

# Presence, methodologies and practices in the teaching of contemporary music in Spanish music conservatories


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**ENG Abstract:** The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed the creation of musical works that have explored new expressive, technical, and sound horizons, giving rise to what is known as contemporary music. This music constitutes an extremely valuable cultural heritage, which should be known, studied and disseminated in Spanish music conservatories, at both professional and higher levels, in order to properly train new generations of musicians, creators and educators. This study proposes an analysis of the methodologies and practices used in the teaching of contemporary music at Spanish professional and higher-level conservatories. To do so, a theoretical framework and state of play has been done on the use of contemporary music in conservatory classrooms, while analysis is also done on the resources, varied uses and implementation of this period in music history that is used by teachers in these educational centres. The research instrument was a questionnaire designed *ad hoc*, and there was a sample of 113 participants. The results obtained show that conservatory teachers do not make intensive use of contemporary music content, even though listening is the most utilised teaching methodology. Those with a higher conservatory degree, postgraduate degrees and less professional experience are those who most encourage the use of music from this musical period. Alternative materials to the textbook are quite frequent, especially with these types of teachers. The representation of women composers in the programs is quite low, with a predominance of male composers belonging to the historical canon in the different manuals, although sometimes recently composed pieces by women composers are used.

**Keywords:** contemporary music; music conservatories; music education; didactics of musical expression.

**Overview.** 1. Introduction; 2 Objectives; 3 Methodology; 4 Results; 5 Discussion and conclusions; 6. Bibliographic references.

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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary music is a broad term that refers to music composed during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that is characterized by experimentation with new languages, practices, techniques and sound media in search of, predominantly, the “rupture with conventional systems of music referred to as classical tradition” (Cubells Pérez, 2023). Various authors note how the conceptualisation of contemporary music addresses, rather than hard to specify temporary variables, aesthetic and stylistic questions (Fubini, 2005; Morgan, 1999; Ross, 2009) in reference to the new compositional processes and resources that explicitly renounce tonal hierarchy (García Torán & Monreal Guerrero, 2012; Laucirica *et al.*, 2012; Vela González, 2020), such as: “extended instrumental techniques, new formal organisational patterns such as timbre or sonority,

organisations of heights outside the temperament system and tonal system, development of randomness and indeterminacy within the music, among other aspects” (García Torán *et al.*, 2023, p. 205).

The study and dissemination of contemporary music in professional and higher-level Spanish music conservatories is essential for the development of musical culture and the training of future performers, composers and teachers. Artistic studies in music are divided into three different educational levels: elementary education, providing a basic knowledge of music through the initial study of an instrument and usually lasting four years; professional education, is professional studies of an instrument and is structured in six courses; and higher-level education, where different instrumental and non-instrumental specialties can be studied, usually lasting four courses (Regional Government of Andalusia, 2024). Within the curricula of the specialised education system for music (in Spain, specialised education refers to subjects outside the general education system such as music, dance and fine arts), the presence of contemporary musical languages has intensified on the curricula through the successive educational laws, both in professional and higher-level studies (Laurica *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, several recent studies indicate its pertinence and relevance to promote a reflexive and critical spirit in students at these centres, to create socio-cultural connections to understand and enjoy the music of their time, and to open up spaces for unconventional artistic experimentation to encourage an understanding of musical language in their vocal or instrumental practice (García Torán *et al.*, 2023; Gómez Alemany, 2023; González & Santapau; 2019). Nevertheless, contemporary music often encounters obstacles and rejection from certain agents in the artistic and educational spheres, who consider it too difficult, remote or abstract (Laurica *et al.*, 2012).

This research proposes to find out if contemporary music has a significant presence in Spanish professional and higher-level music conservatories and what kinds of teaching methodologies and practices are used in its teaching. Teaching methods are dynamic components that facilitate students’ independent and creative activities (Narváez Campana *et al.*, 2020). They vary widely and can be classified according to levels of participation, the assimilation of content and problem-solving approaches. The teacher’s methodology significantly affects how students learn, helping to build meaningful knowledge and develop cognitive skills (Llana Vargas & López Ibarra, 2019). Likewise, to teach contemporary music, teaching methodology is connected to how it is taught. That is, the steps, decisions or actions that a teacher develops to organise the processes for teaching and learning.

First, an introductory theoretical framework will be made about authors who address contemporary music and their teaching methodologies; then a brief state of play will be done to know the current situation on studies that have researched the use of music from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in Spain’s specialised education system. Second, quantitative research will be carried out on the methodologies and practices in contemporary music teaching in these types of educational centres.

### 1.1. Contemporary music and teaching methodologies

Midway through the 1960s, contemporary music burst into contemporary musical pedagogy in the United States and in Central and Northern Europe, expanding as of the mid-1970s through numerous and varied proposals for:

integrating the principles, materials and techniques introduced from the music of this century – above all the different lines of sound research and manipulation subsequent to the dodecaphony of the Viennese School – into all levels and forms of music education. (Hemsey de Gainza, 1995, p. 17)

As of the last decades of the past century, the interest of music educators in the benefits that contemporary music can offer to learning music can be seen. Pioneering European educators such as Paynter (1999) or Schaeffer (1988) propose a methodology of open exploration around these contemporary materials, similar to that of other artistic pedagogies, on aspects such as atonality, randomness, ambient sounds, soundscapes or unconventional notation, as well as the study of the interrelationships of music with other contemporary artistic languages to develop creative expression, putting their faith in new educational perspectives for music studies. Despite the years that have passed since their publications, these authors remain important references within teaching innovation in musical pedagogy.

For Hemsey de Gainza (1995), the musical educator, who must look to the development and needs of their students within the vital context of their present, cannot neglect working with their society’s current and contemporary musical languages. According to this author, contemporary music provides sound experiences that promote auditory awareness, experimentation and creativity in the students related to sound as an object of artistic manipulation and the understanding and interpretation of their listening environment. All this cannot be ignored by the school. Currently, music teachers have different “experiences and materials, properly sequenced and systematised, for the teaching of contemporary music in the classroom” (Hemsey de Gainza, 1995, para. 8), within the different educational stages. Musical games, sound experimentation or improvisational activities and creative composition can all be good ways to approach current musical languages. These activities could be integrated with other curricular content and significantly enrich them, such as the traditional repertoire or interdisciplinary projects and, likewise, with the specific objectives of the subject. The language of contemporary music is no stranger for students in the early stages. Its syncretic nature, rather unstructured and open, is natural for younger students, who are receptive to this type of music, according to various studies (Martínez Aguilera, 2004; Valls, 2010).

Cureses de la Vega (1998) points out the difficulty of developing a contemporary musical didactic given the lack of historical perspective, as happens in contemporary studies, since it seems logical to think that it

will be aligned with the solidity of a research career specialised in the subject. For this author, the situation has evolved positively despite the difficulties and obstacles found for “development of a true didactic for contemporary music, both at university levels and in professional and higher-level music centres – mainly in conservatories and music schools – and, of course, in secondary schools” (Cureses de la Vega, 1998, p. 215).

Hemsey de Gainza (1995) distinguishes different pedagogical styles to teach contemporary music, which differ according to the musical techniques used and methodological approaches. “In this sense, certain proposals aim at development of the sensitive field, creativity and communication, while others place the emphasis on cognitive development and intellectual participation through music” (para. 13), although, according to the author, these proposals would not be mutually exclusive.

In our country, despite the deficient situation that exists in contemporary music teaching and practice (Peris Aviñó, 2023), over recent decades we can find studies and experiences promoting the introduction of contemporary music materials thanks to researchers and teachers interested in their educational potential (Archibeque, 1966; Botella Nicolás & Lerma Granell, 2016; Cureses de la Vega, 1998; Martínez Aguilera, 2004; Mateos, 2007; Muñoz, 2004; Pascual Mejía, 2011; Saenz Abarzuza, 2017; Urrutia, 2012; Urrutia & Díaz, 2013a, 2013b; Valls & Camell, 2010). These classroom proposals defend the didactics of contemporary music from the practice of listening, performance and composition, leading to experiential learning situations versus the explanation of concepts and theories in different educational stages. Results show that the more known and understood contemporary music is, the greater the openness and predisposition toward it (Mateos, 2007; Valls, 2010).

Despite these studies, diffusion of new contemporary languages within the Spanish state's educational and musical contexts, both in general education and in specialised training, is still rare, especially when compared to other artistic fields such as visual or architectural arts (Laucirica *et al.*, 2012). In this sense, there is a pending debt on the part of music education in our country toward the didactics of contemporary music (Cureses de la Vega, 1998). Among the motives that cause this situation in Western societies, Laucirica *et al.* (2012) emphasise “an intense tonal enculturation, which affects the musical preferences of both teachers and students” (p. 1). Along these lines, Ordoñana *et al.* (2006) highlight an almost exclusive predominance of tonal music in our country's education.

## 1.2. Contemporary music in music conservatories

Contemporary music is present in the curricula of artistic studies in music within specialised education in Spain, both in state-run models, governed by Royal Decree 1577/2006, of 22 December, which establishes the basic aspects for the curriculum for professional music education, and Royal Decree 631/2010, of 14 May, which regulates the basic content of higher-level artistic studies in music, based on Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, in Education, as well as the corresponding developments in the autonomous communities. Despite this, there is a significant gap between the legislation and its actual application in musical practice in these educational contexts (Ordoñana *et al.*, 2006).

In recent years, various research projects have taken an interest in the study of contemporary music within the regulated artistic studies in our country. García Torán *et al.* (2023) analyse its use in professional and higher-level conservatories at the state level and conclude that its presence is scarce both as to the instrumental repertoire of this type of music and in the use of related didactic resources (any type of material or tool designed and created with the intention of facilitating a teaching and learning process), despite the importance that teachers attach to it based on the initial courses and motivation shown by the students. González & Santapau (2019) address the context of professional conservatories in Spain, pointing out the absence of a contemporary repertoire in the curricula or specific didactic resources for this purpose. These national research projects coincide with other studies focused on various autonomous communities, such as Castilla y León (García Torán & Monreal Guerrero, 2021), Andalusia (Zagalaz Lijarcio, Cañizares Sevilla y Ortega Ruiz, 2015), as well as the Valencian Community, Murcia and Aragón (Peris Aviñó, 2023), noting the low presence of this type of content and highlighting the discrepancies and curricular differences shown by the different conservatories towards contemporary music. The research by Vela González (2020), focused on higher-level music education, reaches the same conclusions. This study highlights how in most of the centres the contemporary music content is among elective courses, so its study depends on a choice by the students.

In this sense, the studies show a clear imbalance in how contemporary music is treated on the curricula between theoretical subjects and those for instrumental practice. While, in the former, the presence of this content is scarce and uneven, its performance in the majority of instrumental specialties is practically nil and comes down to isolated cases (Laucirica *et al.*, 2012; Ordoñana *et al.*, 2006; Vela González, 2020). To fill this gap, numerous authors (García Torán *et al.*, 2023; García Torán & Monreal Guerrero, 2021; González & Santapau, 2019; Laucirica *et al.*, 2012; Martín Alvarado, 2020; Ordoñana *et al.*, 2006) agree on the importance of early and continuing training for teachers as well as for them to be updated in this area. Along these same lines, García Torán *et al.* (2023) found that the training the teachers have at professional and higher-level conservatories in Spain in regard to contemporary music was enormously unequal, ranging from self-taught training to international specialisation.

The limited performance of contemporary music in the academic repertoire addressed at conservatories limits the students' access and knowledge, and results in their lack of acceptance and interest in an updated and diverse repertoire that connects with emerging and innovative musical trends (González & Santapau, 2019). Laucirica *et al.* (2012) studied the attraction to or rejection of contemporary music shown by students in

different instrumental specialties at higher-level music conservatories in our country, and found that almost a quarter of the students evaluated showed a tendency toward “interest in and enjoyment of this type of music, more when it is performed than when listened to and, in many cases, the work of the teachers involved is essential” (p. 12). At the other extreme, a little more than 20% of subjects interviewed showed little attraction to, or even rejection of, contemporary music due to three main causes: “problems in understanding, having to listen several times, and needing help in performance” (p. 12). It is striking that this research did not focus on the topic, but in light of the results it was an emerging category of study: “mentions about their taste for contemporary music was so frequent and interesting that it led to the creation of a new category for overall analysis of the interviews” (p. 9).

Authors such as Peris Aviñó (2023) and García Torán & Monreal Guerrero (2021) defend the absolute need to integrate content and methodologies dealing with the musical avant-garde at higher-level conservatories because, if not, students are given incomplete and insufficient training for their professional development in the future. García Torán *et al.* (2023) analyse the methodological characteristics, affirming that the didactic approach taken by the teacher, among other aspects, determines the type of training the students receive.

The limited scientific literature that has been found related to studies that delve deeper into the didactic methodologies and resources used to address contemporary music materials in professional and higher-level conservatories in Spain has been the main motivation for development of this research.

## 2. Objectives

The main objective of this research is to find out about the usage, methodology and resources used by teachers at professional and higher-level conservatories when it comes to teaching contemporary music in their respective centres. Also sought are the following specific objectives:

1. To know if they teach contemporary music through original materials or with the support of a textbook
2. To discover whether, among the teaching methodologies, there is use in the classroom of improvisation, musical creation, listening, performance, or learning theoretical content about contemporary music
3. To verify if repertoire materials created by female composers are used
4. To determine whether the amount of teaching experience, sex or educational level of the teacher influences the use of alternative educational material other than the textbook to teach contemporary music
5. To find out if the amount of teaching experience, sex or educational level of the teacher influences the use of contemporary music in classrooms at the conservatories
6. To check if contemporary music is worked on more in professional conservatories or in higher-level conservatories

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Procedure, design and sample

In order to respond to the objectives proposed in this study, an analytical-descriptive research method has been designed, with a quantitative approach. The chosen design is transversal and not experimental, and the data was collected in early 2022. This research will be methodologically structured in two different phases: In the first phase, a statistical-descriptive analysis of the collected data will be carried out, while in the second phase a correlational-causal analysis of the data will be done.

The total sample was  $N = 113$  music teachers at higher-level conservatories and professionals in the Spanish educational system, selected using non-probability and by convenience. Personal data was anonymised in order to ensure the privacy of the respondents. Participation in the survey was voluntary, required the informed consent of respondents, and did not involve any financial or other type of compensation. In addition, this research has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Autonomous University of Madrid.

### 3.2. Instrument and analysis

In the first phase of the research, the data was collected using a questionnaire designed *ad hoc* and managed through the Google Forms tool (Table 1 in Annex). This tool was selected for its ease of use, the ability for the user to do the questionnaire online from anywhere, and the possibility to create different types of questions adaptable to each need (Mondal *et al.*, 2018) as well as for automatic data collection with Google Sheets, which allows easy export to Microsoft Excel. The questionnaire consisted of two main blocks: the first one related to sociodemographic data from the participants and the second one to the use of contemporary music in the classroom. Items were included with a 5-point Likert type scale (where 1 was equivalent to ‘not at all’ and 5 to ‘a great deal’), multiple choice questions and open questions in which participants had to write their answer (there were less of these latter ones). The questionnaire was previously validated by a panel of six experts coming from university centres in the field of Didactics of Musical Expression, as well as by two professors from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Madrid. These experts assessed the understanding, importance and consistency of the questions, and provided new perspectives and useful interpretations for reformulation of the information collection tool. Subsequently, the research participants received an email to fill out the questionnaire voluntarily and electronically.

In the second phase, a relational study was done in the same time period in order to determine the relationship between the years of teaching experience and the use of alternative educational material other than the textbook for the teaching of contemporary music. Likewise, correlations were established between



educational level, experience, sex, musical training received, and the use of contemporary music through listening, vocal or instrumental performance and composition and/or arrangement in the classroom. Finally, we also research whether the use of contemporary materials on female composers has to do with the sex of the teacher.

The results of the questionnaire were analysed using the SPSS Statistics V. 20 statistical analysis tool. We did frequency analyses, as well as contingency tables, where we observed the relationship of the data between two quantitative variables. In addition, the Microsoft Excel program was used for graphic and tabular representation of the data.

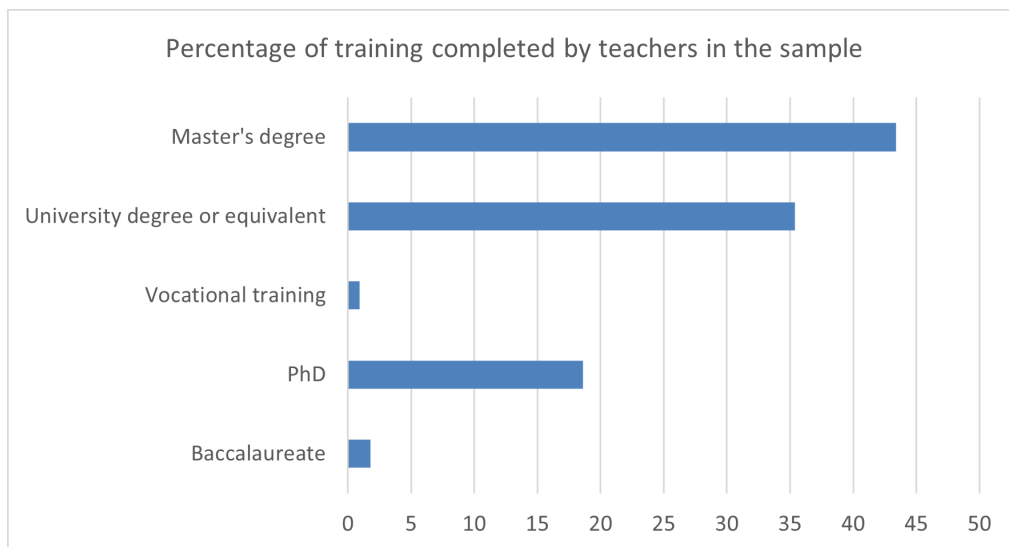
## 4. Results

Below, the results are divided into two blocks according to the established methodological phases.

### 4.1. Statistical-descriptive analysis of the data

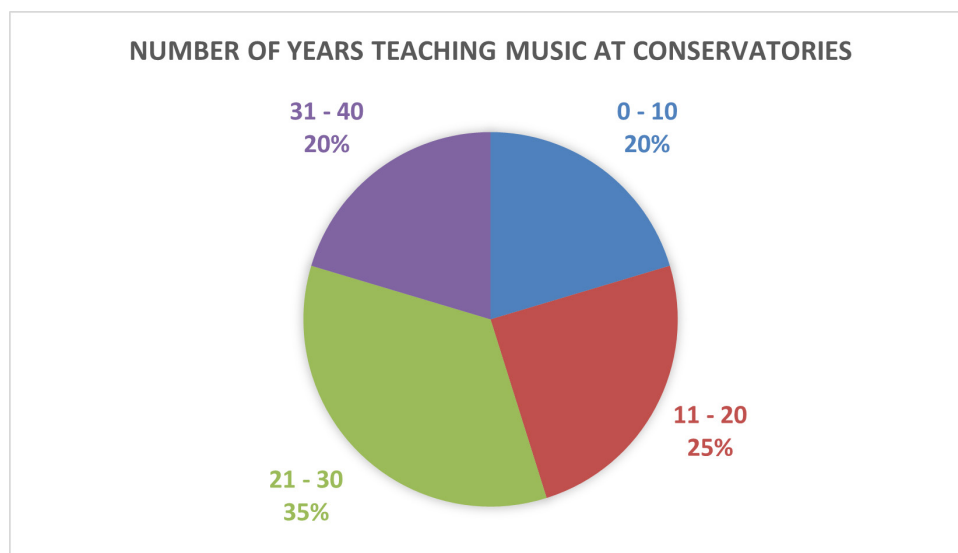
The sample was made up of 42 women (37.2%) and 71 men (62.8%). Of the 113 teachers, 79.6% work at a professional conservatory or approved centre and 20.4% in a higher-level conservatory or approved centre. The conservatory degree held by the participants is elementary level (1.8%), professional level (32.7%) and higher level (65.5%). The percentages on the educational level of teachers in the sample can be seen in Figure 1, which shows that 1.8% only have a baccalaureate degree, 0.9% have a vocational training degree, 35.4% have a university degree, 43.4% have a Master's degree and 18.6% have a PhD. This confirms that the educational level of the selected sample is quite high in terms of the higher education received.

(Fig.1) Educational training of conservatory teachers participating in the sample



As can be deduced from Figure 2, the conservatory teaching experience of teachers participating in the sample is as follows: only 20% have worked between 0 and 10 years, 25% between 11 and 20, 35% between 21 and 30 (the largest sample) and 20% between 31 and 40 years.

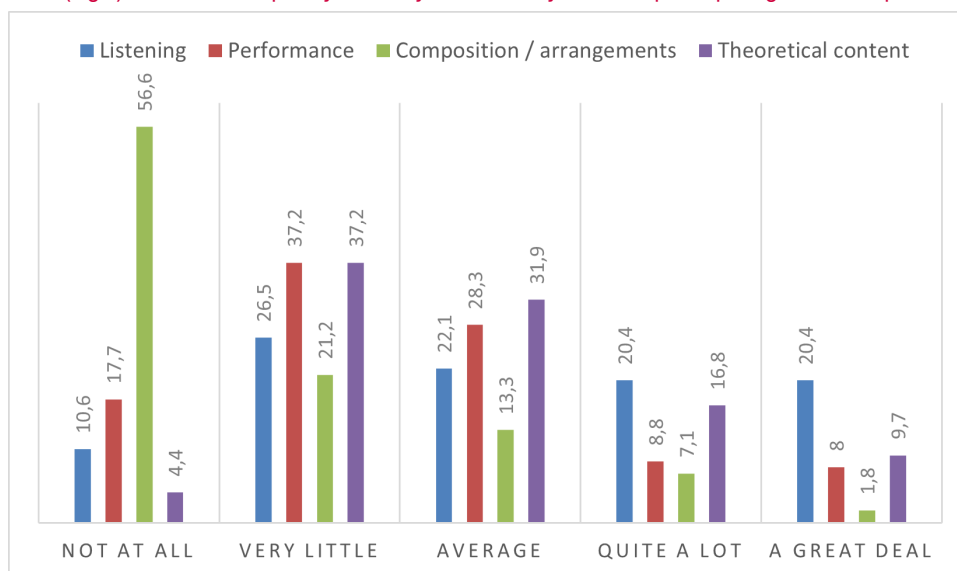
(Fig.2) Teaching experience of conservatory teachers participating in the sample



Once the sociodemographic data of teachers participating in the sample is known, results are described on uses, different methodologies and materials used to teach contemporary music in conservatory classrooms.

To respond to the objective of knowing how the content is taught at a methodological level, the following results can be deduced from the questionnaire. Figure 3 represents the average use that conservatory teachers have given to different aspects for learning contemporary music in conservatory classrooms. The horizontal axis shows the four categories evaluated: listening, performance, composition/arrangements and theoretical content. The vertical axis offers the average score obtained in each category, expressed in percentages. The statistical data shows that, in general, the different methodologies for learning contemporary music in conservatory classrooms are not worked on very much (Figure 2).

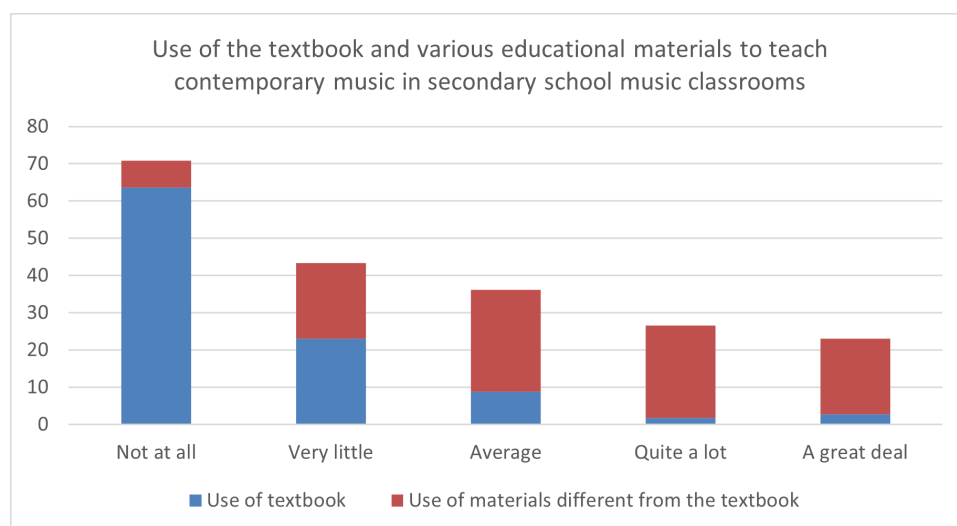
(Fig.3) Use of contemporary music by conservatory teachers participating in the sample



More than half of teachers do not work on composition or arrangements in their classes (56.6%). There are also other teachers who barely work on theoretical content (4.4% not at all and 37.2% very little) or on performing contemporary music (17.7% not at all and 37.2% very little). Conversely, it seems that the most common way of working on this stylistic period is through listening to music (40.8% between quite a lot and a great deal). This suggests that, in general, conservatory teachers spend more time teaching theoretical, performance or compositional content from other periods of music history that have less connection with contemporary creation, although the way to work more intensively on this is through listening. This slightly contradicts the results from Ordoñana *et al.* (2006), who claim that contemporary music is taught more as theoretical rather than practical content. Moreover, it seems teachers do not propose an activity to take students to didactic concerts, since only 7.1% of the sample do this a lot and 5.3% do it quite a lot. This is a paradox, given that professional conservatories and higher-level centres for musical performance are relevant within the state panorama.

As to the materials and resources with which these teachers teach, we see a downward trend in the use of the textbook as compared to alternative materials designed by the teacher (Figure 4). Teachers who use textbooks sometimes turn to manuals on the history of contemporary music or above all to authors such as Ross (2016) or Marco Aragón (2007).

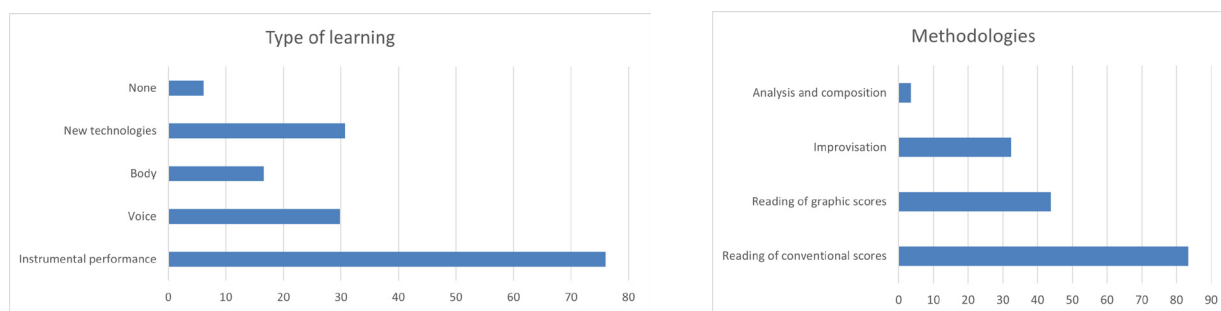
(Fig.4) Use of the textbook and various educational materials to teach contemporary music in conservatories



Conversely, conservatory teachers who use alternative materials other than the textbook use another series of tools, such as scores (91.22% of the sample), educational videos (71.92%), musical arrangements (22.8%), pedagogical activities (31.57%), online resources (53.50%), software to create music (26.3%), resources from other art forms (25.43%) and, very little, the editing and processing of audio via effects (0.8%), live performance (0.8%), certain scientific publications (1.75%) and improvisation (0.8%) as materials for the students to learn about music.

As for the main media with which contemporary music content is transmitted (Figure 5), the most representative are instrumental performance (76%), use of voice (29.8%), use of body (16.6%), use of technologies (30.70%), while only 6.14% of the sample directly do not teach contemporary music content. This is contradictory to some research (Lauricica *et al.*, 2012; Ordoñana *et al.*, 2006; Vela González, 2020) which indicates that contemporary music is approached more theoretically than on a practical level. This result is striking with respect to Figure 3, where performance is barely used. However, it should be taken into account that most of the sample is made up of teachers who teach instruments (81.7%) and, as a minority, teachers of theoretical subjects (composition (15.3%), conducting (4%) and musicology (8.9%), pedagogy (16.8%) and solfeggio (1.5%)), these being the teachers who use vocal training the least in the classroom. The most common methodologies among teachers to teach contemporary music (Figure 5) are related to performance and reading of conventional scores (83.3%), reading of graphic scores (43.8%), improvisation (32.4%) and, to a lesser extent, analysis and composition of musical pieces (3.5%).

(Fig.5a and 5b). Type of learning (left) and methodologies (right) to teach contemporary music content in the conservatory



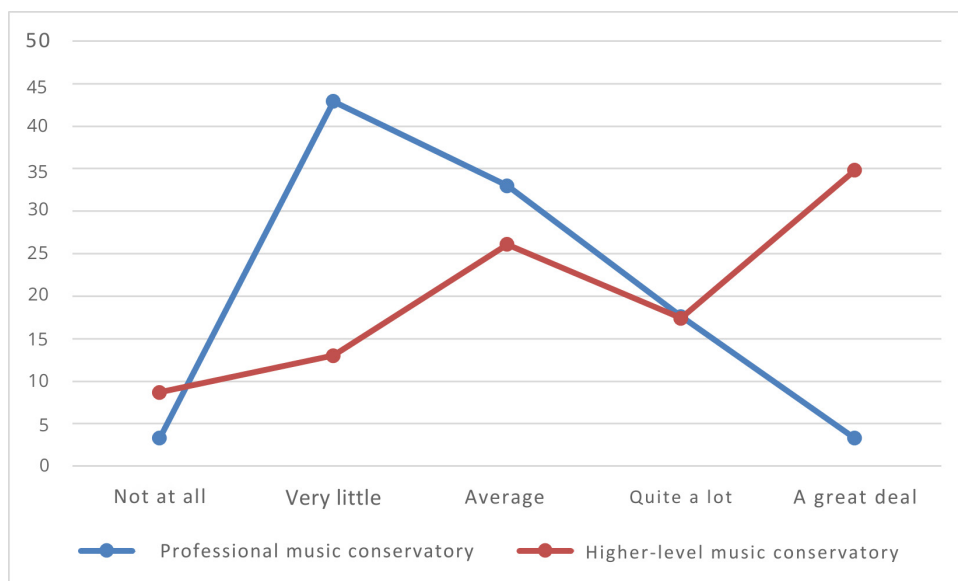
Finally, the most representative composers the teachers work with are very diverse and varied, going from international composers such as A. Schönberg, A. Webern, I. Stravinsky, S. Reich, G. Ligeti, L. Nono, L. Berio, H. Lachenmann, among others, to national authors such as L. de Pablo, D. del Puerto, M. Sotelo or J. M. Sánchez-Verdú. There are very few who, faced with the generic question of giving examples of working composers, mention any female composers. Among them, some emphasise Sofía Gubaidulina, Amy Beach or Kaija Saariaho. However, when asked specifically what content by female composers they work on, almost half of the sample indicate that they do not work on pieces by any or cannot think of any cases (48.2%), which is quite representative of the educational level of the teachers and the educational bias that exists when it comes to teaching content favouring gender equality. The rest of the female composers mentioned coincide with the previous ones, adding some compositional figures in Spanish-speaking musical creation such as Teresa Borrás, Alicia Díaz de la Fuente, Raquel García Tomás and Nuria Nuñez Hierro.

#### 4.2. Relational analysis of data

To relate the data from the variables in our study and answer our objectives, contingency tables have been extracted that we will explain through the following graphs for greater clarity in visualising the results.

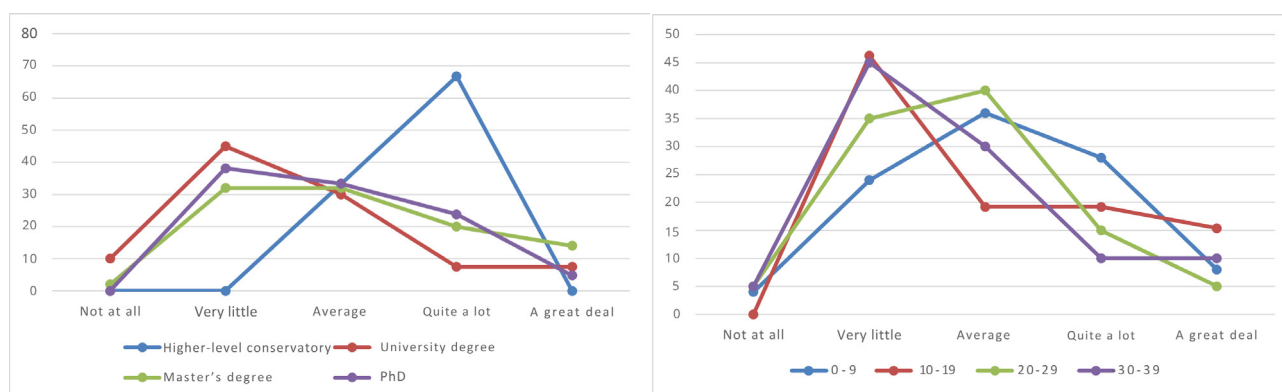
For starters, the first results that respond to specific objective 6 reveal that teachers with higher-level conservatory degrees use contemporary music much more in the classroom than teachers with professional degrees, as can be seen in Figure 6. In general, the trend is rising in teachers who use this style of music from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in courses during the final stage at the conservatory.

(Fig.6) Correlation between the use of contemporary music by teachers at professional conservatories versus teachers at higher-level conservatories



In order to respond to specific objective number 4, in Figure 7 can be seen the correlation of the teacher's educational level and the use of alternative educational material other than the textbook to teach contemporary music (which can be seen in the graph on the left) and the years of teaching experience versus the use of alternative educational material other than the textbook (in the graph on the right).

(Fig.7a and 7b) Correlation between the teacher's educational level and the use of alternative educational material other than the textbook to teach contemporary music (left) and years of teaching experience versus the use of alternative educational material other than the textbook (right)



The results tend to be fairly equal in the case of teachers who, apart from having completed higher-level conservatory studies, also have university studies. Nevertheless, it seems that the overall prevalence is that teachers with university studies generally use alternative materials less than they use the textbook.

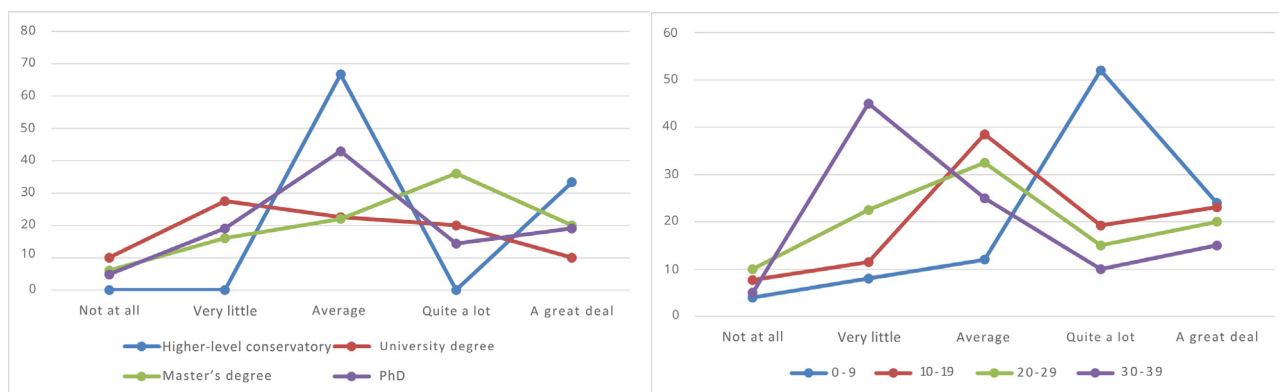
The results of the correlation between the variables of sex and the use of educational material other than the textbook specify that both men and women use alternative materials in an intermediate fashion in their programs, 34.7% and 26.2%, respectively. The figures are quite similar in terms of the division by sex in relation to the abundant use of their own materials, although men seem to use them more frequently, 20.8% for men and 19% for women.

As to the influence of years of teaching experience in regard to the use of these alternative materials, it seems that those with less than ten years of work experience are the ones who innovate the most and avoid using a textbook, while the most veteran teachers use it frequently.

Finally, to find out the answer to specific objective 5 and whether the participant's educational level (graphic on the left) and professional conservatory experience (graphic on the right) influence the use of contemporary music in classrooms, Figure 8 is analysed.



(Fig.8a and 8b) Correlation between teacher's educational level and contemporary music use in conservatory classrooms (left) and years of teaching experience versus the use of contemporary music (right)



Again, there seems to be an overall trend in the case of conservatory teachers who, apart from having a higher-level degree, have completed university studies. The trend seems to corroborate that those with postgraduate studies resort to the use of contemporary music quite a lot, although so do those teachers who do not have university studies. These use music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries only in an average way and balanced with other periods in the history of music.

However, in the graph on the right we see more conclusive results regarding the general trend toward intensified use of contemporary music by teachers who have been working less time in the profession. Moreover, the value showing low use stands out for the group of teachers who have been teaching classes in these conservatories for more than 30 years.

Finally, it seems that differences between the sexes in the use of contemporary music are almost similar, although the trend is that men use it more in their programs than women teachers do, 13.9% in men versus 2.4% in women for the value of 'a great deal'. However, we must emphasise, as mentioned above, that the representation of men is higher than that of women and this result may not be sufficiently representative of the overall sample.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The main conclusions that come from this research coincide with other studies (García Torán *et al.*, 2023; González & Santapau, 2019; Ordoñana *et al.*, 2006; Vela González, 2020) in pointing out that conservatory teachers do not intensively use contemporary music content, not through performance, nor through listening, composition or arrangements, nor through field trips to attend didactic concerts or through theoretical content in their classes. Even so, the methodology they propose most for their students is auditory analysis. In this sense, the results align with other studies that indicate a greater presence of contemporary music within theoretical subjects than in those for instrumental practice in Spanish conservatories (Laucirica *et al.*, 2012; Ordoñana *et al.*, 2006). In addition, it draws attention to how, in current teaching practice, guidelines for authors are not introduced like Laucirica *et al.* (2012), who conclude that students of different instrumental specialties in higher-level conservatories in our country show more interest in, and enjoyment of, contemporary music when it is performed than when it is listened to.

On the other hand, alternative materials to the textbook are more frequent in conservatories, probably due to the difficulty of finding resources and materials designed specifically to teach contemporary music, just like what happens in secondary education (Cureses de la Vega, 1998), even though sometimes they resort to certain manuals for theoretical subjects in music history and because, traditionally, this is material that is not used very much in these educational centres. This indicates that teachers get involved in the development of their own materials, which adapt to the needs of the students. Among these personalised resources, what stands out are the use of scores, educational videos, musical arrangements, pedagogical activities, as well as online resources, software to create music and resources from other art forms. The performance and reading of conventional scores, reading of graphic scores or improvisation are the most representative teaching methodologies for the type of teachers surveyed, which in this sense come closest to the practices of open exploration proposed by pedagogues of reference such as Hemsy de Gainza (1995), Paynter (1999) or Schaeffer (1988).

Teachers with a higher-level degree are the ones who encourage the use of contemporary music and alternative materials to using the textbook in classrooms, over and above those who have university studies or a professional degree. In addition, those who have this higher-level degree and have completed postgraduate studies turn more frequently to the music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in their teaching proposals. This means that the educational level of teachers directly influences the use and usefulness they find in contemporary music, analogous to what happens in other formative stages of compulsory general education (Mateos, 2007; Urrutia & Díaz, 2013b). This is also done by those who have less work experience, and it is striking that male teachers use it more than women (although it would be necessary to have a greater number of participants representing this group).

As to the equitable use of contemporary music with respect to the selection of works by women and men composers, there are still quite a few inequalities, given that the knowledge established by the historical

canon prevails, which predominantly represents the masculine gender. They barely show any knowledge of contemporary music pieces created by women, and the few examples given refer to female composers of recently created works.

It can be confirmed that the knowledge and use of contemporary music in conservatories in our country is scarce and limited, only available to certain students, depending mainly on the training received by the teachers, with those teachers who have completed postgraduate studies and have less work experience being those who most encourage the use of contemporary music in the classrooms. Even so, as some studies defend, a unique opportunity continues to be missed to have comprehensive training for future performers, composers and teachers related to the music closest to their time and reality (García Torán & Monreal Guerrero, 2021), hindering students' interest and motivation towards emerging and innovative musical trends (González & Santapau, 2019).

This preliminary study has certain limitations that are expected to be corrected in future studies, such as by encouraging greater participation to get a more representative sample of teachers, as well as obtaining a more equal number for groups of men and women teachers. Future research will also take into consideration the more specific use made in classrooms and the perception of teachers on contemporary music to acquire competences at conservatories. It is expected that, by hiring teachers with greater training in this stage of music history, content dealing with contemporary music at these centres will increase quantitatively and qualitatively.

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## 7. ANNEX

Table 1 Structure of the questionnaire designed *ad hoc*.

<b>BLOCK I. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA</b>
I.1. Sex
I.2. Educational level
I.3. Number of years teaching
I.4. Main centre where you work
I.5. Mark the highest level of conservatory degree
<b>BLOCK II: USE OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN THE CLASSROOM</b>
II.1. To what extent do you address contemporary music content in the classroom?
II.2. Do you use listening to teach contemporary music?
II.3. Do you carry out activities where students attend didactic contemporary music concerts inside or outside the centre?
II.4.1. Do you use a textbook to teach contemporary music?
II.4.2. If you use a textbook to teach contemporary music, indicate which one
II.5.1. Do you use educational materials other than the textbook?
II.5.2. If you use educational materials other than the textbook, indicate which ones
II.6. Do you do vocal or instrumental performance of contemporary music in the classroom?
II.7.1. What content do you use to perform contemporary music?
II.7.2. What type of methodology do you use to perform contemporary music?
II.8.1. On which male composers of contemporary music do you mostly work?
II.8.2. On which female composers of contemporary music do you mostly work?
II.9. Do you do arrangements or compositions of contemporary music in the classroom?
II.10. Do you provide guidelines for students to make their own compositions on contemporary music?
II.11. Do you include improvisation among the activities for learning contemporary music?

Table prepared by author

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