

**THE LICENTIATE DEGREE COURSE IN BRAZILIAN POPULAR MUSIC –  
CECULT UFRB: CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION IN THE EAD  
MODALITY**

***O CURSO DE LICENCIATURA EM MÚSICA POPULAR BRASILEIRA – CECULT  
UFRB: DESAFIOS DA IMPLANTAÇÃO NA MODALIDADE EAD***

***EL CURSO DE LICENCIATURA EN MÚSICA POPULAR BRASILEÑA - CECULT  
UFRB: RETOS DE IMPLEMENTACIÓN EN LA MODALIDAD***



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**ABSTRACT:** In 2021, the Licentiate Degree in Brazilian Popular Music – EaD modality was started at UFRB, an initiative of the CECULT and SEAD university centers, with the support of CAPES. Starting from an innovative proposal of courses in art, culture and their languages, more specifically, from a successful experience of implementing a course for music educators in the classroom mode, the opportunity allowed us to expand a current process of expansion of education to inland cities. We present an account of this experience, and the discussion of some peculiarities and challenges found in this very recent process, problematizing the issues of teaching music and the arts at a distance and online.

**KEYWORDS:** Musical education. Popular music. Recôncavo da Bahia.

**RESUMO:** *Em 2021, iniciou-se o curso de Licenciatura em Música Popular Brasileira – modalidade EaD, pela UFRB, iniciativa do centro universitário CECULT e da superintendência SEAD, com o apoio da CAPES. Partindo de uma proposta inovadora de cursos de arte, cultura e suas linguagens, mais especificamente, de uma experiência exitosa de implantação de curso de formação de educadores/as em música na modalidade presencial, a oportunidade permitiu ampliar um processo corrente de interiorização do ensino superior. Apresentamos um relato dessa experiência, discutindo algumas peculiaridades e desafios encontrados nesse processo bastante recente, problematizando as questões do ensino da música e das artes em sua modalidade a distância e online .*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Educação musical. Música popular. Recôncavo da Bahia.*

**RESUMEN:** *En 2021, se inició la Licenciatura en Música Popular Brasileña - modalidad EaD en la UFRB, una iniciativa del centro universitario CECULT y de la SEAD, con el apoyo de CAPES. A partir de una propuesta innovadora de cursos en arte, cultura y sus idiomas, más específicamente, a partir de una experiencia exitosa de implementar un curso de formación para educadores musicales en la modalidad de aula, la oportunidad permitió ampliar un proceso actual de expansión de la educación a las ciudades del interior de la educación superior. Presentamos un relato de esta experiencia, así como discutimos algunas peculiaridades y desafíos encontrados en este proceso tan reciente, problematizando los temas de la enseñanza de la música y las artes a distancia y en línea .*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Educación musical. Musica popular. Recôncavo da Bahia.*

## Introduction: A brief history of the course

The Center for Culture, Languages and Applied Technologies (CECULT) Federal University of the Recôncavo da Bahia (URFB) was created in 2013 and implemented in 2014 (although it was already part of the initial project for the implementation of the UFRB in 2005/2006) had, among other innovative and inspiring ideas for its creation, the theme of interdisciplinarity. At that moment in our political and academic history, this epistemological and pedagogical trend was very much in vogue in Brazilian universities (especially in the federal universities of the state of Bahia - Federal University of Bahia, UFBA; UFRB itself and the recent Federal University of Southern Bahia, UFSB). Among other initiatives, the interdisciplinary baccalaureate degrees (BI's) and the corresponding licentiate degrees (with the acronym LI's) were built to serve diversified areas of knowledge and to train researchers and professionals to act directly in the world of work. These areas were: health, varied technologies, humanities, etc. In the case of CECULT, the focus was the field of culture and its artistic languages in multiple dimensions. Considering this scope, music and its various interdisciplinary articulations could not fail to be considered and included.

The first course implemented at the center, the BICULT (Interdisciplinary Bachelor in Culture, Languages, and Applied Technologies), contained in its initial proposal several of these articulations. Having a format in two cycles, the second of these cycles is called “terminalities,” - which aims at specific training related to the understanding of areas and fields of culture, artistic languages, and technologies of the show, “with a view to ethical and professional training, in the idealization, construction, and realization of projects concerning the field of work and the formation of citizenship” (BRASIL, 2014, p. 17, our translation). Before mentioning one of these terminalities of capital importance to the theme of this text, I want to emphasize that there is a capillarity of the various unfoldings of contents related to musical aspects at the intersections with the proposed initial terminalities. This happens in curricular components of general student education (some that focus on themes of artistic languages in general) and in more specific ones related to musical production, cultural policy, management, performance technologies, etc. Teachers with diverse backgrounds were selected to compose an area of knowledge in the center's structure called “Music and Culture<sup>1</sup>”. The denomination of this group is fundamental for the structure of the center – including the fulfillment of administrative demands and the organization of various tasks in academic life –

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<sup>1</sup> Areas of knowledge on the page list the center's faculty: <https://ufrb.edu.br/cecult/conheca-o-cecult/corpo-docente>.

implica na assunção de uma vocação epistemológica bastante patente na construção do CECULT, considering the specificities of dealing with the various aspects of musical knowledge: a strong reference in the diversity of musical practices and knowledge associated with them and the adoption of ethnomusicology as a theoretical reference matrix of great importance. Or, rather, a very present tendency to consider the different musical practices in their social and cultural contexts, as well as historical and other possible relationships with epistemological diversity: interdisciplinarity.

Besides, another issue, in this case, the local, regional affiliation to the identity territory where our campus is located, the Recôncavo da Bahia, was pressing for the adoption of a specificity very dear to the course that nucleated the referred knowledge area and its actions: that of a degree in Brazilian Popular Music (the highlights in italics and underlined terms are precisely due to the emphasis on the cultural elements and the intentionality that refer to this choice).

There is a great diversity of the various meanings taken by the term “popular” in its associations with the concept of “music”. In his text "Goodbye to MPB" (SANDRONI, 2004), ethnomusicologist Carlos Sandroni discusses the historical and conceptual developments of the expression of Popular Music throughout various historical periods, theoretical biases, and authorial idiosyncrasies of great formers of Brazilian musicological thought in general, such as Mário de Andrade extensively, and even uses in the fields of communication and common sense. In Sandroni's text, we can glimpse how the adjective is historically transmuted, from a sense of popularity that was confused with folkloric to one that is inserted in the acronym MPB itself, which is quite identified with media production, especially in its period of the 1960s and 1970s. However, paraphrasing the epigraph that quotes Gilberto Gil (one of the great names of this popular music MPB) in the opening of the mentioned text, we could say that in our music courses, if there are many ways to make music, we also “prefer all of them”.

And, highlighting this multiplicity of ways of making music, we seek the inclusion of its theoretical, conceptual, and practical-performative contributions in the universe of teaching and research at the university level. Popular music and the Brazilian song (one of its most obvious expressions) have been the object of studies and research for some time now. Tatit (1996), Naves (2001) and, Wisnik (2004), Napolitano (1999, 2002), among a series of other authors from the fields of history, linguistics, semiotics, language studies in general, social sciences, etc., have been studying these themes with great effort and focus. However, music departments and schools, and other academic institutions, in Brazil have been slow to include

this field of sound practices and knowledge both in their curricular structures of courses and in their research lines in general (BAIA, 2010; BOLLÓS; COSTA, 2017; RODRIGUES, 2015; SANTOS, 2015). Albuquerque (2016), although with a more specific focus on the teaching of popular singing, offers us an overview of the historicity of this process that has as its landmark the creation of the bachelor's degree course in popular music at the Institute of Arts at the State University of Campinas (IA-UNICAMP) in 1989.

In Brazil, the teaching of popular music reached public universities in the late 1980s at UNICAMP, a pioneering initiative that has been driven by a moment of worldwide interest and appreciation for the subject (ALBUQUERQUE, 2016, p. 12, our translation).

A process, therefore, that seems late to us, considering the very historicity of the field, which goes back to centennial periods in our cultural history, not only with its relations with a phonographic and media industry that emerges at the threshold of the 20th century but also with some productions linked to a powerful musical medium materially driven by the publication of scores and other social forms of sharing, fruition, and symbolic and material exchanges, already in the previous century. Illustrating this production are names such as Ernesto Nazareth, Chiquinha Gonzaga, Anacleto de Medeiros<sup>2</sup>, among others, take us back to a memory that dates back to the transition between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but reaches the university only at the end of the latter. However, let's think about the issue even in a broader panorama. It is a fairly new field of studies in global terms, which even caused astonishment in its early days, as highlighted by a renowned researcher in the area:

One of the initial problems for any new field of study is the attitude of disbelief it encounters. The serious study of popular music is no exception to this rule. It is often confronted with a disconcerting attitude of ironic suspicion suggesting that there is something odd about treating 'fun' seriously or finding 'fun' in 'serious things.' Such attitudes are of considerable interest when discussing the aims and methods of analysis of popular music [...] (TAGG, 2003, p. 8, our translation).

However, after the pioneering implementation of the university in São Paulo, the idea spread among several higher education institutions (HEI) throughout the Brazilian territory, both public and private, making it possible for students from this field of interest to have access to university life. Other circumstances and events that must also be taken into consideration to follow our course development process are the initiatives to teach artistic languages in basic education and their consequences in the dynamics of creation and offering courses to supply

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<sup>2</sup> Musicians of great prominence and pioneering spirit at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

educators' training to meet these demands. This text reports experiences in which we seek to contribute to these processes of improving and developing teaching and learning in music and arts in general.

### **The teaching of artistic languages in basic education**

Although there was already a previous history of inclusion of content from artistic languages in the school environment, in fairly recent times, we could observe some very significant events for the areas of interest of this article. One of them was the enactment of Law 11.769<sup>3</sup>, in August 2008, that “amends Law no 9.394, of December 20, 1996, Law of Directives and Bases of National Education, to provide for the mandatory teaching of music in basic education” (BRASIL, 2008). With this, there has also been an increase in the number of music degree courses offered by HEIs, with a corresponding increase in the demand for these courses by students interested in obtaining their education to serve a labor market that, supposedly, was expanding. Quite significant in the two fields to which we refer more directly (popular music and music degrees) is the data obtained mainly through personal observation and the equally particular experience reported by colleagues working and connected with courses of this nature (coordinators, professors, etc.), of the professional and educational profile of the students who seek these two modalities. It is noticeable the affluence of people with musical education and performance (even at advanced levels) who seek academic education for a number of reasons. Motives that range from the regularization of their professional activities (in the case of undergraduate degrees, accrediting these people for regular activities in basic education teaching institutions) to obtaining the qualification for continuing their academic careers, to a series of other motivations, which certainly include technical and professional improvement.

At the confluence of these two strands, the proposal came to build a degree course in Brazilian Popular Music at our center and our university. To realize this proposal, similarly to many other university courses, an intense pace of work was undertaken, both for the writing of its pedagogical project (BRASIL, 2016)<sup>4</sup> as for the tasks of obtaining the necessary authorizations, those required by the university's internal instances (especially by the Pro Dean of Undergraduate Studies) and those necessary for submission to the Ministry of Education.

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<sup>3</sup> The law, as the text indicates, made a significant impact by teaching music in basic education compulsory.

<sup>4</sup> Some aspects of this process can be better known in the text presented at the XIII Northeast Regional Meeting of ABEM - Brazilian Association of Music Education (BRASIL et al., 2016).

Once these demands were met, it was possible to offer vacancies to students through the Unified Selection System (USS) and, as a result, receive the first class in 2018. That same year, in the midst of the process of welcoming and affiliation these students, the opportunity arose for us to apply to the CAPES<sup>5</sup> n° 05/2018, “call for articulation of higher education courses in DE modality under the Open University of Brazil – UAB” (CAPES, 2018). Our group was presented with the possibility of spreading some principles of the face-to-face course in this innovative modality, and that, in our opinion, since the first moments when access to it was considered, also allowed for great accessibility to higher education, further enhancing an internalization that was already the driving force of our university. Another opinion of the author of this text, not to fail to mention, are the pedagogical contributions in general (emphasize, the term in general meaning, mainly, the possible transformations that they inspire in “face-to-face” courses) that the practices of the DE modality bring.

It is also worth clarifying that the “group” I referred to above included not only the area of knowledge directly involved with the course but also teaching colleagues who adhered to the actions and discussions about teaching in general and arts teaching in particular, as well as people who were very close to the distance education modality in question. The strengthening of academic relations with the SEAD (Superintendence of Open and Distance Education) UFRB was also fundamental for the success of this process. It was the moment to devote more time and energy to the writing of a specific project for the education modality we were aiming at, considering that, even though we already had a good basis for the “face-to-face” project, special attention was needed to avoid the problems of a decontextualized adaptation to the pedagogical model of DE, which would imply a mere transposition from one modality to another. We were aware that a new course was being created, with the experiences of the previous one as background, but keeping in mind the educational environment's demands and specificities. We were also working concomitantly with two projects that have a certain similarity: the Brazilian popular music degree and another degree with a similar trajectory at CECULT, the interdisciplinary one in arts (LIA). Both degrees were then in the process of preparation for distance learning.

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<sup>5</sup> The Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Level Personnel (CAPES), among other actions, encourages the implementation and maintenance of distance learning courses through its Open University of Brazil (UAB) system.

## **The beginning of the course and the challenges**

As we can see, a series of challenges were being launched, with the creation and implementation of new courses and new perspectives for training, teaching, and research. The experience of the innovative situation and challenge is characteristic of initial implementation processes. The idea of the challenge has, at the same time, the meanings of a search for solutions to various difficulties and situations, but also of a stimulus and motivator of enthusiasm and impulse to create and accomplish. With this “double meaning” (or others that we may welcome along the way), I face the idea of a challenge. Let's, then, go to some points that we can highlight, considering our journey until the second semester of the course we are focusing on, which takes place in the calendar period between November 2021 and March 2022.

Our university is a fairly new and diverse institution. Although it is located in a region that dates back to the first decades of Portuguese colonization, the implementation of the UFRB is related to a relatively recent period of interiorization and expansion of the IFES during the first decades of the 21st century. As part of its university vocation, the various strands of knowledge production and professional training are organized in campuses and centers spread over cities in the aforementioned identity territory. We have, for example, the campus in the town of Amargosa, which houses the Center for Teacher Training (CTT), totally dedicated to courses with this purpose in diversified areas. Others are centers in health, biological and earth sciences, exact sciences, etc. Without intending to give a detailed description of this structure, we point to this fact - the amplitude of the areas of knowledge covered, also evident in most universities, being even a requirement for the configuration of university life - considering the possibilities, not always profitably explored, of interchange between centers and diverse courses. If, on a daily basis, it is difficult to perform this interchange, for various and quite legitimate reasons - ranging from the overload of tasks of the teaching staff to the fact that we have centers quite distant from each other - the EaD courses offer possibilities of a greater approximation. In the way, we express the meanings of "challenge" here, the norms put in place by the holding institution CAPES urge us to constantly come face to face with this expansion of our teaching networks. To explain these dynamics better, we are led, by regulation, to make edicts to fill teaching positions that are first offered internally (that is, to UFRB teaching staff) but already promoting contact with other centers and colleagues from these campuses. Going further, when these positions are partially filled, we can extend, in subsequent calls, the network of professionals from other institutions. The challenge here has varied aspects, as going through these selection processes every six months creates a considerable workload and imposes



continuous work rhythms - dissemination, selection, planning, etc. However, this allows us to diversify our networks and to share experiences, knowledge, and ways of looking at our objects of work more comprehensively, making it possible for these shares to add diversity and quality to our courses.

Other challenges emerge from the curricular components that deal directly with practical musical activities, such as rhythm classes, specific instrument classes, and collective practice workshops, among others. We also had, as an aggravating factor hindering the possibilities of interaction. This COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure and impediment of access to the physical facilities of the presential poles. However, from what we have had the opportunity to talk informally with people from other course coordination and even from what we have observed in the profile of our students, the access to these meetings needs to be propitiated by several factors. Many of these students live in neighborhoods, villages, or other locations far from each other and from the centers. Thus, these possibilities of meeting for practices and attending spaces suitable for activities such as workshops and rehearsals end up needing to be improved. Also, the very structure of the students' private facilities, at home or in some work environments (studios, ateliers, etc.), are only sometimes adequate. Although the institutional recommendations are that these students should provide equipment and facilities to follow the courses, we know that, due to socioeconomic and other material issues, this doesn't really happen. Besides, not wanting to sound like we are presenting a list and a rumor of difficulties here - but rather facing situations that need a great deal of attention and a search for solutions - our student body has great diversity in many aspects of their education in general. This situation goes beyond the variegated profile of musical backgrounds and abilities. Our course does not conduct entrance examinations for specific skills. One of the reasons for that is precisely the diversity of musical forms, practices, and knowledge in the region that is the matrix of the course Licenciatura em Música Popular Brasileira - EaD, which inspires it, the Recôncavo da Bahia. In this territory, we see capoeira and samba circle masters and practitioners side by side with musicians trained by the so-called "philharmonic groups". These associations are civil societies, widespread in Bahia and the Northeast of Brazil, some of which emerged during the 19th century and are responsible for maintaining music bands in many locations in this region. As an example of how these organizations are structured in the municipality where CECULT is located, the work of Cristiano Lira, a researcher from Santa Catarina, is quite illustrative.

In Bahia, there are still 12 philharmonics that were founded at the end of the 19th century. These associations occupy, in the countryside cities, the role of centers of cultural activities (CAJAZEIRAS, 2004, our translation).

The Recôncavo Baiano is the region where the diversity of musical practices found fertile soil, including philharmonics, fanfares, and charangas, and this is true even today for the State of Bahia (DANTAS, 2015, our translation).

In the municipality of Santo Amaro da Purificação, there are two centennial philharmonic groups: Sociedade Filarmônica Filhos de Apolo and Sociedade Filarmônica Lira dos Artistas, both founded to promote musical education for young people from Santo Amaro da Purificação society, that is, one of the main purposes of these associations was musical education [...] (LIRA, 2016, p. 23, our translation).

The importance that these associations have in our territory also has relevance in the places where our students live. The example also illustrates our arguments, exemplifying a type of formation that is very widespread and very close to the “conservatory” formations, these are musicians with excellent training in score reading. However, how to reconcile this with other potential students with broad musical knowledge and skills, as is the case of alabese ogans, masters of candomblé music, who use other literacies for their activities? In such diversity, quite favorable for our course in Brazilian popular music, we chose not to have specific exams. What we also glimpse in these first months of classes are other diversifications of the formations for fundamental questions for a degree, such as a familiarity with the production and reading of academic texts and the understanding and appropriation of concepts, fundamentals, and references in diversified areas such as pedagogy, music's relations with historical, social, cultural contexts; themes more linked to critical and theoretical aspects of education and music.

However, returning to the theme we were highlighting, our current challenge is to seek technological and relational tools to implement classes and other practical activities. The technological ones are primarily those that allow us to exchange dynamic and agile materials, such as sending short recordings, excerpts of loops, graphs of pieces to be performed, etc. One of the strategies that the course as a whole adopted was curricular, inserting components such as Musical Technologies I, II, and III into the curriculum. The first one, which was offered in the first semester of our course, had precisely its subtitle and specific application theme: Music Editing, Recording, and Publishing. In addition, in semester 2021.1 (due to the delay caused by the pandemic situation, which altered the university calendar, this academic semester ran from November 1st, 2021, to March 19th, 2022), the component called Collective Music Practices provided for an emphasis on the adoption of applications and programs that allow an environment for the exchange of ideas, files, and the use of streaming audio. Going beyond the synchronous meetings of video calls and teleconferences, we want to seek the possibilities that lead to “obsessive interactivity”. The idea, presented with these humorous terms, is based

precisely on creating the musical sharing environment not only from the technological point of view but also from adopting a climate of mutual trust and respect for the diversity of backgrounds, as already mentioned. Therefore, in addition to technological resources, we must seek precisely the “relational tools”, as discussed above. To seek what the pedagogical model of the UFRB advocates in the current mode, we must always keep in mind that:

From this perspective, the student occupies a central place in the model as an active individual, capable of constructing knowledge, engaged and committed to their self-learning, and, above all, integrated into a learning community (CARDOSO, 2018, p. 14, our translation).

Therefore, our tools must all be calibrated by an instrument that cuts across several pedagogies, the instrument that is already pointed out by one of our greatest pedagogues (cited below) for the construction of mutual learning fields: dialogue, sensitive listening, and the practice of free expression in an organized and equitable way. Our challenge - our power, mediated by technologies that project us to distant and hard-to-access places in the hinterlands and coast of Bahia - is to establish more effective forms of this dialogical instrument.

Dialogue is not a historical product, it is "historicization" itself. It is, therefore, the constitutive movement of the consciousness that, opening itself to infinitude, intentionally conquers the frontiers of finitude and ceaselessly seeks to find itself again in a common world; because this world is common, to seek oneself is to communicate with the other. Isolation does not personalize because it does not socialize. By becoming more intersubjective, the subject gains more subjective density (FREIRE, 1987, p. 16, our translation).

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This dialogue is also produced in sound and musical interactions, in which the search for breaking distinctions/inhibitions/valuations of experience and talent becomes as paramount as obtaining the appropriate software and connections. Professor and researcher Daniel Gohn, from his reflections on the online teaching of his instrument, the drums, points to issues that apply to any of these interactions mentioned above, both in instrumental teaching practices and in specific areas of music such as harmony, rhythm and other aspects of musical structuring.

The teacher can create favorable conditions for online communication, but each student will bring different circumstances subordinate to their equipment and available location for the class. Does the student have a laptop or a cell phone? How fast is his Internet connection? Do you have a good headset? External or laptop microphone? [...] The best way to help the student is to observe him in the conditions in which he practices every day [...] (GOHN, 2020, p. 164, our translation).

In our experience, these considerations apply to any of these interactions above of both instrumental teaching practices and specific areas of music, such as harmony, rhythm, and other aspects of musical structuring.

### **Final considerations**

In conclusion, we point to issues in a teaching environment that is extremely guided by practical activities but raise aspects that may be of general interest. Although we are “newcomers” in our incursions into DE - as frankly stated above - quite recently, the baggage of previous initiatives urges us to approaches and strategies that unite experimentation with experience, but that, above all, seek to maintain the main quality of the “newcomer”, the learner: curiosity and that sparkle in the eye of someone whom every day discovers something new and uses it. Since we are in the arts field, I ask the help of the great master of literature, João Guimarães Rosa, who illustrates with images of his poetic prose some of the impressions listed here. If, on the one hand, using the words of the character Riobaldo, I think that “I know almost nothing. But I distrust many things” (ROSA, 2006, p. 8, our translation); on the other hand, I use another of his prose to state: “a master is not the one who always teaches, but the one who suddenly learns” (ROSA, 2006, p. 271, our translation).

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