



## **Syncretism and Transidiomatism in the Teaching of Jazz and Modern Music in Portugal: Proposals and Strategies for the Development of New Practices.**

This proposal aims to deepen the discussion on teaching methods, focusing on the contrast between formal canonical jazz education and a student's quest for creativity and artistic individuality. The central question is: How can we promote a syncretic musical approach that uses jazz aesthetics as a foundation, creating a transidiomatic product that caters to both formal education patterns and musicians' pursuit of individuality? In other words, how can we develop new pedagogical methods to help students deepen their musical voice and identity, while simultaneously enhancing their improvisational skills and understanding of general rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic concepts?

Jazz programs vary significantly worldwide. Conservatories in Northern Europe have long been exploring new techniques, incorporating free improvisation, and studying European classical styles (Ake, 2010; Nicholson, 2005) to enhance students' musical and instrumental skills. In the South, particularly in Portugal, most jazz programs adhere strictly to canonical standards and compositions inspired by jazz tradition. These programs are deeply concerned with "authenticity" and often refer to a dichotomy between jazz and non-jazz music.

As a student, I often questioned the repertoire and learning methods, particularly the rigid definitions of what a jazz musician should or should not be. More importantly, in my early years as a professional musician, I grappled with what I could or could not play in a jazz gig. Musicians like Brad Mehldau or The Bad Plus, who used pop/rock compositions as vehicles for improvisation and sublime performances, validated what I aspired to do: create a hybrid compositional and repertoire style that could encompass various influences and ambitions. Over the past decade as a university teacher, I have incorporated this approach into my classes, aligning with David Ake's perspective (2010):

In jazz, as in every other discipline in higher education, good teachers provide students with a foundation in what has come before, offer suggestions to address perceived weaknesses, and foster a challenging, creative, and supportive environment in which they can focus on their work. (p. 115)

At the same time, I always try to keep in mind Hall Galper's insight that an effective teacher should also know how to get out of the way of a student's development (Ake, 2010).

During this session, I will share examples of arrangements that I have worked on with students, tailored to their tastes and repertoire choices.

References:



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Ake, D. (2010). *Jazz matters: sound, place, and time since bebop*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nicholson, S. (2005). *Is Jazz dead?: Or has it moved to a new address*. New York: Routledge.

Born in 1980, the Portuguese guitarist **Nuno Costa** started playing at the age of 15. In 1998, he began his classical music studies at Academia de Amadores de Música. A year later, he went to the Hot Clube de Portugal jazz school, and in 2002, he received an achievement scholarship. He then moved to Boston with a new scholarship to attend Berklee College of Music, graduating in 2005 with Magna Cum Laude in Film Scoring. In 2021, he completed his PhD at Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon (Summa Cum Laude).

His first album, “(...) - Reticências entre Parênteses” was released in 2009 by the Portuguese indie label Tone of Pitch. The record received positive reviews from critics and was featured in both national and international press. In 2012, he released his second album, “**All Must Go**” for the same label. “Packed with solid and imaginative writing, played by a group of amazing improvisers, All Must Go is a dazzling musical experience that should not be missed by anyone interested in modern jazz,” said one review. “**Detox**” was released in 2015, and Mário Laginha commented, “It is enjoyable to listen to and it is never predictable. I don’t feel one can ask more from a record. “**À Deriva**” (2017) is his fourth album as a leader and the first of Saga Cega, a project that took him apart from jazz for the first time in his career. Saga Cega brought together a cast of notable musicians from the Portuguese scene. His trio NoA has been active since 2012 and has played a significant role in the Portuguese jazz scene. “**Evidentemente**” (2020) was recorded by this trio and is also available on vinyl. The album was nominated for the best jazz album at the Prémios Play awards. “**Cenas de Uma Vida no Bosque**” was released in 2021. It was recorded with a septet and is also a part of his PhD thesis. “**Convavexo**” (2022) is NoA’s second album and features the amazing Rão Kyao.

With a strong connection to film scoring, Nuno Costa frequently collaborates with directors, composing music for their projects. He has a “Silent Movie & Live Music” project that has been showcased in several film festivals in Portugal.

He is currently teaching at the Jazz e Música Moderna Major and at the Musicoterapia Master’s Degree at Lusíada University of Lisbon.