

“Good composers borrow; great ones steal”¹

Ownership, advocacy, and ethics in compositional artistic research

If music is legally in the public domain, does this mean we can treat it however we like? This presentation takes the form of a dialogue between doctoral student and supervisor. Both are composers with established practices that aim to develop new relationships with Early Music and associated performance practices, particularly music from the 16th and 17th centuries, but with different aesthetic frameworks and methods. This includes, for example, collaboration with historical performance practitioners, the use and repurpose of renaissance and baroque instruments, and the development of tuning systems that revitalise tuning theories predating equal temperament. Through a comparison of practices, the dialogue will explore the epistemological and methodological dimensions of the speakers’ artistic research process: what forms of insight and knowledge does this compositional research engender, and what methods (compositional, collaborative, qualitative) are used in its pursuit and transmission?

This discussion focuses on questions of ownership, advocacy, and ethics in artistic research. In engaging with materials and styles of music from a different time and place, what claims of ownership can be made by a composer, and how might this be different to ownership of compositional work that sits entirely within a contemporary domain? Sixteenth-century Ferrara saw the fervent exploration of harmonic theories that today would be described as microtonal. How can contemporary compositional engagement and further development of these theories be framed as an act of advocacy, analogous to a performer programming the repertoire, or a musicologist writing about it? What are the ethical considerations when using such a microtonal system as an open-source language to combine musics and instruments from different eras and cultures? The *Vancouver Protocol* of 1978 established international standards of accreditation and authorship, and intellectual property rights are enshrined in contemporary international law. But what are the ethical dimensions of engaging with materials that were created hundreds of years ago? The dialogue will discuss these questions in relation to the research process involved in specific examples.

¹ Attributed to Igor Stravinsky.

Parallel Session



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James Batty is a British composer and historical keyboard player based in London. His music uses alternative tuning systems to explore themes of interconnection between humans and the natural world. James is working towards a PhD at the Royal Academy of Music, London, supervised by David Gorton. With his ensemble, the Picardy Players, he presents microtonal music old and new in the context of multi-sensory audience experiences. James's commissions and collaborative projects have also been performed by the Riot Ensemble, Noxwode, pipa player Cheng Yu, CHROMA, the BBC Singers and Opera North, with performances at the Spitalfields, Cheltenham, Norfolk & Norwich, Bloomsbury and Davos Festivals. Two albums of his microtonal music have been released commercially ("Until I Set Him Free", "Sanctuary (Overtones and Deviations)") and received critical acclaim and radio play worldwide. Other recent projects include a miniature ballet with choreographer Cameron McMillan.



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David Gorton is a composer and artist-researcher. A winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society composition prize, he has worked with ensembles that include the London Sinfonietta, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and Ensemble Exposé. His music is published by Verlag Neue Musik, Berlin, and recorded on the Métier, Toccata Classics, and Neos labels. He has been an Associate Researcher at the Orpheus Institute in Ghent, working with the *Performance, Subjectivity and Experimentation* research cluster, and has published on the areas of composer-performer collaboration, and the analysis of performance and rehearsal. He is the Associate Head of Research at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he is also a Professor of the University of London.