on the micro and macro evolution of music.

The counterpoint at its core is a set of rules, which regulate the superposition and interaction of two or multiple notes or to simplify it even more the superposition and interaction of two or more components of music.

In my view these specific rules (like no parallel octaves and fifths are allowed) could and should be changeable, as long as they still create a coherent system. The important thing for me is, that the educators who are going to teach counterpoint improvisation understand that it actually does not matter so much, which aspects of music are being superposed and what set of rules is chosen to coordinate this superposition, as long as out of this a in itself coherent and logical musical system arises. This musical system follows certain rules, like a small musical universe with its own physical laws, in which the students find possibilities to express themselves. In my view this is the perfect way to integrate individual and cultural aspects of the young musicians into the music they are playing, enriching in the process the existing musical tradition(s) with new ideas and new combinations.

The counterpoint can also be understood as a dialogue (of two or more interlocutors) or a system to communicate between different interlocutors (standing for different aspects of music, like two melodies). The analogy of the dialogue or communication system is perfect, as it shows the effect and possible outcomes this furthered concept of the counterpoint can have on the evolution of a musical idea.

At this point the first possibility is that the interlocutors can be of the same opinion (for example by sharing the same harmony) which does not bring big changes in music with it, except for maybe reenforcing the common idea and developing it together in one direction (for example like a continuous crescendo).

The second possibility is more interesting, as it offers multiple outcomes. What happens when the interlocutors are of different opinions (like for example through the introduction of a new idea like nonharmonic notes)?

The first possible outcome is that eventually one of the two ideas asserts itself (for example in the form of a “reprise” of the old harmony or by modulating to another harmony, where the previous nonharmonic notes, are part of the harmony).

The second possible outcome is that the interlocutors find a compromise between the two divergent ideas (For example by staying in the same harmony with the same harmonical scale functions, but with a few of notes, which bring some spice into the sound and change the chords).

The third possible outcome is by far the most interesting as it does open up again new outcomes for the development of the music, which are far more drastic.

The third option is the braking of the set-up discussion or communication rules, a breaking of the system. For example, through turning to another music component as a means to communicate, in our previous context of harmony this could be the introduction of purely rhythmical playing or the introduction of sounds and language.

In this case again either one of the two now existing communication systems can prevail (reprise of the harmony-based system or moving to the rhythm or sound/language-based system).

Or through a compromise of the interlocutors a totally new music language, or communication system with new rules can be created and set up (for example, if both interlocutors, where playing the guitar at first, now you could have a music language with guitar and narration or onomatopoeia). At this point now both interlocutors can choose all the aspects of the new system to tell their part and the circle starts again and we have a progressing and ever-changing music system.

This example is to show that counterpoint improvisation in the furthered sense can really offer young students a big spectrum of expression possibilities and following the principle of learning by doing young improvisers will find a new and different access to different types of music, harmony, music rhetoric etc. Counterpoint improvisation could be the missing link between music theory subjects, as harmony and history and the practical playing subjects.

Earlier I spoke about the fact that the counterpoint is at its core nothing more than a set of musical rules that determines the outcome of a superposing interaction of two musical ideas, like the basic superposing of two notes or two melodies. Basically, this means that everyone, that understands the concept of two different things (like butter and bread) creating something different and new (like a bread with butter) by being put together can understand the counterpoint. Everyone who understands that this new thing is governed by the laws of interaction between the two distinct parts and is going to act differently in its environment than the two separate parts would do (like a falling buttered bread now always lands upside down since the buttered part is heavier due to the added butter) can understand the concept of the counterpoint. The only thing missing to master counterpoint improvisation now is a flexible, motivating, working didactical system on which teaching methods have to be built on, to teach how to play by the counterpoint rules step by step.

3.2 Why improvisation with clear rules/counterpoint improvisation vs. free improvisation should be thought

The counterpoint was the justification for the birth of the multi voiced western music cultures. On one side the counterpoint is the system that holds on a microstructural way western music composed or improvised together, it basically is the grammatical structure of our music language. On the other side the counterpoint is also the fundament of our macro structures, the big overarching movements in the musical pieces. Following this, it seems only logic that students learning how to improvise a counterpoint will get in time a far better overview and understanding of the small and the big movements in classical music. Since they are exploring a coherent system, it is easier to understand causality in music, like understanding how small changes, or the intentional violation of a rule on a microscopical level might have a big impact on the continuation of the music and therefor have a big impact on the big movements in the music. In free improvisation by contrast, since there are no rules regarding what should, or can be played on the microlevel and since there are also no rules regarding the bigger picture in free improvisation, there is also no clear breaking of roles. It is less clear when expectations are broken in free improvisation, consequently I believe that free improvisation is a less optimal tool for teaching causality in classical music. Only in a

coherent logical system, like the one the counterpoint builds in classical music causation can be fully understood and hence be used to recreate the (musical) effect, which follows a certain causation.

Especially for children (but also for people of every age) it is important to understand the so-called cause-effect relationship to be able to form categories and understand the role things play in the world. Through learning how to improvise in a system with fixed rules children, young music students can learn these cause-effect relationships in music, which will help them to form categories to navigate and explore this world of sound much more efficiently and therefore be more motivated to continue studying music including music theory. As now they can enrich their understanding of the newly formed musical categories, which are the bases for music theory and solfège (thanks to the understanding of the cause effect relationship) with personal memories, that are bound to emotions and are in consequence easier to remember. (Siegler et al., 2016, p. 244.)

Now there is the valid argument, that through free improvisation certain aspects of musicality are easier to explore like timbre, colours, and different sounds than they are in a more complex improvisation setting with clear rules like counterpoint improvisation. Therefore I believe that free improvisation should also be used as a teaching tool. Especially the power of group creativity and collectivism, which were the root ideas of the free improvisation movement since its beginning in the 1950s and the embrace of the leaderless cooperative model (influenced by the anarchic political views of many early free improvisers) (Neeman, 2014, pp. 55–56) are powerful tools and ideas, the use of which should be considered in any improvisation/ music pedagogical related field. However, it has to be recognized, that even the movement of free improvisation is formed out of the western classical music tradition (Neeman, 2014, pp. 8–37), at the root of which lies the counterpoint.

Learning how to improvise within the rules of the counterpoint, could be the fundament for a new generation of classical musicians with a much bigger potential of changing classical music and exploring new ways than the movement of free improvisation had.

This new generation would have a deeper understanding of the musical language (its grammar and syntax), as they actually would be able to speak it, not only read it (like from a score) or write it (like in composition). If a new generation of classical musicians grows up by almost being native speakers of the classical musical language, it could ignite in classical music an evolving force that is shared between all spoken languages, but that is not to be found in languages that are only conserved through writing, like Latin, which is not spoken anymore and therefore does not really evolve anymore either. I want to specifically stress

classical music as the target of this argument, since other forms of music do not have this huge disproportion between written and improvised music or rather music lived solely in the moment.

I imagine that learning how to improvise in complex systems with rules can give musicians a more insightful view into a written musical piece, its creation, and the possibilities of interpretation, as they can test the boundaries of said musical system/ style, in which a piece is written during their improvisations and therefore they might have more background information on the musical world this piece they are to interpret comes from. This might encourage musicians to find more bold, new, and just different interpretations of old and known pieces, because we they are more familiar with the musical language.

Another aspect is that the skills necessary to improvise effortlessly in a complex musical system with clear rules have to be far more advanced than the skills necessary for free improvisation. The skills a musician has to acquire to learn counterpoint improvisation, will make him/her a far more capable, free, and flexible musician, than if they only acquired the skills to improvise freely.

After having explained my reasons, why I reason that counterpoint improvisation is to be preferred over just free improvisation studies, I would like to clarify what I think should be the absolute end goals of counterpoint improvisation studies and why I chose historical counterpoint practices as goals for my didactical system. I think that the absolute end goal would be to have taught music students in a way, that they become so flexible and adaptive in their minds that they could set up any number of rules for themselves, which can be taken from the historical counterpoint, but could also be the complete opposite (like improvising with parallel 5th and 8th, but no parallel 3rd and 6^{ths}) and improvise with this chosen set of rules, which they then could intentionally break if they want to and replace with other rules.

The reason I chose the historical counterpoint rules and systems as ways of improvising, which are to be mastered is a very simple and pragmatic reason. Although counterpoint rules, harmonical rules and musical aesthetics have changed and adapted a lot during history (there is so to say not one set of counterpoint rules) we can still consider these historical counterpoint practices to be proven to be functional, as historically speaking they have been used to improvise and to compose. And as we are currently in a time where there are not many capable classical improvisers, we need as much help as possible to build up a new generation of improvisers and these historical counterpoint practices offer a huge volume of note materials, ideas, exercises that have proven to be practicable and that teachers can use as a source of teaching material, without having to invent completely new methods and counterpoint systems, especially since there are not to many classical guitar/

music-teachers at the moment, who would be experienced enough in improvisation to create new complicated musical systems with coherent rules on the spot.

4 Counterpoint and didactical system

4.1 Defining the goals and the therefor necessary skills of the didactical method based on historical practices

When we are talking about how to teach counterpoint improvisation to children, this means that we are talking about guitar students who are not fully developed instrumentalists, and who are still developing their motoric and cognitive skills, therefor I reckon that it makes no sense to shoot for the stars and try to make children improvise a fugue or a four voiced counterpoint. Since we decided on a skill-based learning and teaching system I think the best way is to look at a few important historical counterpoint practices, define the skills that are needed to improvise a counterpoint in these specific styles and then figure out a way how to teach this specific skills step by step to children. We therefor define these historical practices to be advanced counterpoint improvisation (like an “advanced counterpoint improvisation Level A”-course) and what we are trying to do is to prepare the basic level of counterpoint, which lays the foundations for these practices and gives the students the possibilities to start practicing all of these more advanced counterpoint improvisations once they have mastered and combined all the skills of the basic level of counterpoint improvisation.

We are going to proceed the following way, I am going to shortly present the historical practices I have chosen to be important, by giving a short definition and shortly give an overview of the rules defining this practice together with an example of the practice. Then I am going to analyze the skills needed for, as well as the skills developed by and through the basic level of these practices and categorize them into progressive instrumental skills, aural skills and added skills and then move on to the next historical practice. The skills needed and the skills that are going to be developed whilst studying these basic level practices go together as usually the skills that are needed to conclude the study of a subject are also the skills that are developed by studying the said subject.

The summary of all the skills mentioned under the mentioned practices in this chapter form the skill pool that constitutes the “basic level of counterpoint improvisation” and are the fundament for the “advance level of counterpoint improvisation A/B”.

Finally, I am going to point out to which degree I believe that these historical practices can be studied with children, or only certain aspects of them, if I deem the historical practice in its full complexity too hard to be taught to children. Subsequently I am going to give a short

practical example of how I think these practices, or aspect of them could be taught to children using play and group-based pedagogy.

I have to emphasize, that the short explanations I am giving for these historical practices are just to give a short overview over the basic rules used in this practice, so that we can get a good idea of what skills have to be prepared at the basic counterpoint improvisation level, to be able to study these counterpoint practices in the advanced counterpoint improvisation levels. These practices are a result of a fluid, living and everchanging music culture of their times, wherefor it is impossible to describe their full complexity by just trying to shortly define them. My goal is to just get a good enough overview over them to get an idea of the skills that are going to be necessary to master these practices on the guitar.

In the category of “added skills” I will put skills that are not necessary to learn for the specific historical counterpoint practices, that we are now aiming for in the specific subchapter, but which are a logical extension of the needed skills for the historical practice. These “added skills” aim to make the student a more flexible improviser right from the start. They can give the teachers the possibility to spice things up and to create a more interesting learning environment with more possibilities to play around as we do not want to solely aim at historical counterpoint.

Additionally, the “added skills”, which aim at making the player more flexible and versatile might come in very handy once the student progresses to the advanced part of the curricula, which we are not discussing in detail in the thesis, since by the end of this basic curriculum the students most likely are not children anymore, but teenagers for whom a different learning and studying approach with different didactical tools has to be invented.

I understand there are many more counterpoint practices and I am also aware that I will not be able to go too much into depth on the singular historical practices, but since I am restricted in space in this bachelor thesis, I had to create a small selection.

This is for sure a section of this first draft of a didactical system teaching counterpoint improvisation, which needs further research.

With the completion of the “basic counterpoint improvisation level” we prepare the children to be able to master the following advanced improvisation practices, which are going to be the main subject and the foundation of the “advanced counterpoint improvisation level A” studies.

These practices I chose, which are the foundation for a hypothetical “advanced counterpoint improvisation level A course” and which we are preparing the children to learn the skills for in

the hypothetical “basic counterpoint improvisation level” which is the main focus of this thesis are:

- Diminutions, Imitations and Variations
- Organum Parallelum, Tvisöngur, Gymel and Faux bourdon
- Two voiced Contrapunctus simplex, Contrapunctus diminutus and syncopated Contrapunctus diminutus

I believe that, once these get mastered and combined in the advanced curriculum (“advanced counterpoint improvisation level A”) they can pave the way to improvise on an even higher level. Something like a “advanced counterpoint improvisation level B” in which the student learns to improvise in styles of music, which need even more advanced knowledges of counterpoint improvisation, more flexibility, and more stamina, like being able to learn how to improvise a fugue.

I also tried to put these practices in an order from easier to more difficult, and in a way that the skills learned in preparation for the first mentioned practices are going to help with the preparation for the following practices.

4.1.1 Diminutions, Imitations and Variations

I have put these three Subject together, as all of them focus purely on the horizontal direction of the music. We established in the beginning of the thesis, that the premise for starting counterpoint improvisation should be that children are capable of playing melodies without problems on the guitar. Therefore, I reasoned that it would be a good choice to start with evolving the skills of horizontal improvisation with the young students. I want to stress however, that although these three subjects are focused on the horizontal music direction, they all move in a harmonical environment. This means that specially to evolve the aural skills of students, the teachers or more advanced students should always accompany the students practicing these skills harmonically, meaning with chord accompaniment, different harmonies, arpeggios, or maybe just a simple bassline.

All of these three subjects are part of the so called “partimento” teaching tradition. Following is a short definition of the partimento in the words of Job IJzerman.

“In the past ten years "partimento" has been of growing importance in the domain of music theory, as witnessed by the many recent publications and conference papers on this topic. Partimento stands for the eighteenth-century, mainly Neapolitan tradition of music education. A partimento is a figured or unfigured bass, which serves as an exercise for keyboard improvisation or com- position. Through the realization of partimenti, young music

apprentices at the Neapolitan conservatories acquired the musical vocabulary of the prevailing Galant Style. During the course of the nineteenth century the partimento tradition gradually sank into oblivion. Until roughly ten years ago, it was almost entirely unknown to the music theory community. (...) One of the leading pedagogical principles behind the eighteenth-century partimento school is what we would call “hands-on learning” today. The theoretical requisites for realizing partimenti, the Regole that have been formulated by Neapolitan masters, such as Francesco Durante (1684–1755) and Fedele Fenaroli (1730–1818), are remarkably concise. Far from claiming to build a “scientific” system, the Regole facilitated the acquisition of hands-on experience, and guided the training of memory and recognition skills. In other words, skill training had priority above conceptual learning.” (Ijzerman, 2018, pp. 12–13.)

I would consider the historical partimento method one of the primary sources for research to create a method with exercises for the classical guitar on counterpoint improvisation after this thesis. Because it was a historically used practical, working teaching method for instrumental improvisation.

In the next step we have to look closer at the aspects of diminutions, imitation, and variation. The following short explanations are taken from “The pianist’s guide to Historic Improvisation” by John J. Mortensen, which is a fantastique introduction to various historical improvisation techniques.

Diminutions:

“Eighteenth-century music is made of harmonic patterns. However, music is rarely a mere series of chords; that would be boring. Individual voices within the chords are broken up and differentiated into separate lines. Vertically considered, a note is merely a chord factor or a nonharmonic tone. Horizontally, though, it is part of a coherent melodic line.”

Historians tell us that counterpoint came first and harmony followed as a result. In other words, musicians of the past developed independent counterpointing lines that sounded good together, and the resulting combinations of sound were accepted and called chords. Over time chords were standardized into the triadic system of harmony we know today.

During improvisation, however, this process may happen in reverse order. Today’s musicians tend to think in terms of chord progressions more readily than counterpointing lines. This is a result of the fact that for most of us, our educational experiences placed far more emphasis on harmonic analysis than on contrapuntal awareness. Fortunately it is possible to learn to play contrapuntally by taking advantage of our relative fluency with chord progressions.

One way to approach this challenge is to choose in advance what chord progression to use and decide later (even in the midst of playing) how to differentiate the voices within those chords into independent lines. We may achieve this goal through the use of *diminution*.

Diminution fills in the gaps between longer notes with shorter notes, thus creating a flowing line with its own distinct character. By practicing various diminution patterns we may acquire the ability to fill in gaps of any melodic interval.

[Example 5.1](#) (meaning the following example, which in the book is Example 5.1) shows sample diminution patterns that cover intervals from a unison to a sixth, ascending and descending.” (Mortensen, 2020, 52.)

Figure 7: Diminutions (Mortensen, 2020, p. 52)

In short diminutions are variations on one note (if formed on a unisono) or on an interval and as explained by John J. Mortensen they are always to be seen and used in the harmonical context.

Giogio Sanguinetti explains the historical use of the Diminutions as follows:

„The art of transforming a simple, slow melody into a rich, fast-moving one is called diminution. The art of diminution was developed by the Italians during the Renaissance and the early Baroque, and it is codified in a number of treatises and manuals, such as Sylvestro Ganassi's *Fontegara* (1535), Giovanni Battista Bovicelli's *Regole, passaggi di musica, madrigali et motetti passeggiati* (1594), and Francesco Rognoni's *Selva de varii passaggi* (1620), to mention just a few. (...) The students in the Naples conservatories often began their studies in counterpoint by writing countless series of diminutions based on the very same patterns they used for partimenti: cadences, scales, and bass motions. The diminutions initially used slow and regular rhythmic values, like the figures of the species in strict counterpoint; then they moved on to fast figures with scales, arpeggios, and instrumental passagework. The same procedure- from longer to shorter values- is one of the techniques we may use in the passage from simple to more elaborated realizations of partimenti, but it is by no means the only method. Motivic coherence and imitation play an equally essential role in giving a proper and distinctive shape to a partimento.” (Sanguinetti, 2012, pp. 198–199.)

Imitation:

Giorgio Sanguinetti describes imitation in music improvisation and composition the following way:

“Alongside diminution, imitation is the most important tool for transforming a continuolike accompaniment into a self-standing composition. Through imitation the diminutions become more coherent and engage in a thematic relationship with the bass. Besides, the study of imitation is an excellent preparation for fugue—the highest stage of partimento training. The theoretical study of imitations was the object of counterpoint, which in Naples was taught together with partimento (but usually by different teachers).” (Sanguinetti, 2012, p. 191.)

John J. Mortensen adds some more practical advice in “The pianist’s guide to improvisation”:

“Imitation is a technique in which a tune starts in one voice sounding alone, and then appears in other voices as they enter in succession. These short instances of imitative entries are called *points of imitation*.

Imitation is a defining characteristic of eighteenth-century music. Pieces not rigorously contrapuntal in construction may nevertheless begin with points of imitation, as though it were necessary to pay tribute to the tradition of imitation before proceeding with other business. Some readers may suppose that improvising imitation is extraordinarily difficult because of its time-shifting nature. A melodic event in one voice must recur moments later in another, but meanwhile the first voice must carry on. This management of melodic material in multiple, nonsynchronous “time-lines” may seem bewildering. However, with systematic practice, simple points of imitation need not be so daunting. (...) Imitation can occur at various intervals, meaning that the answer may not enter at the same pitch as the theme, but may be “off” by a fifth, fourth, or other interval.” (Mortensen, 2020, p. 89.)

As an example, I am going to show a written-out imitation on the guitar, in the form of a fugue exposition. I wrote and improvised this imitation on the guitar with the help of my dear friend and former harmony professor Carlo Benzi at the “Conservatorio di musica Claudio Monteverdi”. Prof Benzi instructed me in the basics of counterpoint improvisation and showed me different aspects of counterpoint improvisation and together we tried to adapt the practice to the guitar.



Figure 8: Imitation example on the guitar, fugue exposition (Dario Dorner1)

This example actually shows a double imitation. Since after the exposition two distinct melodies are always present, both the subject (marked in yellow) and the countersubject (marked in blue) are played together.

As I mentioned earlier that a fugue improvisation would be part of an even higher improvisation course (advanced improvisation level B). So, I think that it would be enough to prepare students in the basic improvisation course (which we are talking about now) to be able to practice an imitation with one melody plus a simple harmony accompaniment, similar to what is shown in Mortensen's book as an example for a simple imitation exercise. Of course, one has to keep in mind that the harmonical accompaniment on the guitar can never be as full as it is on the piano, since there is no second hand on the guitar.

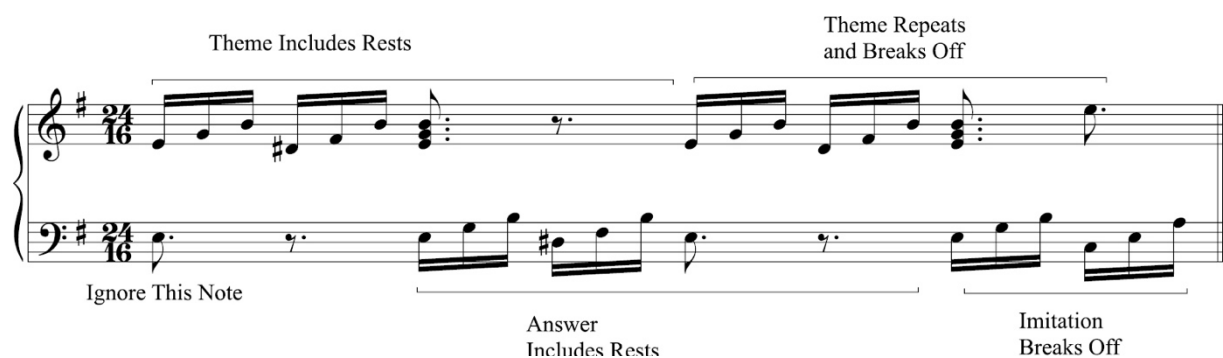


Figure 9: Imitation example (Mortensen, 2020, p. 89)

Variations:

The historical Partimento variations mostly are based on the 18th century variations system, which are to be found in Chaconnes and Passacaglias as well as in theme variations, such as Scarlatti's "folia" variations. Basically, the variations in 18th century were a constant development of a repeating bass line, or chord progression. In this system that harmony usually does not change over the variations and the variations are the same length as the (harmonic) theme which was usually 4 to 8 bars long.

A typical variation system can be seen in Friedrich Witts Passacaglia in d minor, where one can observe the earlier mentioned bass line from the theme (bar 1-4) staying the same and therefor creating the same harmonic structure during the variation (bar 5-8), which takes place in the melody line. (Mortensen, 2020, 70.)



Figure 10: Example of a typical variation, Friedrich Witts Passacaglia in d minor bar 1-8 (Mortensen, 2020, p. 70)

I believe that since thick chord progression with constant development of their voicing are a bit too difficult on the guitar to be improvised even in the advanced level A. Since there are many technical difficulties to overcome as big harmonies alone already take a big part of the left hand's capabilities, when adding in variations of those same chords, maybe with some faster voice movements, as variations in between the chords over a same base line it might become very tricky on the guitar. I believe that this kind of variation should be reserved for the highest improvisation levels.

However, one thing that can be studied already in the basic level counterpoint course, is how to create variations of melodic themes with a harmonic and/or bass line background by applying simple diminutions on an established melody line, furthermore to enhance the mental flexibility children should learn the simple variation methods of motives, such as the following techniques ("Variieren und Entwickeln eines Motivs," 2017):

Retrograde (cancrizans):



Figure 11: Example of retrograde (cancrizans) variation on a motive ("Variieren und Entwickeln eines Motivs," 2017)

Inversion:



Figure 12: Example of an inversion variation on a motive ("Variieren und Entwickeln eines Motivs," 2017)

Retrograde inversions:



Figure 13: Example of a retrograde-inversion variation on a motive ("Variieren und Entwickeln eines Motivs," 2017)

Rhythmical variations:

Figure 14: Example of rhythmical variations on a motive (“Variieren und Entwickeln eines Motivs,” 2017)

Permutations:

Figure 15: Example of permutation variations on a motive (“Variieren und Entwickeln eines Motivs,” 2017)

Reductions:

Figure 16: Example of reduction variations on a motive (“Variieren und Entwickeln eines Motivs,” 2017)

Modulations of motives with or without transposition:

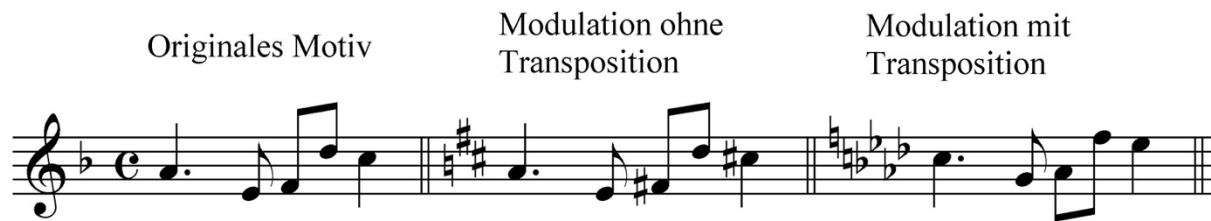


Figure 17: Example of a modulation variation of a motive with or without transposition (*"Variieren und Entwickeln eines Motivs,"* 2017)

4.1.1.1 Skills needed for and developed by improvisation with diminutions, imitations and motivic variations:

Aural Skills:

- The students will develop the skill of aural memory of small motives.
- The students will develop the skill of recognizing intervals better and associate them with own musical experiences.
- The students will develop the skill of prehearing at least the notes of arrival for diminutions and the motives transposed by any interval.
- The students will learn how melodic intervals interact with a harmonic environment.
- Additional to the below mentioned skills the students should also practice imitating intervals and motives by hearing. In the beginning the starting note point should be made known. This can be transformed into an interesting game of searching for the notes.
- Students will learn by constantly moving over the fretboard the different colours and timbers of the guitar. I must stress, that even when learning the technical aspect of an improvisation practice the playing with different colours and timbers and moods and characters should always be a central aspect of the improvisation studies.
- In addition to the below mentioned instrumental skills and their progression, students and teacher should also improvise together a parallel movement on a melody that both know by heart, so to give the student the opportunity of just listening to the music.

Instrumental skills:

These first practices are solely meant to enhance a student's melodic capabilities, therefore no playing of multiple voices is needed.

- For all three of these practices, students have to learn how to find immediately all notes across the entire fretboard of the guitar and find all intervals close to the regarding position of the note that has been decided to be the starting note for an exercise. For example, a student should be able to first find all the notes "c" on the fretboard and then be able to find the next closest second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and octave. This is especially important to find the first note of a motive that has to be imitated on another note and to find the best possible ways to move across the fretboard to create diminutions between two notes
- In all these practices students will get used to follow easy preset rules.

For diminutions:

- The student has to be trained in different ways on how to get from one note to another. To be able to do this, the first skill that students have to develop is to envision (and hear) the note they are going to land on before starting to play the first note, this will help them later with the development of speed.
- Timing and a feeling for up and downbeats is another skill that has to be when studying diminutions, as the students need to be able to judge how much time they have between beats to move from their starting note through the diminutions and arrive at the envisioned ending note in this case a chord accompaniment with clear strokes signaling up and downbeat can help develop these skills.
- Furthermore students have to learn different ways on how to cover the distance of a given interval with diminutions, I recommend starting with small intervals as frames and use regular rhythms for the diminutions (meaning no dotted rhythms in the beginning), also the basics of diminutions (nota di volta, nota di passaggio and circulation) should be learned first separately before starting to put these different options together (a lot of time should be given to this first steps).
- In the end students should be able to create their own diminutions (with different ways of reaching the end note and different rhythms) between all possible intervals and on all possible positions on the guitar and create a repertoire of those, so that they will not have always to come up with new diminutions, when playing longer improvisations at higher levels.
- Students should learn over time which right hand technique suits them well for faster diminutions, this might also depend on if the diminutions are played in the bass or the discant.

For imitations and variation studies:

In the beginning of imitation studies, it is advisable to start with really small motives, maybe 3 or 4 notes and with very easy rhythms, till the students feel comfortable with the short length of the motives. Later motives can be prolonged and become rhythmically more advanced, at a certain point it might also be fun to introduce the play with two motives, once the students are advanced enough.

- Students have to develop the skills to find good left hand (and right hand) fingerings for the motives, these should be fingerings that are easy to remember.
- In a second step students should be able to imitate the motives on all octaves of the starting note they can find on the guitar, later they should move on to playing the motives on all possible intervals from the starting note. By doing this, students will develop a faster memory of motives, how they sound and how they are played.
- Students have to learn how to adopt their fingerings to different positions on the guitar.
- Imitations can either be practiced in a question answer game with others or by having them linked to a chord progression played by the teacher, or more advanced students.

The chord progressions should be very easy at the start, maybe just with the Tonic of a tonality, then moving on Tonic-Dominant and Tonic subdominant and later more complicated cadenzas, also this chord progressions should be agreed on with the student (like how many beats of one chord till the next chord change and what chords and harmony are used), to give them time to adapt their improvisation.

This would allow students to practice their hearing by experiencing how different intervals sound within the context of a harmony and develop own experiences connecting actual music making with harmony teachings.

For the variations:

- The basic skill that students have to improve over the years to able to play variations is to the skill of flexibility and creativity. As first they have to imitate a motive and then change it.
- To be able to change a given motive the students must have developed a really good memory of the single components of a motive.

Variations should only be approached once the students start becoming firm with the pure imitations. Variations can be very fun, but they can be also unnecessarily and frustratingly difficult, so the teacher should always make sure in the beginning, that the motivation of the students is high and that they are having fun together. In the beginning I recommend starting always with a music question answer training, either so that the teacher always plays back the original motive or plays back the variation that the student has just played, as to refresh the student's memory of the motive and the variation.

I believe that certain motivic variations are harder to learn than others, therefore I will present a personal order how I would approach variations.

- The easiest to most fun are probably rhythmical variations and reductions (these can be studied in combination), as here the students can use the skills acquired in the diminution studies to change a motive.

With the reeducation studies it might be helpful to first agree on some rules which note of a motive gets cancelled out.

- The second group of modulations to learn are the retrograde (cancrizzans) and permutations modulations. The skill that students have to learn for these is the capability to change the order (for permutations) or the direction of events (for the cancrizzans in a motive without losing track forgetting the original motive. A helpful skill here is to be able to create easy to play and to remember fingerings for the motives.
- Third is the modulation, this should be played together with a chord progression as accompaniment, so to aid the students understanding of how a modulation in music sounds. The skill that has to be acquired here is the students understanding of tonalities and how notes change between them, also students have to understand the concept of leading notes well, to be able to modulate.
- The last variation is the inversion, and it is by far the hardest and could also be considered to be two advanced for this stage of playing. The skills needed for that are to remember the order of intervals and their melodic direction (ascending or descending) and to be able to invert their direction.

Added skills:

It might be useful for students to learn in this stage also easy chord accompaniment, since they already are developing their knowledge over the fretboard. It might be helpful to start also learning the different positions of the chords on the fretboards and all their inversions.

Since this segment is more focused on the melodic aspects and chord playing is quite hard for younger children, they should start playing the chord in an arpeggiation way. Ideally students would use Tuukka Terho's method for learning chords and harmonies on the guitar, to explain his method here would go over the limits of this thesis. I just want to say that it is a method, which has practical use and has proven to work fantastically in teaching harmonies and intervals to children. It is a method based on a number-based notation system for the guitar, which can help student to find the notes and chords easily on the fretboard, whilst also displaying the symmetry of the fingers on the fretboard. Therefore I would recommend his method as complementary studies. (Terho, n.d.).

4.1.1.2 Short example of how to teach diminutions, imitations and variations to children:

In the case of these three practices which focus more on developing the children's melodic improvisation capabilities I believe that all the above-mentioned practices can be fully practiced with children, maybe except for the interval-inversion-variation, for which a more theoretical knowledge of intervals is needed.

To learn imitations and variations, I propose the typical party game of "I packed my bag". This should be played with more children to make it funnier and more challenging.

In the normal game on participant starts with "I packed my bag and in it I put, ... my toothbrush (for example)", now the next in line has to remember to pack the toothbrush plus an item, that they themselves want to bring, therefore the things to memorize become longer and longer.

In this version of the game one child would start with a note and the next child would have to repeat that same note plus adding another one, with this after while quite long melodies might arise. This would help children to enhance their musical memory plus learn the fretboard.

Different rules could be added, like that everyone has to play the same order of notes but from different positions and strings of the guitar, or that each time the notes have to be played with another rhythm. Subsequently, when the bag is "nice and full". One could let the children unpack the bag. For this the children would have to first play all the notes backwards (learning the retrograde variation) and then play the backwards melody again, by either leaving out always the last item/note that got put in the bag (learning something like the permutation and reduction variation) or leaving out a random item/note (reduction).

It might be very good to have the children sing the names of the notes along to help them memorize the right order and helping them develop their ear.

Other versions of this game could have each participant having to start the same series of notes from a predefined interval higher or lower than the previous child (like always a small third lower), this could teach children to develop a better understanding of intervals and teach them how to better move across the fretboard.

Also the teacher could accompany the game with chord playing, and could change with or without announcing it from major to minor versions of the same chord the children would then have to modulate their notes, for example if the teacher moves from “a minor” accompaniment to an “A major” accompaniment, all f-, c- and g-notes have to become f#, c#- and g# notes (this way children would learn the importance of harmony and how to modulate). In later stages the chord accompaniment can be taken over by other students, who have learned how to play chords, these students would then also take over the role as gamemaster, deciding when and what aspects of the games to change.

To learn diminutions, I propose to take a known melody and play it again in a bigger group taking turns, and every turn one note has to be substituted by two not identical rhythmically faster notes with small intervals, moving in the direction of the next note.

For example, if there is a half note “d” followed by a higher half note “g”, the half note “d” could be divided into a quarter note “d” and a quarter note “e” or “f” moving towards the half note “g”. This way the children can explore almost endless possibilities of transforming known melodies through creativity using diminutions.

4.1.2 Organum Parallelum, Tvisöngur, Gymel and Faux bourdon

I put these three practices together since they all mainly focus on parallel movements of the voices. Although historically speaking they are to be placed in different times, these practices can be seen as the origins out of which the counterpoint emerged. The Tvisöngur is a special case since it is the only one of these practices still practiced today in Iceland and historically speaking had no proven impact on the development of counterpoint practices. However, since the Tvisöngur is the only one of these parallel movement practices that is still alive and is at its core very similar to the historic parallel movements, that we know of, I wanted to include it as I thought that teachers could find nice and different teaching material from a music culture that is still alive, compared to the historical ones. From the viewpoint of the needed skill set these practices should be very similar, as the only thing that changes is the number of voices that play/sing together, and which intervals separate the parallel melodic lines.

Organum Parallelum

The online Britannica Encyclopedia offers the following definition:

“**organum**, plural **Organa**, originally, any musical instrument (later in particular an organ); the term attained its lasting sense, however, during the Middle Ages in reference to a polyphonic (many-voiced) setting, in certain specific styles of Gregorian chant.

In its earliest written form, found in the treatise *Musica enchiridias* (c. 900; “Musical Handbook”), organum consisted of two melodic lines moving simultaneously note against note. Sometimes a second, or organal, voice doubled the chant, or principal voice, a fourth or a fifth below (as G or F below c, etc.). In other instances, the two voices started in unison, then moved to wider intervals. Both melodies might in turn be doubled at the octave. Early organum of this sort (9th–11th century) was, it seems, spontaneously produced by specially trained singers before being committed to manuscript.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2010, p. organum.)

In general the Organum Parallelum is considered the earliest form of western polyphony, the leading voice (*vox principalis*) is always the upper voice that gets doubled at an octave (octave-organum), or a fifth (quint-organum) or a fourth (quart-organum) below by the bass voice, later the organum developed and the melodies became more flourished, whilst staying always note against note, but for practicing and didactical reasons I am specifically interested in the early parallel movement (Duden Learnattack GmbH, n.d., p. organum, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2010).

Here are a few examples of the Organum Parallelum, that I took from my harmony classes back in Italy, it shows first a quart-organum, then a quint-organum, followed by an octave-organum.

The image displays three examples of Organum Parallelum, each consisting of two staves: 'Vox pr.' (principal voice) and 'Vox org.' (organal voice). The music is written in a medieval style with square notes on a four-line staff. The lyrics 'Ae-le-lu' and 'ia (...)' are written below the notes. The first example is labeled 'Organum parallelum, Quarte' and shows a fourth interval between the voices. The second is labeled 'Organum parallelum in Quinte' and shows a fifth interval. The third is labeled 'Organum parallelum in Octave' and shows an octave interval. The notation is handwritten in blue ink on a light-colored background.

Figure 18: Example of the Organum Parallelum in the fourth, fifth and octave (Dario Dorner 2, unpublished studying material of Carlo Benzi)

Tvisöngur and Gymel

The Tvisöngur (pl. Tvisöngvar, Ger. Zwiegesang, Eng. double chant) is described by Manfred Bukofzer as a practice of mostly male duet singing, that differs very little from the organum in fifths, as the melody is either accompanied by the fifth above or that below. Whether a singer accompanies the melody on a fifth above or below depends on the physical comfort of the singer. The moment a singer cannot go higher anymore he will cross the melody through a unisono to the fifth below. (Bukofzer, 1940, 32.)

Here an example of an islandic drinking song sung in the Tvisöngur practice.

Ex.1. Tvisöngur: O min flaskan (after B. Thorsteinsson, Íslensk Þjóðlög, 1906-09, p. 781)

O, min flaskan fríð - - a! flest jóg vilð-i lúð - a, fróstið,
far og kvíð - a, fyr en þig að miss - a; mundiég mega

³ See E. M. von Hornbostel, *Phonographierte isländische Zwiegesänge*. in *Deutsche Islandforschung*, II (1930), and A. Hammerich in *Sammelbände der internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, I (1900).

Figure 19: Example of the Tvisöngur practice (Bukofzer, 1940, p. 32)

The crossing of the voices is a connecting feature between the Tvisöngur and the Gymel practice. The big difference is that the intervals mostly used in the Gymel are consecutive thirds compared to the parallel fifths of the Tvisöngur, there seem also to be Gymels with mainly consecutive sixth, though apart from a written description in the Encyclopedia Britannica I could not find any score of a Gymel with sixths (“Gymel’ Britannica Academic,” 1998). The Definition of the encyclopedia Britannica goes as follows:

“Gymel, (from Latin *cantus gemellus*, “twin song”), medieval musical style of two-part polyphonic composition, possibly of popular origin, in which the voices move mainly in consecutive intervals of a third or a sixth. Crossing of parts is a common characteristic. Although gymel compositions have been preserved in manuscripts dating from the beginning of the 13th century, the name itself is first found in a detailed description of the style by the 15th-century theoretician Guilielmus Monachus.

Gymel seems to have been favored in England during the 13th century, preceding English **descant** (q.v.) and thus leaving its mark on the development of English polyphony. In late

15th- and early 16th-century English choral music, the word *gymel* denotes a duo, as well as the splitting of a part into two parts.” (“*Gymel*’ Britannica Academic,” 1998.)

Bukofzer describes the *Gymel* as the “earliest kind of specifically English harmony”

(Bukofzer, 1935, p. 78).

Furthermore, as can be seen the following example of a *Gymel*, there seems to be a certain degree of rhythmical freedom between the voices, as not all “*nota di passagio*” get doubled in both voices.

Ex2

The image shows a musical score for a two-part setting of 'Salve virgo'. It consists of three systems of two staves each. The lyrics are: 'Sal - ve | vir - go | vir - gi - num | pa - ren - sis ge - ni - tor - is, Sal - ve | lu - men lu - mi - num ra - di - us splen - dor - is, Sal - ve | flos con - valli - um stel - la | ve - ri | ro - ris. etc'. The notation shows two voices with some rhythmic freedom, as indicated by the text above.

EX. 2. *Salve virgo* (two parts).⁽⁴⁾ (Br. M. Arundel 248, fol. 155 v.)

Figure 20: Example of a *Gymel* over “*Salve Virgo*” (Bukofzer, 1935, p. 81)

Both *Gymel* and *Tvisöngur*, with their voice crossings (which can be seen as a first step towards counter movements in between voices) and use of unisons, could be used as teaching materials to move from pure parallel movements towards actual counterpoint practices.

Faux bourdon:

“**Fauxbourdon**, (French), English **false bass**, also called **faburden**, musical texture prevalent during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, produced by three voices proceeding primarily in parallel motion in intervals corresponding to the first [inversion](#) of the triad. (...) The result was a particularly “sweet” sound in contrast to the mixture of passing dissonates and open sonorities favoured in earlier [music](#).

[Guillaume Dufay](#) (c. 1400–74) is said to have been the first to introduce fauxbourdon into written music. Other early 15th-century Burgundian and Netherlandish composers, too, embraced this essentially homophonic technique, especially for psalm and [hymn](#) settings requiring distinct textual articulation and clear enunciation.” (The Editors of Encyclopaedia., 2017.)

The Faux bourdon is interesting to us as it is the only presented practice with three voices.

The Encyclopedia Britannica explains the leading voice in a faux bourdon, most likely was

the upper voice, with a second voice following in a parallel fourth below and a bass voice following a parallel sixth below. Then there are other scholars who believe the middle voice to be the leading voice with an upper and lower voice that followed and together formed a harmony resembling a 3/6 chord, indeed in an article by Berentsen Niels both types Faux Bourdon are shown and explained in detail. (Berentsen, 2014, pp. 232–235.)

Therefore the fauxbourdon could be used as a bridge between parallel movements and the harmonization of the basso continuo, since it is clearly a practice that indicates a first approach towards a concept of harmony, although we are still more or less 200 years away from the practice of the basso continuo, which developed around 1600 (The Editors of Encyclopaedia., 2017, Rampe, 2018, pp. 25–62).

Following is an example of a Faux Bourdon over a cantus firmus from Berentsen's Article "From Treatise to Classroom: Teaching Fifteenth-Century Improvised Counterpoint"

Example 11. Fauxbourdon II, excerpt (*De preceptis*, fol. 28r-v)

The musical score for Example 11 consists of four staves. The top staff, labeled 'Sup.', contains a melodic line with various note values and rests. The second staff, labeled 'Ct.', contains a line of chords, likely representing the fauxbourdon harmony. The third staff, labeled 'Ten.', contains a line of chords, likely representing the cantus firmus. The bottom staff, labeled 'C.F.', contains a line of chords, likely representing the cantus firmus. The music is in a 3/4 time signature and G-clef.

Figure 21: Example of a Faux Bourdon over "De preceptis" (Berentsen, 2014)

(Berentsen, 2014)

4.1.2.1 Skills developed with and needed for improvisation with Organum Parallelum, Tvisöngur, Gymel and Faux bourdon

Aural Skills

- Students will develop their skills of identifying vertical intervals.
- Students will develop the ability to playing something different based on what they are hearing.
- Students will develop the skill to follow a voice whilst playing another one.
- In general student improve their aural harmonic skills and they will attach personal emotions and feelings to intervals, therefor giving harmony teachings a personal level of importance.

Instrumental skills

At the beginning of this praxis, I believe that students should start improvising the parallel movements by reading one given melody line and improvising the parallel movement above it. In the beginning the two voices should be played by two players, the teacher playing the written melody and the students improvising the parallel movement. In doing so students should develop the skill to transpose a given melody to a higher or lower interval then the original melody. This skill of transposing is extension of the skills learned in the imitation studies. The difference here is that students have to learn how to synchronize their transposition of a melody rhythmically with a second voice.

- Students will get used to follow more complex preset rules and tasks in their improvisations.
- In hindsight of the approaching counterpoint studies, students should develop at this stage already the skill to improvise a parallel movement with any interval above or below the given melody line. As through this they can prepare themselves to improvise different vertical intervals. Whilst doing this the students should always be made aware if they are currently playing consonant or dissonant vertical intervals.
- Parallel octaves and fifths should be a focus, as students will have to learn how to avoid these later.
- In a second step students should learn how to play both voices, the given melody line, and the improvised parallel movement, to do this, students have to develop the skills of finding the right positions and starting points on the guitar, from where both voices can be played together without having to over or under stretch.

- At this point students should also learn how to play a faux bourdon with 3 voices.
- Students should develop an insight on how vertical intervals are placed on the fretboard. (For example, except for between the 3rd and the 2nd string a vertical higher fifth is always to be found one empty fret apart towards the bridge of the guitar on the next higher string, if the F is found on the first fret of the 6th string, the higher fifth c is found on the 3rd fret of the 5th string).
- In a last step (which in my view is already on the advance level) students should develop the skills of improvising a simple melody and form a parallel movement on top of it. For this they will have to expand their skills learned from motivic imitation to create a bit longer melody, whilst at the same time the skill of parallel playing must almost be automatized to be able to improvise 2 parallel voices. It can be helpful to first improvise a melody and then form a parallel movement on it.

The technique of the Gymel and Tvisöngur with their voice crossings and the use of unisono in countermovement should be used in preparation of the counterpoint studies. These two practices should be studied as soon as the student gets comfortable with playing parallel thirds, fifths, and sixths, whilst still be playing only one voice.

- These two practices should be used to form the basics to understand the countermovement skill needed for the counterpoint. It should be practiced so that in the beginning there are fixed point on which the students have to cross the teacher's melody. Later the students should develop the skill of knowing when it is better to move against the other voice and cross by themselves, through this they can also experiment and learn the limits of the guitar tablature, as there is always a point where one cannot go higher or lower.

4.1.2.2 Short example of how to teach Organum Parallelum, Tvisöngur, Gymel and Faux bourdon to children

Also, in the case of all the above-mentioned parallel movement-based practices I believe that children can learn these without a problem, I would recommend starting to teach these practices once the children have gotten comfortable to the previously mentioned melodic exercises of imitations, variations, and diminutions.

Before even starting to improvise the parallel voice, the following exercise could be done between the teacher and one other student to get them used to playing but also hearing another interval. The student and the teacher could play each on melody of a prewritten out parallel movement (for example a parallel fifth organa) and the student should whilst playing their own melody (these melodies should be Kept slow and simple and studied before doing

this exercise) sing the melody played by the teacher (basically singing their own melody for example a fifth higher.

Once this feels comfortable with all possible intervals, one could play a group game based on a game called “Armer Schwarzer Kater” which translates to “poor black tomcat”.⁶

Usually in the “poor tomcat” game, one participant sits in the middle of a circle of participants and has to go to a participant of their choice and make the participant laugh whilst the chosen participant has to say three times “poor tomcat”, without laughing, if the chosen participant laughs he_she has to take the place at the center of circle, if he_she does not laugh the “poor tomcat” has to move to another participant.

In this version of the game there has to be one short either memorized or written out melody or better motive that everybody knows (and that should be easily fingered on the guitar), which is played by the “poor tomcat” in the center. Now the “poor tomcat” should choose one participant of the circle and demand an interval (like “a fourth higher”) in which the chosen participant has to play parallelly with the “poor tomcat”, if the participant can do that 3 times without a problem the “poor tomcat” has move on to the next one in the circle demanding another interval, if the chosen participant fails he_she has to take the role of the “poor tomcat”.

To add some difficulty to this game and enhance the aspect of improvising of it, the “poor tomcat” could use some diminutions or easy variations on the known motive/melody. In this case the “poor tomcat” should fist play the variation of the melody to the chosen participant, who then has to react by adjusting his_her parallel movement of the known melody/motive to the variated version of it. With this version of the game the students are going to improve their reaction time, the aural skills, as well as their musical creativity.

In another advanced version of this game the “poor tomcat” could ask the chosen opponent to play a Faux bourdon meaning a parallel 3rd and 6th on top of the known melody played by the “poor tomcat”. This would introduce the students to three voiced playing and music and to a certain degree to a more chord like thinking.

As a game for the Gymel or the Tvisöngur, which both share the feature of the main melody line being crossed through an unisono by the normally parallelly moving line I offer following option. Two students have to prepare lower and higher parallel movements to a given melody. One child gets chosen to be the main voice, which can also be written down, whilst

⁶ Before continuing I want to shortly mention that I am well aware that this game’s name is actually translated differently in English, however since the name that is used instead of “tomcat” in the English version could be offensive or disturbing to some readers I chose to go with a literal translation from the German name of the game and leaving out the adjective “black”, which is part of the German version of the game to stay as close as possible to original English title of the game, without causing any disturbance to the reader. The original English name of the game can easily be found by first searching “armer Schwarzer Kater” on Wikipedia and then switching to the English article.

the other child plays the parallel movement starting either higher or lower than the main melody line.

The parallel interval can either be 3^{rds} and 6^{ths} like in the historical Gymel or parallel 5^{ths} like in the Tvisöngur, or for practicing's sake any other predetermined interval.

Both play together in a parallel movement and at the sign of the main melody player (for example by shouting "nyt") the player playing the parallel movement has to cross the main melody line through a unisono. On another sign of the teacher both students have to switch roles, whilst trying to continue playing. A more advanced version of the game could be that the teacher towns in every now and then an interval that is not part of the parallel movement. For example, if the students are plying parallel thirds like in a Gymel, the teacher could shout "fifth", at this point the student playing the parallel movement has to react and play one fifth in his otherwise parallel movement. Through this advanced exercise the children are going to get used to more variation in their musical movements, by incrementing the number of intervals that are out of the parallel movement, the teacher can redirect his/her students the away from parallel movements towards counter movements in their improvisations.

To make this possible it is important that the melodies have a slow rhythm, so that the children have time to react and are not too difficult to get into the hands, so that the children can focus on the improvisational part of the games.

4.1.3 Two voiced Contrapunctus simplex, Contrapunctus diminutus and syncopated Contrapunctus diminutus

In this subchapter I am going to move step by step to explain all the different parts that are needed to be able to improvise a two voiced Contrapunctus simplex in the style of Palestrina, then I am going to explain the basic rules, which have to be added, if a syncopated contrapuntos diminutus is to be improvised.

Now we move away from the parallel movement, and we finally reach the movement in opposite direction of the voices, which from the renaissance on becomes the trademark of the counterpoint. It has to be said that this is an actual big step in difficulty compared to the earlier practices. The student should now already be able to play two voices at the same time, of course in the beginning the two voices can be split between two players, like the student and the teacher. However, for this to work, one of the two voices has to be written out, for both players to orientate themselves on, or both players have to know the leading voices melody by hard for one of them to improvise the counterpoint on.

Here a short definition of both the "Contrapunctus simplex" and the "Contrapunctus diminutus".

Contrapunctus simplex and Contrapunctus diminutus:

In the second half of the 15th century the humanistic music theorist Johannes Tinctoris expanded the term of counterpoint. In his first music lexica “Terminorum musicae diffinitorum” he explained that two forms of counterpoint existed, the “contrapunctus simplex, and the “contrapunctus diminutus”. He defined them the following way:

“Contrapunctus simplex est dum nota vocis, quae contra aliam ponitur, est ejusdem valoris cum illa (...) Contrapunctus diminutus est dum plures notae contra unam per proportionem aequalitatis aut inaequalitatis ponuntur, qui a quibusdam floridus nominator.” (Tinctoris, n.d.).

Translated this means:

“One speaks of contrapunctus simplex, if the note, which is set against another one, has the same length. (...) One speaks of the Contrapunctus diminutus, if multiple notes are set against one note in the same or different proportions; some also call it a contrapunctus floridus” (translated by the author of the thesis, after Johannes Menke).

Johannes Menke explains in his book “Kontrapunkt I: The Music of the Renaissance, that the contrapunctus simplex is indeed a note-against-note structure, which is seldomly found in its pure form in the musical praxis of the time. “Diminutus” actually meaning “divided”, implicating, that it is a result of the division of a contrapunctus simplex. What it means at its core is, that on one note of a voice, there are coming multiple notes in the second voice, being played during the same time that the single note is ringing. The reason for Tinctori’s differentiation between the two counterpoints is that, whilst the contrapunctus simplex is solely built on consonants on the vertical level, the contrapunctus diminutus actually allows for the use of dissonates on the vertical level between voices. (Menke, 2015, pp. 71–72.)

How to build a contrapunctus simplex?

First, we are going to look at how to improvise melody that would be used for polyphony of the time. Melodies of the 15th and 16th century usually resemble an arch, the voices usually move gradually, if bigger steps than a third are used, they usually get compensated by a countermovement. Bigger melodic intervals like sixths and fifths can be formed through two smaller intervals as shown beneath:

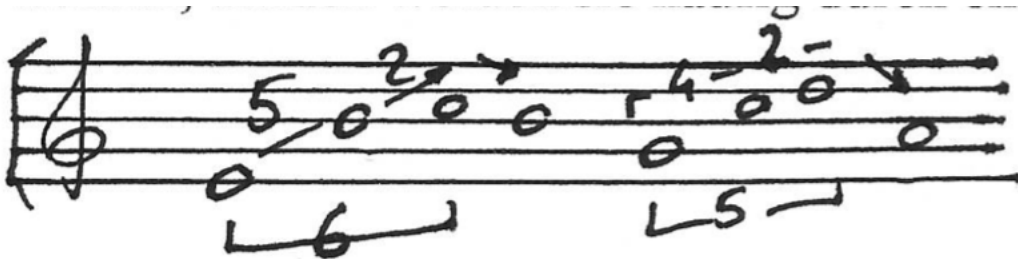


Figure 22: Example of how to divide bigger melodic intervals into smaller steps in a renaissance melody (Dario Dorner 3, unpublished studying material of Carlo Benzi)

The triton is forbidden in any form, as a horizontal and as a vertical interval.

Melody lines usually show the maximum amount of variety, meaning there should not be too many note repetitions following each other or being played close to each other, there should also be no use of sequences (transposed motives) or long scales, as they would make the melody predictable. Melodies were written in the modes (also called church tonalities) and usually a melody would start and end on the finalis (the first note of the modus). (Menke, 2015, pp. 69–177.)

Now that we looked at the basics of how melodies were formed, let us have a look at the vertical movement in the contrapunctus simplex.

The vertical intervals had all to be consonants, these were divided into perfect consonances (prime, quint and octave) and imperfect consonances (thirds and sixths).

Parallel octaves and fifths are forbidden, also octaves and fifths that are reached through a countermovement between the voices are forbidden. There are two exceptions for this rule though.

An octave can be reached through parallel movement if the upper voice rises a half note and the lower voice rises a quart:

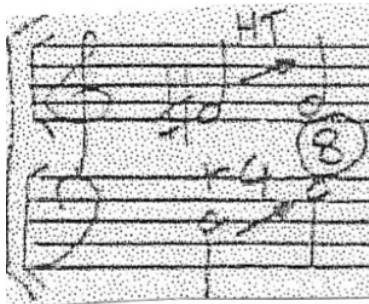


Figure 23: Example of how to execute a correct parallel octave movement in the contrapunctus simplex (Dario 4, unpublished studying material of Carlo Benzi)

And a fifth can be reached through parallel movement, if the upper voice rises or falls by a step of second (major or minor), the lower voice is free to do whatever it wants:

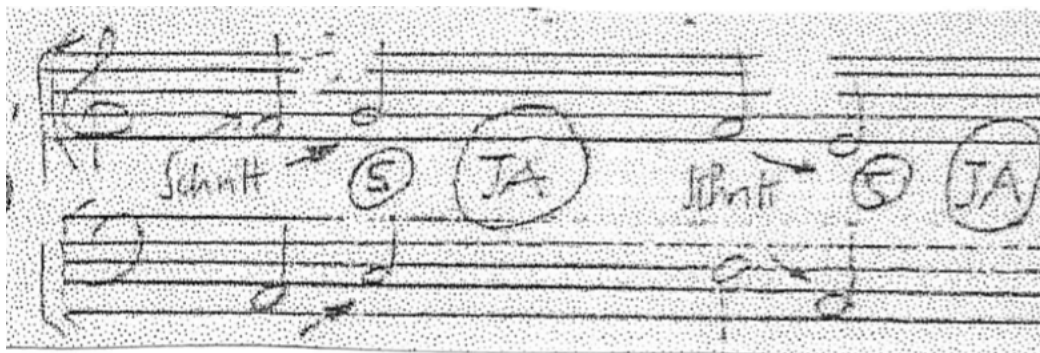


Figure 24: Figure 23: Example of how to execute correct parallel fifth movements in the contrapunctus simplex (Dario Dorner 5, unpublished studying material of Carlo Benzi)

As a last rule, one has to make sure not to build a row longer than three imperfect consonances (like three consecutive thirds or three consecutive sixths), also one needs to make sure that between two consecutive thirds there does not form a diagonal tritone:

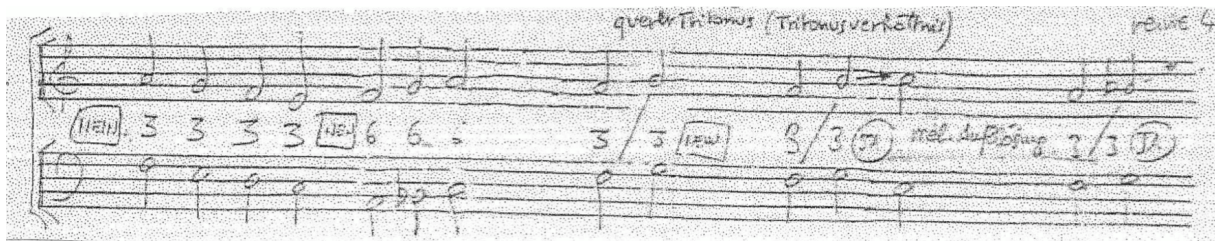


Figure 25: Rules for consecutive imperfect consonances in the contrapunctus simplex (Dario Dorner 6, unpublished studying material of Carlo Benzi)

To conclude the theme of the contrapunctus simplex I want to show a written-out example of how an improvised contrapunctus simplex could look like on the guitar.

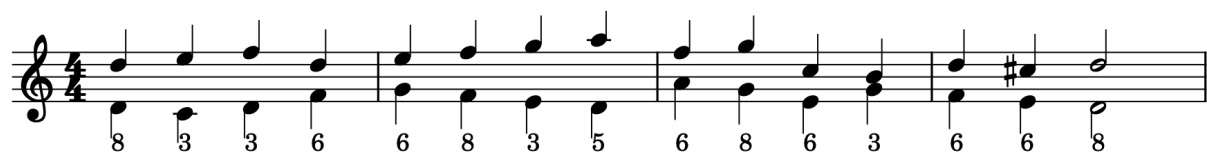


Figure 26: Example of a contrapunctus simplex on the guitar (Dario Dorner 7)

The contrapunctus simplex is important to learn, as it lays the foundation of a specific aspect in multi-voiced music that we call harmony today. The constant note-against-note playing forms a constant sequence of chords in the fundamental position or a sixth chord. I think that the contrapunctus simplex is the first step in learning how to improvise harmonization of a bassline, such as the basso continuo demands, as it teaches the basic roles of voice leading with the advantage that younger student can first focus on getting the voice leading right with two voices before moving on to basso continuo practices in the “advanced counterpoint improvisation level B”.

Contrapunctus diminutus

The contrapunctus diminutus can be understood as a diminution of the simplex, the note value gets literally divided. This change made it possible for the first time to create voices that are rhythmically distinguishable from each other, which is the basis for a clearly perceptible polyphony. Polyphony and counterpoint are not synonyms, the polyphony is one possible manifestation of the counterpoint.

With the use of diminutions, the use of dissonances becomes almost inevitable, because of this the theory and teachings of dissonances were deeply intertwined with the contrapunctus

diminutus. Although the use of dissonances became idiomatic for the language of music, it has to be stated that each time period, each region, each school of thought, each music genre, and each single composer (maybe including his/her students) developed its/ his/her own particular way of using these dissonances. Nevertheless, the technique of the counterpoint still remained universally recognized as a uniting grammar that stands above singular genres and ways of expression.

For this thesis we are going to go with a general rule on the use of dissonances in the contrapunctus diminutus proposed by Tinctoris in chapter 32 of his 1477 published book “*liber de arte contrapuncti*”. Here he states that generally speaking, dissonances should always follow a consonant by moving either stepwise (meaning the interval of a second) up or down, like 1-2, 3-2, 3-4, 5-4, 6-7, 8-7 following this dissonance there should always follow immediately stepwise or by a jump of a third another consonance. (Tinctoris, 1477, p. Cap. XXXII.)

In his book “*Gradus ad Parnassum*” Johann Joseph Fux developed a categorization of genres of contrapunctus diminutus. This method of counterpoint-genres dependent teaching was meant to help organizing the studies of the huge amount of different ways to write a contrapunctus diminutus. (Menke, 2015, pp. 177–180.)

These categories are based on how many notes stand against one note and what their rhythmical values, as well as how the dissonances, are used.

The categorization go as follows:

First species: 1 Semibrevis: 1 Semibrevis (as in the contrapunctus simplex)

Second Species: 2 Minimae: 1 Semibrevis

Third Species: 4 Semiminimae

Fourth Species: 1 syncopated Semibrevis: 1 not syncopated Semibrevis

Fifth Species: free rhythm: 1 Semibrevis

(Fux, 1725, pp. 45–80.)

After having discussed the theory behind the contrapunctus diminutus I want to give a short example of how one can move from the first species (the contrapunctus simplex) to the second species.

The upper system shows the contrapunctus simplex and the lower system shows how to apply diminutions to the same counterpoint, creating a contrapunctus diminutus of the second species:

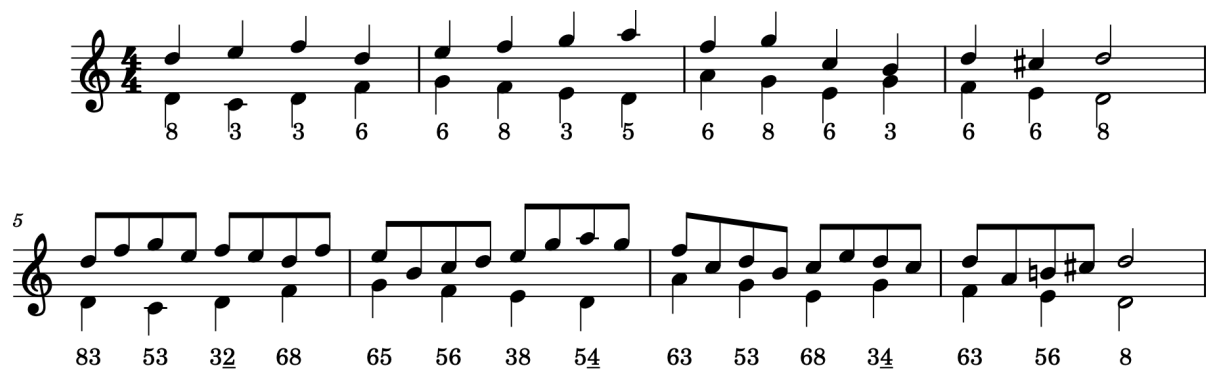


Figure 27: Example of how to transform a contrapunctus simplex into a contrapunctus diminutus (Dario Dorner 8)

Going from here towards the third species is simple, as the rules of the dissonance can be applied the same way, only that in the third species there are double as many notes against one note compared to the second species.

Syncopated Contrapunctus diminutus:

For Franchinus Gaffurius (1451-1522) the “Sincopae” are usually used when an imperfect consonance moves in countermovement to the next bigger perfect consonance. This means that consonances are to be mainly used in the context of a cadenza. This idea, that the “syncopae” were to be played during a cadenza was really relevant for Gaffurius and other composers during the early 16th hundred, although even then “syncopae” were also used occasionally independently of the cadenza and with the progression towards the end of the 16th century syncopes were used more and more out of the context of cadenzas.

Gaffurius gives the following examples of when and how to use “sincopae” in the context of cadence progressions. (Menke, 2015, pp. 186–190, Gaffurius, 1496.)

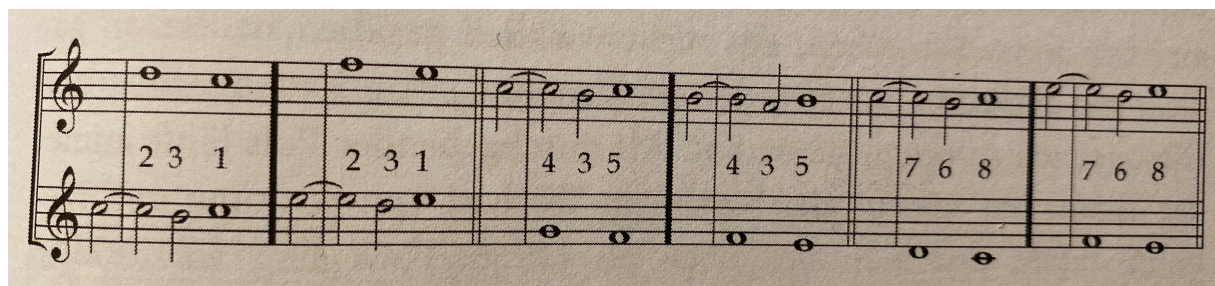


Figure 28: Example of how to execute and resolve syncopations in a contrapunctus diminutus (Gaffurius in Menke, 2015, pp. 186–190)

Based on this description Johannes Menke formulates the four central conditions for the use of syncopated dissonances, which will be of great importance for the rest of composition history:

1. The dissonant note has to be prepared on a weak beat and has to be consonant on this beat.
2. Following, this note gets tied and becomes dissonant on a strong beat.
3. After this the dissonance resolves on the next weak beat stepwise (meaning in a step of an interval of a second) downwards into an imperfect consonance
4. In the upper voices the dissonances that are allowed are 4th-3rd and 7th-6th, whilst in the lower voice the only accepted dissonance is the 2nd resolving downwards to a 3rd

Indeed, these general principles will remain in force, the only thing that changes is the answer to the question, which notes or intervals are seen as dissonances and which of these dissonances should be used as syncopes. (Menke, 2015, pp. 186–190.)

As conclusion of this last historical counterpoint, that I want to include as a goal as a learning objective for students in the basic counterpoint studies. I want to give three last examples of a written out syncopated contrapunctus diminutus, the first two are written on two pentagrams, whilst the last example is more adapted to the typical guitar score with just one pentagram.

The first example is a syncopated contrapunctus diminutus, with the melody of “Victimae Paschali Laudes” in the bassline and the syncopes in the upper voice:

The musical score for Figure 29 is presented in two systems. Each system contains two staves: a treble clef staff for the upper voice and a bass clef staff for the lower voice. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The upper voice features syncopated rhythms and dissonances, while the lower voice plays the melody of "Victimae Paschali Laudes". Fingering numbers are provided below the notes in the upper voice.

System 1 (Measures 1-8):
 Treble clef: 5 6 8 | 7 6 4 3 | 1 3 4 3 | 4 3 4 3 | 3 6 7 6 | 8 6 4 3 | 4 3 5 6 | 8
 Bass clef: [Melody]

System 2 (Measures 9-16):
 Treble clef: 5 6 8 | 7 6 4 3 | 1 3 4 3 | 4 3 4 3 | 3 6 7 6 | 8 6 4 3 | 3 6 7 6 | 8
 Bass clef: [Melody]

Figure 29: Example of a syncopated upper voice on the melody of "Victimae Paschali Laudes" in the bass (Dario Dorner 9)

The second example is a syncopated contrapunctus diminutus, with the melody of "Victimae Paschali Laudes" in the upper voice and the syncopes in the lower voice:

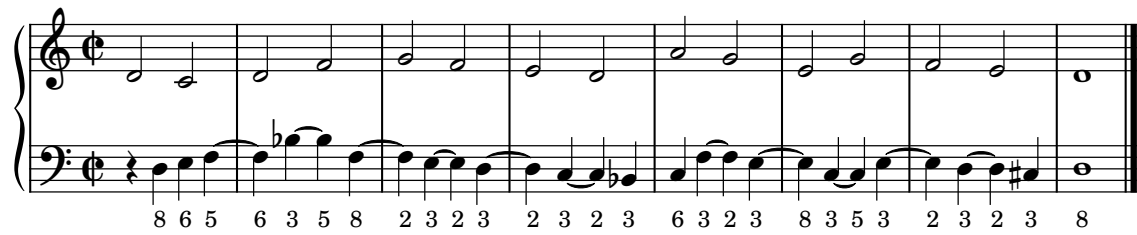


Figure 30: Example of a syncopated bass voice with the melody of "Victimae Paschali Laudes" in the upper voice (Dario Dorner 10)

The third example shows a more creative way of how to use syncopes on a simple bassline progression, and evolve that idea with the use of diminutions:



Figure 31: Example of a creative way of how to implement syncopations and diminutions in a contrapunctus diminutus on the guitar (Dario Dorner 11)

Before continuing to the part where I analyze the skills needed, I want to mention, that I think for this particular section on the contrapunctus simplex and diminutus it can be useful to have some renaissance melodies at disposal to improvise on. Of course with time both students and teachers will get a feeling for how renaissance melodies work and they will be able to improvise these from stretch, however till then a good source of material and inspiration to improvise on are the melodies in the different voices of the fantasies in Luys Milán's "El maestro" book, which is one of the earliest pedagogical and didactical book for the guitar like vihuela, with the facsimile being from 1536. Since these fantasies are written for the ancestor of the modern guitar they fit the instrument very well and can be useful teaching material. (Milán and Jacobs, 1971.)

4.1.3.1 Skills developed with and needed for the contrapunctus simplex, contrapunctus diminutus and syncopated contrapunctus diminutus

Aural Skills:

- The students will develop their harmonical hearing skills
- The students will develop the skill to pre-hear cadenzas
- The student will be able to follow independently moving voices better and develop their polyphonic hearing skills

Instrumental skills:

Students could first start by playing the written melody, whilst the teacher improvises the second voice, so that the student can get and getting accustomed to the sound of the countermovement's in the music and memorize the melody, following this stage students should play only the improvised voice to get used to playing a countermovement to a melody he_she already knows. It might be good to use in the beginning historical melodies, before the students are capable of improvising such melodies by themselves. In the beginning only very short counterpoint fragments should be practiced.

Later students should be able to read a short melody and play the second voice to it. (This is in my view already part of the advanced counterpoint studies, as is of course also the improvising a melody plus the counterpoint to it.)

This practices mostly need just a further development and combination of the skills learned from the previous practices:

- Students should develop the skill of following complicated rules.

- To follow the rules students should develop the skill of having a far-reaching oversight over the movement (ascending or descending) of the melody they have to improvise over to be able to plan countermovements and allowed parallels ahead.
- To follow the counterpoint rules students have to develop the skill of remembering which vertical intervals they just played and plan ahead to avoid the use of unwanted parallels.
- Students should develop the skill of playing and following voices in countermovement.
- Students have to develop even further their oversight over the fretboards to be able to plan ahead on where to play the voices so as to have enough space to maneuver.
- Students need to further develop their ability to improvise and memories a melody following redecided rules.
- When preparing for the contrapunctus diminutus students have to further be able to add the roles of how and when to play dissonance, which means that they have already incorporated the basic roles of the counterpoint without too much trouble.
- Furthermore, with the syncopated counterpoint practices students have to be able to play, follow and see or hear ahead of the melody line, to be able to prepare (skill of planning ahead) a consonance, which will then become a dissonance.
- At the same time with the contrapunctus diminutus students need to be able to play together with another voice, meaning following the same pulse, whilst improvising rhythmically independent of the pre-given melody.

I want to clarify that I am well aware of the fact that to develop these skills and being able to reach these various counterpoint practices, will take years of practice for children and most students will be teenagers by the end of this basic level counterpoint studies. To make teaching counterpoint improvisation a successful and valuable didactical approach future studies would have to develop a practical teaching method based on these didactical and pedagogical plans with more games and exercises with various degrees of difficulty to develop these listed skills.

4.1.3.2 Short example of how to teach two voiced contrapunctus simplex, contrapunctus diminutus and syncopated contrapunctus diminutus to children

I definitely recommend the studying of these final practices after the children has gotten used to the melodic improvisation practices (diminutions, imitations, and variations) and the

improvisation with parallel movements, as starting from the contrapunctus simplex all of these counterpoint practices build on the in the previous practices learned skills.

As I mentioned earlier, I do not think that a young child is going to be able to improvise a full counterpoint by him_herself, as there are too many rules and things to consider, for a child alone to handle it, however I believe that a group of children with good help from a teacher can improvise a two voiced counterpoint.

The major problem with the contrapunctus simples (and diminutus) is the number of rules regarding when which intervals can be played, that the student should keep track of. So, I believe that the keeping track of the intervals can be outsourced to a group of students.

At this point in their studies the children should not have any more problems in improvising /playing any vertical interval on a given melody, since they have been training this skill with the parallel movements.

To bring children closer actual counterpoint improvisation I propose the following exercise.

The first step has to be in any case to either improvise a renaissance melody or to write one down, both should not be too difficult at this point since the children have studied melodic improvisation for some time. Once a melody (which for this exercise has to be played slowly) is set up and all the children know how to play it two children are chosen from the group.

The first child is going to play the agreed-on melody, the second child will play the counterpoint to it, however this second child will get help from the group. One at a time the children of the group propose each one vertical interval that the second child playing the counterpoint has to play on top of the melody. After the counterpoint that is created by the group has been played though by the child playing the counterpoint, this child will now take the spot of the first child to play the agreed-on melody, and another child from the group will rotate in to be the new counterpoint player. At this point a new counterpoint will be formed by the group of children through the same method as already described.

To keep the children concentrated the melodies should be kept short, to enable a fast rotation within the group. By letting the group create the counterpoint the responsibility of remembering all the rules whilst playing, whilst trying to improvise a counterpoint gets divided into the group that “monitors” the rules and creates the counterpoint (obviously the children should be told the rules of which interval can be played when earlier) and another group executing the idea. It will keep the entire group of children busy and responsible, as they all are accountable for each other’s counterpoint. Also, the children will learn the rules of counterpoint faster and they can also focus listening how the counterpoint sounds.

In a second step once a counterpoint is established on the main melody this combination can be played with diminutions (for example by dividing each note or only some notes of the counterpoint into two different notes of the next smaller rhythmical value) and variations of both the melody and its counterpoint to study the contrapunctus diminutus. Depending how

well and fast the group advances also the syncopated counterpoint can be added into this exercises, this could be achieved by the group telling the player where they want to have which syncopated dissonance (like play a syncopated 7th on the third beat), in this very advanced version the player would not only have to play the intervals he_she is being told but also form a plan on how to place the notes which will become the syncopated dissonances in the following beat. This last version with the syncopes is by far hardest and I am not sure if it could be done with children, but it would be worth a try otherwise the syncopated, contrapunctus would have to be postponed to later counterpoint studies.

5 Play based and group-based pedagogy as a fundament to teach children music

The actual counterpoint improvisation might seem quite complex for children to learn but learning it in a play-based environment which allows mistakes and considers mistakes as a part of improvisation practice it can be a means to have fun with music together.

I tried to show in the previous chapter how one can create games and enjoyable and exciting exercises out of a rather complex and seemingly theoretical and dry subject, with many rules such as the counterpoint. So, at the end of my thesis, I just want to go a bit deeper on why I believe that play- and group-based pedagogy should be the foundation of a future teaching method to teach (counterpoint) improvisation to children.

The major problem I expect educators facing when teaching anything as complicated as counterpoint improvisation to children is how to motivate children to want to learn counterpoint improvisation.

We have already shown the various positive effects that counterpoint improvisations improvisation is going to have on children music education and their musical capabilities. The problem is however that these are long-term effects, and they are all rational and research based, but a child does not learn on the bases of what from an adult's point of view would be rationally right to learn. The question a child might pose itself or the teacher when faced with all these necessary skills and things to learn is, why should I learn this, what is in it for me?

We can of course reason, that since children starting this program are already in elementary school and therefore should also be used to learn on the bases of instructional teaching methods that usually replace play-based approaches with the beginning of school education. The problem however is twofold, on one side children do not go to music school to voluntary

elongate their daily school experience. Although parents might have rational reasons for sending their child to learn an instrument, the reason why children themselves might enjoy going to instrument lessons is, because the aspects that the child enjoys in the lessons like the communication with a friendly and cool music teacher, the enjoyment of playing something they like, the exploration of new territory with their fantasy outweigh the annoying and boring factors of having to practice constantly and having to follow certain music rules. Following this logic, adding another subject with lots of rules whose theoretical necessity might not be clear to the child in the moment, is not going to drive the motivation for learning up. On the opposite side "The innate curiosity of young children is often manifested through discovery and learning through play (Wylie, 2009; Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Welch, 1998)".

„(...) Childrens' experimental, creative and improvisational approaches to music-making (Nilland, 2009; Tarnowski, 1999) (..) have been noted to support the development of valuable musical skills and attributes including exploration in the use of tonal centre, clear tonal, melodic, and rhythmic structures (Whiteman, 2001) and a deep engagement in collaborative and social musical interactions (Littleton, 1998; Smithrim, 1997). "(Hardy, 2021.)

And Lucy Bainger clarifies "Play is learning for the young child - it is their work, and they can work very hard!" (Bainger, n.d.). Furthermore, play based pedagogy can have the positive effect, that the teachers might find themselves on the receiving end of a constant stream of invention and new ideas from children. (Lum and Shehan Campbell, 2007)

„An individual child's innovation can then be re-introduced to a larger group, extending the musical ideas in the free play. (...) Music time in small groups is invaluable for creating the structures needed for many music games that the children love. Guidance is needed to help the children form circle groups, to share, take turns, rotate leadership and to co- ordinate moving and singing together when required. In any musical activity there needs to be an invitation from the educator, asking the children for their ideas, preferences or improvisation in movements, sounds, voices, words and even changing the game altogether. It is always worth trying out the children's suggestions. There is learning for the child in what doesn't work just as much as in what is successful. "(Bainger, n.d..)

This indicates to me that a play-based pedagogy might be very successful in introducing children into learning counterpoint improvisation. If done correctly play based music pedagogy can shift the focus of the children away from the difficult aspect of it (which can be a problem with the counterpoint improvisation) towards the aspect of fun and exploration. Additionally the games played by children in the elementary school age involve more and more rules, that are share between all the players (Siegler et al., 2016, p. 250), this means that play based pedagogy in the context of a group can make it easier for children to learn the rules of counterpoint improvisation if they are presented as rules of a game. In the long run I think, that learning counterpoint improvisations in a group of students right from the start might take away the fear of improvising in front of others, that many classical musicians have now.

It is proved that role games of younger children are usually more complex and challenging if played together with older siblings or parents. These social forms of support give children the possibility to learn and enhance their abilities in telling stories (Goncu and Gaskins, 2007, pp. 101-129, 131-154, 247–273).

Although I do not have proof for this, I reason that consequently it might be also enhance younger children's abilities in counterpoint improvisation, if they study together in a group with older and more advanced students. This of course would only work if the older students would not get frustrated from having to play with younger students. This could of course be avoided by giving the older students in the group some of the responsibility over the learning progress of the group elevating them to some sort of mentors next to the teacher. It could even have the effect that through such a group dynamic also the older students might be more motivated in learning and improving their skills in counterpoint improvisation.

I have to add that of course the entire approach towards play and group-based pedagogy in the context of teaching counterpoint improvisation has to be adapted and constantly re-evaluated with the children's advances in skills and age throughout the basic level of counterpoint improvisation studies. A mix of one-on-one lessons between a teacher and single students and group-based pedagogy supervised by a teacher might be an even more promising model. So that the teacher would additionally also have the possibility to focus on each child's specific needs and goals apart from the group. Also, the single one-on-one lessons are especially valuable when new aspects and practices of the counterpoint are being studied and the children might have all individual problems understanding or insecurities regarding this new aspect of the counterpoint studies, which are better to be dealt with in a more secure feeling environment of one-on-one lessons with a teacher.

But how exactly to implement the play and group-based pedagogy to create an adaptable, practical, working, and fun method to teach counterpoint improvisation on the classical guitar is material for bigger research that has access to more time, more researchers and teachers and more groups of children and advanced students that should be involved in building a new (counterpoint-)improvisation curriculum.

The primary goal of a bigger research in this field, should be in my eyes the development of more games and exercises for different constellations of group and one on one lessons. Also, more detailed research should have a look at more counterpoint practices and how to include them into a long-term studying curriculum for children and advanced students. Continuing, it might be interesting to have a closer look at jazz and folk music improvisation and for classical guitarists especially the study of flamenco music and its different forms of

improvisation and how these could be connected and intertwined with counterpoint improvisation.

What I have done here is hopefully to have laid out a first pedagogical and theoretical fundament for future research to be done on.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Information given by Various sources on the ideal starting age for children to start playing the classical guitar

- 1) Musika: The American online music teaching platform recommends starting at age 6 with studying the guitar, as so they reason most children have developed enough strength in their hands, following this logic smaller children should wait maybe till the age of 7 to start playing the guitar. It has to be said that from what I could gather from their online platform Musika seems to cooperate with local institutions, whose teacher's music and teaching qualification range from amatorial to professionals, also I could not find out, who exactly wrote the article on the best age for guitar playing. Also being based in the United States this statement derives clearly from another culture of music education, therefor its validity for this thesis only comes from the logical argument of the required strength. ("What is the Best Age to Start Guitar Lessons?" n.d..)
- 2) Turku Suzuki School: The Suzuki is a very successful pedagogical tool, which is internationally recognized to successfully train children from a young age. The Suzuki method is also supported by some of the biggest names in classical guitar performance and education, as shown by the recordings for the 9 Volumes of the Suzuki guitar method, these were recorded by Frank Longay, William Kossler, Seth Himmelhoch, Kevin George Brown, Andrew LaFreniere George Sakellariou and William Kanengiser. ("Browse: Search results for: 'Suzuki Guitar school,'" n.d..)

Although the vast majority of children are still going to start playing the guitar in a non-Suzuki based music environment, I considered the Suzuki method to be a good example of what is the minimum age at which children can start playing the guitar. I base this on the encouraging environment and well though through play based pedagogy of the Suzuki method, that deeply cares for an early development of the musicality of the child, as music in the Suzuki method is seen as a key way to improve good characteristics in a person (*Suzuki guitar school*, 1991).

The Turku Suzuki School offere's "Guitar Pre classes with the Parents" from the age 3 to 5. This information is particularly interesting, as it is based close to the Turku Arts academy and therefore could influence a good portion of children, who might later start playing the guitar at the conservatory or with an guitar student of the Arts academy and could be interested in an imaginative course of

“Counterpoint improvisation on the guitar” at the Turku Arts Academy (Ketonen and Turku Suzuki School, n.d., <https://turunsuzukikoulu.fi/in-english/>).

- 3) International School of Music Finland: The ISM is a nonprofit organization with teaching licenses in the cities of Helsinki and Espoo as well as having a school in Oulu, it is also part of the Association of Finnish Music schools. The school offers pre-instrumental lessons from the age 5 to 8, in which children learn the basics of instrumental performance, as well as notation and rhythm in a group setting, the school offers also individual and group lessons for all ages following the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM). This source is valuable as it might show the age range in which guitar lessons are usually offered to children in Finland outside special methods like the Suzuki method.
(<https://ismfinland.org/pre-instrumental/>)
- 4) As a last source I wanted to mention prof. Heinz Teuchert (1914-1998), who is described as one of the most influential German guitar pedagogues, many important guitarists and guitar teachers studied with him at the Musikhochschule in Frankfurt. He was also famous for his teaching of amateur guitar players and as an author of guitar music and guitar schools and books. Actually, the first two books I studied with as a child at the age of 5 and 6 years “Meine Gitarrenfibel 1” and “Meine Gitarrenfibel 2” were written by him and I consider them to this day the best guitar books or guitar schools for children I have seen on the market so far, because of the way they build the skills of the child step by step having good exercises and nice small pieces as well as a very smart, beautiful and child appropriate design. I started with 5 years playing studying with these books, but in his short preface to the first book prof. Heinz Teuchert explains that they were meant for beginners from the age of 6 to 11 years, from which I can deduce, that this must have been an appropriate age for him to start playing the guitar. (Ricordi Milan, Berlin, London, New York, n.d., *Meine Gitarrenfibel*, 2005, pp. 1–3.)

7.2 Appendix 2: Information on improvisation at the Sibelius academy

Continuing, a look at the “general info” category under the search term “improvisation” or “improvisointi” reveals, that there is just one link for improvisation, namely “Afro Improvisation” (upload date 02.04.2020) in the subcategory digital resources for teaching and learning and between 2001 and 2021 only two doctoral theses were written talking about improvisation, these were the following, **Pulkinen Outi** (MuTri) Artistic component: *Sileän tilan laulu*. Thesis: *Runolaulusta kokonaisvaltaiseen improvisointiin* (written in 2014) and **Sirkka Kosonen** (MuTri) *Kitapurjein tuntemattomaan – Tyylien välillä liikkuva improvisointi ja laulajan kehitys* (written in 2018).

Having shown, that even though in the Finnish music education system seems to envision music improvisation being a big part in a classical musician's training there seem to be problems in enforcing this idea, making it part of the many regular practiced aspects of a classical musicians training, I want to redirect the reader's attention, towards and interesting trend in music education in Finland that is easily spotted by looking at the following categories, (published) articles, projects and especially (happened) events, under the before mentioned search terms (improvisation" or "improvisointi") on the Sibelius Academy's homepage. ("Results for search term: improvisation," n.d., "Results for search term: improvisointi," n.d..)

Whilst in the years prior nothing (at least nothing mentioned by the academy itself) to improvisation had been published, in 2020-2021 three articles, were published talking about different aspects of improvisation:

Arts- based methods decrease social anxiety

(Upload date 12.6.2020)

- Doctoral dissertation: Improvisation pedagogy can support the social skills of all kinds of learners and their ability to deal with feelings of insecurity (upload date 26.5.2021)

- Taidetelakka project culminated in the release of the Wildness Makes This World -LP (upload date 3.9.2021)

Furthermore, two projects including this theme were launched:

-Sibelius Academy's International Visitor Program, with prof. David Dolan (connected with the Sound Diaries project), prof. Robert Levin (upload date 5.2.2020)

-Teaching unit Global Choir (upload date 14.4.2021)

And a lot of Events on this topic have happened between 2020 and 2021:

- **FULLY BOOKED! Sirkku Rintamäki – The contemporary hymn** (upload date 8.9.2020)
- **MuTeFest'20: SYNTHESRA** (upload date 8.10.2020)
- **ONLINE CONCERT: Musica Nova Helsinki: Joy Against the Machine** (upload date 15.1.2021)
- **Meriheini Luoto & Metsänpeitto** (upload date 19.1.2021)
- **Juho Laitinen: The Virtues of Improvisation Workshop** (upload date 10.5.2021)
- **Online event: Public defence of the doctoral dissertation of Eeva Siljamäki** (upload date 12.5.2021)
- **Online concert: Global Spring: Jaakko Arola – Ambiguous Borders** (upload date 17.5.2021)

- **Online concert: Global Spring: Canonic Soles** (upload date 17.5.2021)
- **Online concert: Global Spring: Rhythm of now** (upload date 17.5.2021)
- **Giampaolo di Rosa – Improvisational concert** (upload date 8.7.2021)

(“Results for search term: improvisation,” n.d., “Results for search term: improvisointi,” n.d..)