



ROYAL WELSH COLLEGE
OF MUSIC & DRAMA
COLEG BRENHINOL
CERDD A DRAMA CYMRU

Artistic Research in Jazz

And its integration into the MA Jazz Programme

Dr. Andrew Bain, Head of Jazz, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, UK – Feb 2024

Sunset (Bain, 2023)

Angelica Sanchez (piano)

John O’Gallagher (alto saxophone)



Tori Freestone (tenor saxophone)

Per Zanussi (acoustic bass)

Andrew Bain (drums)

MA2 Jazz Performance as Research (level 7, 20cdts)

The module itself involves weekly delivery of various approaches to performance research, followed by each student finding an area of interest for themselves with a specific research question that they aim to answer. Assessment is via a 35-40 minute lecture recital that fully encompasses the research undertaken and resulting developments in performance. Source material, transcription and contextual information can be included, and any technical (instrumental/vocal) demonstration and performance should be between 15 and 20 minutes. The tutor helps to guide each student in their learning by passing on knowledge of similar research, current thinking on this subject, and assisting in deepening the student's project.

Three student examples

1. What is fluency in performance? A practical and compositional study of the Rhythm Changes harmonic sequence, alongside interviews on the multiplicity of views on fluency with key faculty members, will result in a performance lecture on the impact of the research on live performance
2. The search for a modern sound on trumpet. Through transcription and analysis of key improvisers, this student will compose a series of etudes, study solos, and compositions that aim to inform modernised performance practice on both standard and original compositions
3. Jazz guitar and the language of jazz. Through transcription and analysis of Joe Pass, Oscar Peterson and Charlie Parker, this student will aim to create an instructional handbook that condenses applied jazz language on the electric guitar with an output of study solos and original compositions

Using Henrik Borgdorff's (2012) *The Conflict of the Faculties* as an essential resource, this presentation will outline three of his main themes:

1. Artistic Research sets out to be research from its inception;
2. Any resulting output should be situated in both artistic and academic circles;
3. Artistic practice should be at the core of the research.

Aiming to differentiate itself from more general forms of performance practice, and research that might limit its impact by being situated only in academia, I have found this methodology to be extremely useful within the conservatoire/arts sector.

Case Study: *Mosvatnet*

This chapter will detail the evolution of a set of improvised performances that explored Empathic Speculation in both live and studio settings. As a means to elevate musical attunement in live performance based on an atmosphere of musical trust that ‘allows for creative risk-taking, which can result in the production of spontaneous musical utterances’ (Seddon, 2005: 58), Empathic Speculation (Bain, 2021) describes a further level of interaction that attempts to encourage another member of the ensemble beyond their perceived musical boundaries; or ‘comfort zones’.

Featuring Angelica Sanchez (piano), John O’Gallagher (alto saxophone), Tori Freestone (tenor saxophone), Per Zanussi (bass), and myself on drums, this research project (completed June 2023) used original music composition with a clear aim to elevate the musical attunement of the group. Alongside the documentation of the individual reflections of each ensemble member, this project also resulted in a studio album with a commercial release planned for 2024.

'Mosvatnet' (Bain, 2023)

'Tentavsom' (Bain, 2023)

'Sunrise' (Bain, 2023)

'Sunset' (Bain, 2023)

'Muzika' (Bain, 2023)

And the improvised group pieces recorded in the studio (4 June 2024) were as follows:

'Alto and Drums'

'Alto and Piano'

'Alto Flute and Double Bass'

'Piano and Tenor Saxophone'

'Tenor Saxophone and Double Bass'

Sunset (Bain, 2023)

Angelica Sanchez (piano)

John O'Gallagher (alto saxophone)



Tori Freestone (tenor saxophone)

Per Zanussi (acoustic bass)

Andrew Bain (drums)

John O’Gallagher/Andrew Bain improvised duo



Sunrise (Bain, 2023)

Angelica Sanchez (piano)

John O’Gallagher (alto saxophone)

Tori Freestone (tenor saxophone)

Per Zanussi (acoustic bass)

Andrew Bain (drums)



Empathic Interaction:

I don't make any effort to put anything on any other musician that I'm playing with [...] when I'm playing with folks I want to be in the moment, and [...] it is a meditation for me. So I would never consciously say 'I want to push someone out of their comfort zone' [...] you're trying to control something that's not yours
(PR1, 2023)

The Comfort Zone

(widely used in sports and adventure education literature)

(sometimes disapproving) a place or situation in which you feel safe or comfortable, especially when you choose to stay in this situation instead of trying to work harder or achieve more (Oxford Dictionary, 2024)

(approving) (especially in sport) a state in which you feel confident and are performing at your best (Oxford Dictionary, 2024)

The Comfort Zone:

I feel for myself that [...] this is kind of a zone I live in, so [...] I was never out of my comfort zone.

For me [...], my comfort zone is pretty wide (PR2, 2023)

The Comfort Zone:

Being a crazy musician, I feel like I'm often [...], probably like 90% of the time, being pushed out of my comfort zone, in a way.

Even though you have got that 'out-of-comfort-zone' feeling, you know, it feels great! [...] I wouldn't miss it for the world (PR3, 2023)

In the moment:

The longer I've been in academia, the more often I say: 'Don't think', to people [laughs]. Because then you do something more spontaneously, you know? To save the situation.

You think before and after. You prepare, and then you analyse afterwards (PR4, 2023)

Empathic Speculation:

In a sense, you can look at it two ways [...]; that pushing people out of their comfort zone has a slightly negative aspect, doesn't it? But you could say that creating a situation in which you do something that you haven't done before, is a positive way of looking at it (IR5, 2023)

The Research Catalogue

www.researchcatalogue.net

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-exposition?exposition=1043548>

Information:

The Conflict of the Faculties (Borgdorff, 2012)

Seddon, F. A. (2005) 'Modes of Communication during Jazz Improvisation'. In *British Journal of Music Education*, 22(01), 47–61.

The Research Catalogue – www.researchcatalogue.net

International Network for Artistic Research in Jazz
www.artisticjazzresearch.com

Email: andrew.bain@rwcmbd.ac.uk | www.andrewbain.org