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PERFORMING ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN MUSIC – PERFORMING MUSIC IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Editorial

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Performing Artistic Research in Music – Performing Music in Artistic Research

OTSO AAVANRANTA, ANU LAMPELA AND SAIJALEENA RANTANEN

The editors would like to dedicate this *Ruukku* issue to the memory of our dear colleague Kirsi Heimonen (1959–2024).

In memoriam Kirsi Heimonen

This issue of *Ruukku* explores the relationship between artistic research and the performance and presentation of music, asking what kind of music performance practices artistic research produces or enables. Artistic research as an experimental, avant-garde art form opens up a wide range of possibilities for how music can be practiced, presented or heard. The traditional settings of rehearsal or concert can take on new forms through, for example, shared agency, multimodal engagement, environmental attunement, installative practices, as well as non-real-time performance involving digital media and networks. The academic ethos of artistic research also offers the possibility of extending the spectrum of musical performance into the conceptual terrain, complementing the essentially non-semantic nature of music as a “crucial mode of thought”, as Pauline Oliveros (2010, 16) has framed it.

Artistic research may offer a direct insight into artistic practice and, within it, embodied knowledge. But it is never easy to write thoroughly about any embodied aspects, even though these aspects are constantly articulated in pedagogical situations. For example, for a piano teacher instructing a student, it is natural to talk about wrists, fingers or sitting position; it is normal to sing or use metaphors – whatever is useful for teaching. It is also quite easy for a teacher to demonstrate what he/she wants by simply playing. It is much more difficult to write a research paper or a report on the same subject. To be able to accurately describe in writing any embodied sensation, or what might be experienced during a single bar of a musical work, is extremely challenging. With this in mind, the expositions in this *Ruukku* issue take significant steps towards opening up the many aspects of artistic practice. An interesting example of new embodied artistic knowledge is the



pianist **Hui Han Lui** 's exposition *Reimagining the Use of 19th Century Techniques on Historical Piano*. Lui narrows the gap between modern and historical instruments and offers her colleagues new ways of approaching the obvious instrumental differences, for example in touch and control. With the help of reflective protocols and video recordings, the author also illuminates the issues of dynamics and phrasing in piano playing.

This *Ruukku* issue also offers relevant perspectives on interdisciplinarity within art education. While each art genre cherishes its own tradition, collaboration with artists from other genres can offer insightful and invaluable ideas for artistic work. The results of some of these *Ruukku* expositions suggest that interdisciplinarity can be enriching and rewarding for art students of all ages. While negotiating the content of an artist's training curriculum is challenging, the importance of interdisciplinarity in education needs to be evaluated.

In fact, two of the expositions deal with interdisciplinarity between a musician and a dancer. In her exposition *The Time, Space, and Gesture in a Crossdisciplinary Context*, the pianist **Elina Akselrud** presents her artistic collaboration with the dancer **Lea Orož**. Russian composer Alexander Scriabin's middle- and late-period solo piano works provide the context for a case study: the two artists negotiate possible interpretations through piano playing and dance improvisation. The set of methods consists of recorded discussions and an attempt to define the different ways of communicating while one plays the piano and the other dances. The aim is to develop strategies for an interdisciplinary artistic dialogue.

The other exposition of musician-dancer collaboration is by musician **Kerstin Frödin** and choreographer-dancer **Åsa Unander-Scharin**. In *Fragmente2*, the two artists create a unique choreomusical work in 17 short fragments, based on Japanese avant-garde composer Makoto Shinohara's solo piece *Fragmente* for tenor recorder. In this study, music and dance interact on an equal footing. Drawing on Don Ihde's experimental phenomenology and the concepts of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Schaeffer, the authors analyze and describe the choreomusical interaction in a detailed and ambitious manner. The exposition also presents a rich set of different methods for describing the artistic process.

In his exposition *The labyrinth: using new music experience in the performance of historical music* the violinist **George Kentros** offers a case study for developing new methods within violin praxis. While the Western classical music tradition has emphasised the fixed nature of a musical work and the instrumental technique that renders the oeuvre, the author finds a need to seek interpretive and artistic freedom in music making. He takes a critical look at his own training as a musician and uses contemporary practice techniques to find new approaches to 18th century music, taking Pietro Locatelli's (1695–1764) Caprice No. 23 as a case study. The article also looks at the role of the musician in a tradition where learning begins at an early age and the role of the teacher is central.

Leonardo Barbierato 's exposition *[in situ]: re-thinking the role of musical improvisation performance in the context of the ecological and cultural crisis* invites the environment into the practice of musical improvisation. The exposition describes and analyses an electro-acoustic improvisation practice that takes place outdoors. It is attuned to its environment and open to site-specificity, flexibility, immersiveness and interactivity. Designed as a dual investigation of both site-specific improvisation and the ecologies of the site itself, Barbierato's exposition develops reflections on the ecopolitics of musical performance, ecosystemic cybernetics, and the role and agency of the performer in an immersive and relational context.

Multimodal relatedness is also at the heart of **Ava Imogen Grayson** 's exposition *Notational actants: new musical approaches through material scores* , which presents ongoing research into scores as sculptural, material entities. Working with three-dimensional scores sculpted in clay and beeswax – or “notational actants” as the author calls them – the exposition explores both the possibilities and constraints of sculptural forms as a basis for music-making. The notational actants are reflected upon in relation to notions of maps, mapping and terrain, (non-)universal musical notation, affordances, and the translation of visual-tactile materialities into musical imaginaries.

In their duo exposition *Sonic equity*, **Adriano Adewale and Nathan Thomson** explore issues of inclusion, equity and decolonisation through artistic practices centered around the Brazilian berimbau. The exposition features musical case studies of Adriano Adewale's solo work on the berimbau, as well as duo dialogues between Adewale on berimbau and Nathan Thomson on double bass. The results of the exposition point to the wide range of sonic possibilities of the berimbau, which are mobilized by the authors in both solo and duo playing. In uncovering the vast sonic possibilities of the berimbau, the authors question why this instrument and its associated traditions have not been given equal space and value within higher music education, highlighting the need for institutions to continually reassess their policies through the lens of decolonisation.

Alžběta Trojanová 's exposition *Performing the Changing Landscape* tackles the questions of singing (folk music), walking, and changing landscape. The theme of the sung tradition in relation to the living environment is discussed at the intersection of environmental aesthetics, land art, site-specific art and listening walks. The exposition also touches on questions of epistemology and how experiencing the landscape through walking resonates in singing practices. Through walking exercises, understanding the walked landscape as the score and singing this score, the exposition aims to explore the experienced history of a specific place and its landscape.

Beyond this particular *Ruukku* call, the issue also includes two lectio praecursores: **Lauren O'Neal** 's *Choreographic Thinking in Curatorial Practice* (Academy



of Fine Arts) and **Riikka Talvitie**'s *The Composer in Flux. Towards Dialogic Practice* (Sibelius Academy).

The initial call for this issue of *Ruukku* included the possibility of considering the outreach of musical performance practices in the context of artistic research. It is noteworthy that while the expositions in this issue are at the heart of a wide range of exploratory musical practices, the audience and the relationship to the audience emerges as a present-absent – implicit in all sounding practices, but not explicitly addressed in this collection of expositions. Drawing on Jean-Jacques Nattiez's (1990) tripartite taxonomy, the present issue of *Ruukku* addresses the poietic and neutral levels of the artistic research apparatuses at hand, leaving the aesthetic dimension open for future investigation. For us, the editors of this issue, the question of how explorative musical practices open to the public emerges as a key issue to be pursued within artistic research in music. Public outreach and societal impact are topical questions for the entire field of artistic research, which, after its initial phases of formulation and consolidation, has entered its “third phase”, characterised by challenges of sustainability and societal relevance (Elo 2022). The richness of the expositions in the present issue of *Ruukku* initiates and enables further investigations into how musical practices in the context of artistic research reverberate further afield.

29/10/2024



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