



TEACHING MUSIC
PERFORMANCE IN
HIGHER EDUCATION

EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF
ARTISTIC RESEARCH

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PART I

ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION

Introduction to Part I

Stefan Östersjö

Since its introduction in many European countries in the beginning of the twenty-first century, artistic research in music has proven its potential to enhance artistic development in individual practices as well as in collaborative projects. Artistic research in music has developed methods for the study of creative processes, often through introspective and reflexive approaches, and contributed new knowledge in cross-disciplinary music-research settings.¹ A characteristic feature of artistic research in Europe is how institutions have targeted artists with extensive professional experience to enter their artistic PhD programmes. This approach has ensured high artistic quality in the outcomes and that these have ‘force and effect’² in an art world. At the same time, artistic research is characterised by the singularity of the knowledge produced, a typical factor in research built on challenges and possibilities in the practice of the individual artist. What might such research into specialised practices bring to the teaching practices in HME? And, indeed, what roles have artistic researchers developed in these institutions?

1 See, for instance, the role of artistic research in the CMPCP project, as reflected in a series of publications, including *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music*, ed. by Eric Clarke and Mark Doffman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) and in *Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance*, ed. by John Rink, Helena Gaunt, and Aaron Williamson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

2 Barbara Bolt, ‘Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm?’ *Parse*, 3 (2016), 129–42, <http://parsejournal.com/article/artistic-research-a-performative-paradigm/>.

While initially, artistic research may have typically been experienced as a Trojan horse,³ a foreign intruder—disturbing and threatening the established workings of the teaching and learning of music performance in HME, by providing space for the experimentation of individual artists in their premises—in Part I, we consider how artistic research has become instead an integrated feature, providing novel approaches. The notion of artistic research as a laboratory practice is useful,⁴ since it allows for an understanding of experimentation as an approach which draws on the affordances of technologies, such as those of video recording,⁵ and inter-subjective approaches to knowledge production, enabled through audio and video technologies.⁶ By considering artistic research from the perspective of the laboratory, the exploratory practices that are developed in the lab come to the fore. What artistic research offers to HME is, therefore, explorative and experimental practices, and tools that enable and enhance these. However, it is also essential to stress the nomadic nature of artistic research, through which the researcher continuously provides an outsider perspective, bringing a critical gaze at the practices and traditions of these teaching institutions.

In Part I of this book, experimental approaches to individual practice are central perspectives in two chapters, building on ongoing artistic PhD projects: Fausto Pizzol's chapter 'Experimentation as a Learning Method: A Case Study Exploring Affordances of a Musical Instrument' offers a detailed account of a cycle of experimentation designed to explore the harmonic potential of the electric bass. The author proposes that the artistic research approach tested in the project may be relevant in artistic research on instruments other than the electric bass, but furthermore, that his methods, grounded in ecological psychology, offers new possibilities for the teaching and learning of playing the electric bass. Mikael Bäckman, in his chapter, 'From Imitation to Creation', employs a similar theoretical framework, grounded in embodied music cognition, in a project which explores how experimentation with transcription and imitation may lay the grounds for a transformation of individual voice. In the final analysis, Bäckman assesses how the learning outcomes of his individual artistic research process may be applied in teaching the harmonica to students in HME. This is also the central theme of the entire of Part I, addressed in a somewhat wider perspective in the first and final chapters. First, Stefan Östersjö, Carl Holmgren, and Åsa Unander-Scharin's chapter, 'A Swedish Perspective on Artistic Research Practices in First and Second Cycle Education in Music', provides an analysis of method development in the Piteå School of Music, at Luleå University of Technology, taking the independent degree project, and the courses

3 Marcel Cobussen, 'The Trojan Horse. Epistemological Explorations Concerning Practice Based Research', *Dutch Journal of Music Theory*, 12/1 (February 2007), 18–33.

4 Stefan Östersjö, 'Artistic Knowledge, the Laboratory and the Hörspiel', in *Gränser och oändligheter—Musikalisk och litterär komposition, en forskningsrapport / 'Compositional' Becoming, Complexity, and Critique*, ed. by Anders Hultqvist and Gunnar. D. Hansson (Gothenburg: Art Monitor, 2020).

5 Ben Spatz, *Making A Laboratory. Dynamic Configurations with Transversal Video* (Santa Barbara, CA: Punctum Books, 2020).

6 Stefan Östersjö, Nguyễn Thanh Thủy, David Hebert, and Henrik Frisk, *Shared Listeners: Methods for Transcultural Musicianship and Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

preparing students for these, as the point of departure. This is relevant, since the impact of artistic research in HME has been found to be substantial in the development of methods and forms of representation in student theses.¹ In such method development, artistic research practices have also been important when the centre of the independent project becomes an opportunity for the student to identify their individual interests, challenges, difficulties or opportunities, that they wish to develop in their studies, and bring with them into the next stages of education or professional work. The fourth chapter in this Part develops an analysis of the second Training School which formed part of the REACT project, and which was hosted by the University of Aveiro in May 2022. Building on their experience as participating teachers, Gilvano Dalagna, Clarissa Foletto, Jorge Salgado Correia, and Ioulia Papageorgi's chapter, 'Teaching Musical Performance from an Artistic Research-Based Approach: Reporting on a Pedagogical Intervention', reports on a pedagogical intervention seeking to develop and test an artistic research-based approach to teaching and learning music performance. The chapter builds largely on a focus-group interview with participating students but also relates these to a literature review looking at current curriculum development in HME, and an assessment of the relation between HEIs and the music industry.

A significant feature of Part I of the book is how it is built on qualitative interviews, seeking to assess how individual students in first and second cycle education have experienced the application of artistic research approaches in their studies. Three out of four chapters draw on small-scale interview studies, which also bring out student voices, with the aim of focusing on individual experience rather than curriculum design and overarching pedagogical strategies. While this approach has obvious beneficial qualities, this section of the book also illustrates the need for more comprehensive studies of the impact of artistic research in HME. It suggests that such further study should employ multiple perspectives—starting with findings by artist researchers in their individual research projects—to further trace how these findings may be applied in teaching. Through combinations of qualitative and quantitative approaches, we should be able to document how such findings have been systematically employed in curriculum development across European countries, and, finally, to assess the outcomes through analysis of student publications and through interviews with students and alumni.

1 Karin Johansson and Eva Georgii-Hemming, 'Processes of Academisation in Higher Music Education: the case of Sweden', *British Journal of Music Education*, 38 (2) (2021).

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