

Developing meaningful relations – a study of artistic research in music composition in Flanders

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In 2014 I finished my PhD focusing on the creative process in music composition. A systematic, evidence-based reflection of my own creative process lead to a profound impact on my artistic practice. But in this lecture I present a more general and exploratory study on artistic research in music composition (ARMC) in Flanders (Belgium). In this study five recent doctoral dissertations and eleven papers from master students were analysed. An online survey of 23 composers, performing or supervising composition research in one of the institutions for higher music education in Flanders, provides additional information on the experiences and ideas of researchers in the field.

This study offers a view on the development of ARMC and its impact on the wider community of researchers. It is based on the concept that artistic research is characterized by a close interaction between research and artistic practice. Therefore I examine how artistic practice and fields of knowledge, including artistic research, are integrated in the research design and method.

The results show that in the doctoral dissertations the link between the research and the artistic practice is rather weak, although on the master level there are more attempts to find and elaborate a meaningful link. In most cases the studied research designs and methods are based on individual knowledge and established scientific disciplines (such as musicology, music cognition or philosophy). The links with both artistic and reflective research are small in number and not substantial.

Nevertheless there seem to be a number of shared aims and concerns. In both the online survey and the research outputs many researchers and supervisors stress the importance of finding meaningful relations with artistic practice. Moreover, the importance of reflecting on the own artistic practice and becoming aware of the own concepts, are underlined repeatedly.

I conclude that in music composition research in Flanders, there are gaps between :

1. master and postmaster research
2. discourses/literature on artistic and reflective research on the one hand and results of artistic researchers on the other
3. text/research and the artistic practice.

Link with the conference theme

To bridge these three gaps and raise the impact of ARMC, I make the following three propositions. First, institutions should implement minimum criteria for the form and *dissemination* of research outputs. Additionally, a regular selection and distribution procedure could be set up on *master* level to exploit the potential of master research.

Second, discourses are needed to explicitly connect strong knowledge domains in music composition with artistic research. In this study two such knowledge domains were detected: (score) analysis and the (research) history of composition. In the studied outputs these domains not only appear in a traditional form but also in new forms (such as 'conceptual' and 'reflective' analysis). These innovative but tacit practices need to be articulated and elaborated in relation to discourses on artistic research.

Third, institutions should aim to create a research *environment*, in which experiences and practices are shared and discussed between researchers and artists.

[The presented study was made by the Orpheus Institute in collaboration with Kevin Voets from the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp – AP University College]

Short bibliography (the five most important references in my study)

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