

The 'little r' in Artistic Research



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www29.griffith.edu.au/comprovisers

www29.griffith.edu.au/little-r

Background

‘Artistic research’ increasingly accepted in the academy, eg:

- Qld Con Research Centre [Artistic Practice as Research](#) cluster
- EU [Journal for Artistic Research](#)

‘artistic’ research) as opposed to traditional methods (or ‘big R’ research).

The image shows two overlapping website screenshots. The top screenshot is the Griffith University Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre website, featuring a search bar, navigation menu, and a sidebar with links to Research, News and events, Staff, HDR students, Partnerships and collaboration, Resources, and Contact us. The bottom screenshot is the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR) website, which includes a search form, a 'Current Issue 2 (2012) Archive' section, an 'Editorial' section, and a 'Research Catalogue' section. The JAR website also features a grid of article thumbnails with titles and authors.

analysis.
purpose of disciplines.

Background – Why?

- Artistic practice and reflection can develop in tandem and with improvisation & composition
- Many of our research students are required to present original works and a reflective exegesis but they have few opportunities to see academic staff do the same
- Despite ERA 'equivalency' rhetoric, there is a tendency to privilege traditional modes of publication

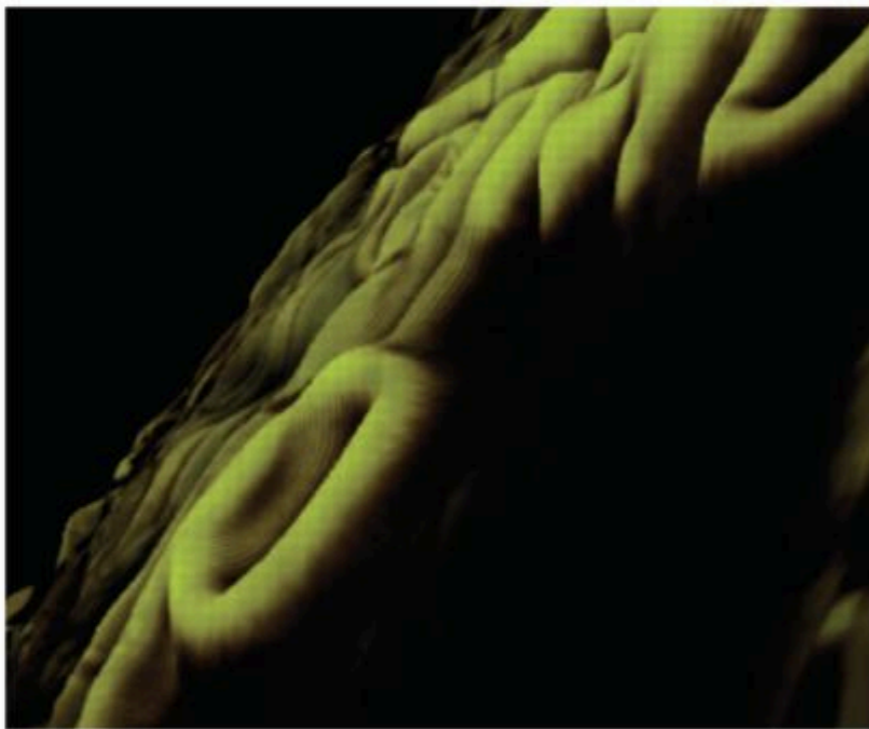


Hence *The Comprovisers*, a gathering of staff at the QLD Conservatorium to explore improvisation and the co-creation of music www29.griffith.edu.au/comprovisers

Background

www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415581691

The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts



Edited by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson

www.artandeducation.net/announcement/henk-borgdorff-the-conflict-of-the-faculties-out-now

The Conflict *of the* Faculties

This book is about artistic research – what it is, or what it could be. And it is about the place that artistic research could have in academia, within the whole of academic research.

'Well written and well argued, this book will probably become a reference for many studies to come and required reading for anyone active in this domain.'

– Frans-Willem Korsten
ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM AND
LEIDEN UNIVERSITY, NETHERLANDS

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Leiden University Press

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Create World 2012

Exposition

We frame an *exposition* (Schwab, 2012) to reveal so-called ‘little r’ thinking in music making, and as such to meet the OECD (2008) definition of research as,

... any creative systematic activity undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this knowledge to devise new applications. Includes fundamental research, applied research ... and experimental development work leading to new devices, products or processes.

Huib Schippers (2007) provides a succinct context:

... thousands of deeply considered and split-second decisions are made using music notation or memory ... consulted or remembered recordings in private collection and libraries and performances; learned, acquired and developed values; experience and assessment of audience reactions; and probably most importantly an aural library, which, for a mature musician, would typically consist of 20,000 to 50,000 hours of listening, learning and playing.

Exposition

- i) a scholarly research paper with artistic research questions, method, analysis and conclusions; and
- ii) live music performance components that will feature the voice, acoustic instruments and digital arts technologies.

Draper, P. & Cunio, K. (2013, forthcoming).
‘The little-r in Artistic Research Training.’
In S. Harrison (Ed.), *How may musical thinking and practice be researched? Research and Research Training in Music and Music Education*.
UK: Springer.

Presentation /performance components

1. musical improvisation (the beginning)
2. structure, form and repetition (in the middle)
3. technical production, capture and

Forthcoming 2013, in *Research and Research Training in Music and Music Education*. UK: Springer.

The 'little r' in Artistic Research Training

Paul Draper and Kim Cunio

In a recent visit to a European conservatoire one of the authors here was elated to have been part of an examination team to experience a week of a so-called ‘research festival’. This provided a intensive framework for graduating Master of Music candidates to defend their research projects in compelling blends of talk, text, screen and performance. At end of week, academics and administrators reflected on this over dinner. Of particular impact was the apparent ease with which students expressed themselves to offer deep insights into the meaning of their own artistic practices while never seeming to offer any less than complete transparency, validity and trustworthiness. To which the institution’s principal enthusiastically exclaimed, “Ah no, not the British ‘big R’ rhetoric. We do ‘little r’ research here – and we’re proud of it!!”

These notions of ‘big and little r’ we find provocative and inspiring, while at the same time resonating with tacit understandings that are beginning to emerge in our own institution in Australia. In this chapter we therefore explore this further via recent insights and activities of the authors as practicing artists and as supervisors of student research projects. To do so, we now turn to examine the local context and recent literature which informs our approach.

Context

Following the so called ‘Dawkins reforms’ of the Australian federal government in the late 1980s, Colleges of Advanced Education and vocational institutions were amalgamated with universities. Similar to the later Bologna processes in Europe, this was the beginning of accountability processes which imposed the policy metaphors of public service departments and governments (Bessant, 2002). In the arts, this included the implication that research is produced via familiar formats of text-based arguments by the theoretician and much less so by the practicing artist. This tended to be a natural fit with conservatories where musicology and composition were taught and disseminated along traditional lines that could easily be recognised by bureaucrats, while performance staff continued to teach (albeit somewhat invisibly in relation to their own research traditions). More recently, the triennial Excellence for Research in Australia (ERA) evaluation exercise established the recognition of creative works. However, outputs continue to be measured along the boundaries of theoretician or artist – in the case of the former, via books, journals, citation indices, grant successes and so on; in the case of the musician, via relatively low level proxy measures which include proof of (say) a performance, some form of peer review, and a self-authored 250 word ‘research statement’. Nowhere is there the opportunity for researchers to portfolio both theoretical *and* artistic outputs and be recognised for this – yet oddly, this is exactly what is asked of the higher degree research candidates who are supervised by these same academics.

Atypically, research training in music provides a supervisory team comprising a theoretician as the ‘principal supervisor’ to assist in dissertation writing, the literature review and method, together with an artist from the field in question to advise on practical matters but often positioned as an ‘associate supervisor’. Perhaps this may have been once reasonably conceived given that many practical staff were mature age musicians employed as teachers since before university amalgamations and consequently their skill base did not usually include exegetical writing. However it is clear that such higher degree qualifications can easily be skewed to inauthentic representation just as Dieter Lesage writes,

practices:
‘research’?
questions?

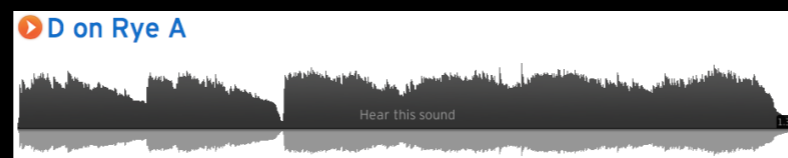
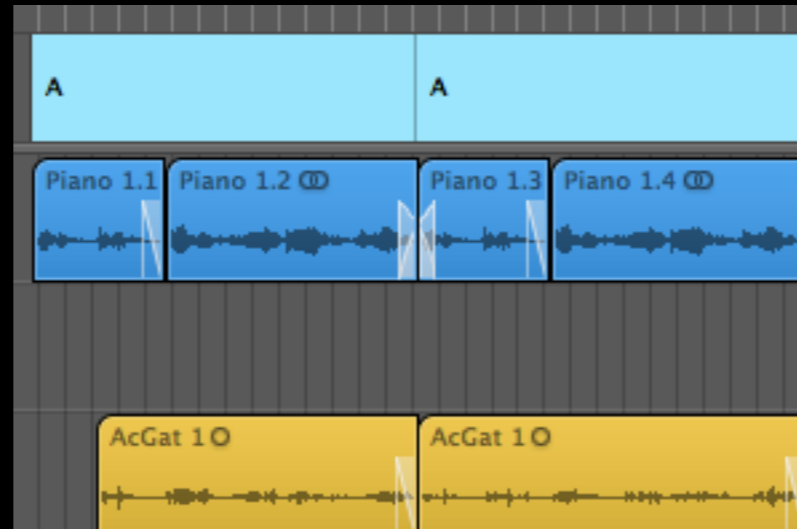
rk.



Create World 2012

Exposition

LET'S PLAY
(& record)



play: D on Rye (Improv section A)

Exposition

With music software, early ideas can easily be placed on the page, manipulated, repeated and added to in a fluid way where the actual composition takes place after the recording of the individual parts (Cunio, 2009).

The same acoustic guitar and piano improvisations were recorded, edited, structured, repeated where salient.

... then invoking the question 'what next?' as a logical musical research idea (and which was not a question that could have been asked earlier). Vaggione (2001) writes,

... musical processes ... are not situations 'out there' waiting to be discovered: they are rather composed (since they did not exist anywhere before being composed), and hence they cannot be considered properly as modelling activities, even if they use – and deeply absorb – models, knowledge, and tools coming from scientific domains ... In fact, music transforms this knowledge and these tools into its own ontological concern: to create specific musical situations (musical 'states of affairs').

Exposition

AND NOW LET'S PLAY

B

Logic screen #1
Kim - bass
Paul - Strat

Logic screen #2

[▶ D n Rye \(improv section B\)](#)
Hear this sound

[play: D on Rye \(Improv section B\)](#)

Exposition

Method, design, and 'composition'

Onward ... we sent each other files to find a common sound world, and discussed ...

A Ry Cooder inspired theme – 'D on Rye'

We improvised the A section theme,
added a B section,
more instruments,
then a C section groove



[play: D on Rye \(Improv section C\)](#)

The screenshot shows a music production software interface with a piano roll. The top bar is divided into sections labeled A, B, C1, C2, C3, C1, and Tag. The piano roll displays notes for Piano 1, Piano 2, and AcGat 1 O. The piano roll is divided into sections corresponding to the top bar labels. The piano roll shows notes for Piano 1, Piano 2, and AcGat 1 O. The piano roll is divided into sections corresponding to the top bar labels. The piano roll shows notes for Piano 1, Piano 2, and AcGat 1 O.

Logic screen #2



Exposition

Logic screen #3

The screenshot shows a Logic Editor arrangement for a piece titled "Exposition". The arrangement is organized into sections: A (0:00-3:20), B (3:20-4:00), A (4:00-5:20), B (5:20-6:00), C1 (6:00-6:40), C2 (6:40-7:20), C3 (7:20-8:00), C1 (8:00-8:40), and a Tag (8:40-9:00). The tracks include Piano 1.1-1.6, Piano 2, AcGat 1.0, AcGat 2, AcGat 3, AcGat 4, AcGat 5, Strings, iPad Bass, and Kit. A large white text overlay in the center reads "Let's groove".

Let's groove

[▶ D on Rye \(performance bed\)](#)
Hear this sound
6:58

play: D on Rye (performance bed)

Publication

Presentation, dissemination, and 'product'

The final stages of our project involve the ways in which we consider our preparation for dissemination (another emergent question).

Some might see this to be via the trajectory of making an album, working with a record company or publisher, or by self-publishing a sound recording through an outlet such as Apple's iTunes store.

Publication

In the 21st century social networking world of course there are many opportunities for other than this and so we explored common approaches including:

- this performance itself as an outcome;
- the on-going curation of a website around the project;
- the viral nature of cross-posting documentation and media on other social networks, seed video and audio hosting /embed sites;
- and the 'mastering' of works for multiple formal outlets including via scholarly in-text publication and indeed, on-line commercial music outlets.

Publication

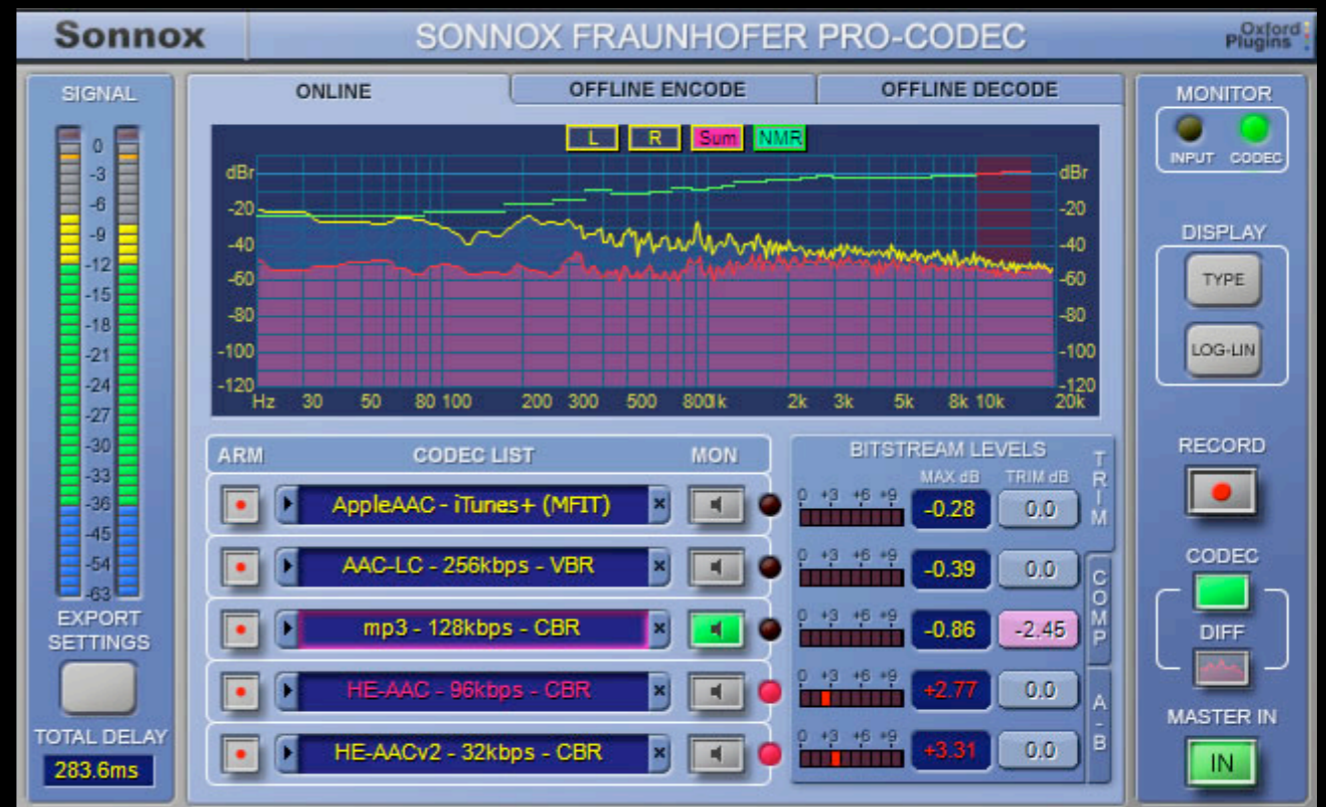
Mastered for
iTunes

White paper & plug-in

images.apple.com/itunes/mastered-for-itunes/

Sonnox pro codec
for AU, VST, RTAS & AAX

<http://www.sonnoxplugins.com/pub/plugins/products/pro-codec.htm>



Logic screen #4

Discussion

Differentiating between the internal, technical aspects of music and the artistic goals which a project may set out to achieve. While the two are essentially interrelated, for performing musicians this may often be difficult to reconcile given their long experience of taking lessons, doing practice, then performing outcomes vs. an often much later conceptual undertaking that may apply to research projects. Henk Borgdorff (2012) elaborates...

Art practices are technically mediated practices. Whether this involves the acoustical characteristics of the musical instruments, the physical properties of art materials, the structure of a building or the digital architecture of a virtual installation, art practices and artworks are materially anchored.

Artistic practices are technically mediated at a more abstract level of materiality as well. Consider the knowledge of counterpoint in music, of colour in painting, of editing in filmmaking, or of bodily techniques in dance.

Discussion

As researchers we need to be clear about technique and artistic aspirations, the latter of which in our experience extends far beyond the do-ing of it, to the say-ing of it, and importantly – to whom? From Borgdorff (2012):

[artistic research] does not limit itself to an investigation into material aspects of art or an exploration of the creative process, but ... reach[es] further in the transdisciplinary context.

Experimental and interpretative research strategies thus transect one another here in an undertaking whose purpose is to articulate the connectedness of art to who we are and where we stand.

Discussion

- Do we really believe that music is research?
- What does the computer do to us as musicians?
- Does doing research increase our music making potential?

If some music is already 'research ready', does the simple process of making it constitutes a research outcome?

How do know when music is not research?

AND

How can we transition that music into a research paradigm?

Discussion

Little 'r' = reflection?

Identification of research question and problem

---- methodology ---- literature -----

analysis of creative works ----- findings of the research ----

contribution to epistemology

---identification of areas for future research.

Big 'P' = Project?

Identification of practical project ---- funding and other logistics

---- creation of works at benchmark standard

---- documentation of works ----

incorporation of works into larger creative output

analysis of works within dissertation or paper.

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... and one more thing

Possibilities

The screenshot displays a digital audio workstation (DAW) interface with a multi-track session. The top section shows a timeline with markers for 'Intro', 'A', and 'Tag'. Below the timeline, several tracks are visible:

- Marker**: A track with three colored segments (cyan, yellow, cyan) representing different parts of the song.
- iPad primo**: A track with a green waveform, representing the main melodic line.
- iPad Bass**: A track with a yellow waveform, representing the bass line.
- Kit**: A track with a purple waveform, representing the drum kit.
- Hand Perc**: A track with a green waveform, representing hand percussion.
- Hurdy Gurdy**: A track with a purple waveform, representing the hurdy gurdy.
- Performance bed**: A track with a dark purple waveform, representing the overall performance bed.

A pop-up window at the bottom of the interface shows a waveform for the 'Possibilities (performance bed)' track. The window includes a play button, the track name, and a 'Hear this sound' button. The waveform shows a complex, multi-layered sound with a duration of 3.48 seconds.

`play: Possibilities (performance bed)`

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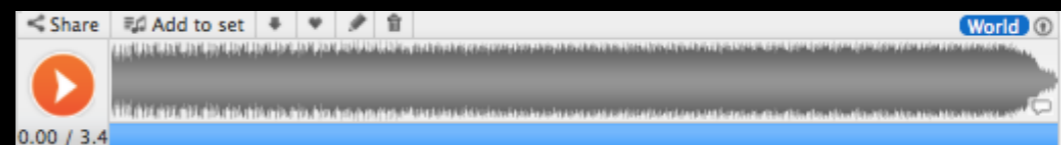
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play: *D on Rye (final mix)*



play: *Possibilities (final mix)*



CreateWorld 2012

5-7 December Griffith University Brisbane