

Isolator or connector? On the role of research as an integrative force between practice, theory and experience

Only a decade ago, artistic research in conservatories was considered by many as a Trojan horse, importing academic values to which art institutions had to adapt. Since then, familiarisation with research has weakened the fears of losing artistic identity. Today, research in conservatories is approached in diverse and pragmatic ways, leading not only to growing acceptance but also to more active appropriation. Crucial to this shift is the art schools' growing self-confidence in defining and applying its own research models. However, this appropriation demands a critical re-evaluation of research ambitions and motivations. What is the promise of research after its integration into music curricula?

Careful listening to the policy plans of conservatories in Western Europe leads us to surmise that future curriculum reforms will no longer be focused on the integration of research as such, but rather on the integration of elements that usually remain disconnected within education, with research playing the role of a lubricant. In particular, the inherent interdisciplinary characteristics of artistic research seem to offer possibilities to connect and combine practical, experiential and theoretical aspects of musical training. An interesting reversal of the logic becomes apparent here. Integrated knowledge, in the form of inherently embodied and tacit knowledge in art practice, has been a major argument for artistic research to claim a unique place in the knowledge production of the academic field. This trump card has ultimately turned into a task to be fulfilled: a responsibility to attune and combine practical and theoretical dimensions of music education that have lived separate lives in curricula for many decades.

I will investigate the potential and pitfalls of the ambitions to use research as an integrative force in higher music education. Starting from concrete research examples, I propose to distinguish aspects of integration-through-research at the levels of practice, the individual artist and the artistic community. In doing so, I will defend a model that makes it possible to both connect and isolate different dimensions of art practice in music curricula. This requires a temporally and spatially nuanced view of the role of research between theory, practice and experience.

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