

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

[Note: This is a transcript of video one on this page of the exposition. Onscreen text appears right justified, while spoken words appear left justified]

[00:09]

I am an artist-researcher and a practicing musician and curator, active in the field of electroacoustic music, sound art, and creative AI for musical performances. My research is driven by an interest in the interplay between humans and more-than-humans, exploring what types of agency and sociality emerge from these relationships.

[00:34]

Agency is a theoretical concept with diverse meanings across academic fields and cultures, often used to describe the capacity for action and its outcomes. While social theories traditionally emphasise agency as a human attribute (Alaimo, 2017), many contemporary posthuman theorists view it not as belonging exclusively to the human but as the result of co-constitution with the many entities of this world.

[01:08]

(Stefánsdóttir, 2019)

[01:17]

I align with the latter and understand agency as the result of “situated actions”, a term coined by Lucy Suchman (1987) in relation to her investigations into human-computer interaction. From such a perspective, agency is not something one has but forms through emergent configurations and reconfigurations. Through this, I seek to develop my practice in relation, distributed through culture, environment, and technology (Stefánsdóttir, 2023).

[01:51]

Within the field of Western Art Music agency is often limited by a systemic inertia (Becker, 1982), manifested through established protocols. In Higher Education, an example is how students are not given the opportunity to take charge of formulating their own practice methods—as discussed in Laboratory 3 of this exposition. Technologies and environments are frequently reduced to mere tools or backdrops for human creativity. Institutional power, working through embedded values and norms, uses these technologies as tools of control to maintain standards of perfection and virtuosity—a practice that often harms performers’ health (Papageorgi et al., 2013; Yoshie et al., 2009). Similarly, the field’s deeply rooted patriarchal structure (Leech-Wilkinson, 2020) further restricts opportunities for female and non-traditional creative voices.

[02:01]

(Oldfield, 2013)

[02:22]

(Oldfield, 2013)

[02:53]

(Rawlings, 2017)

[02:53]

This explains why artist-researchers in music often steer their experimentation towards challenging established protocols (D'Errico, 2018; Laws et al., 2019; Torrence, 2019). In my doctoral research, I explored this by examining how agency is preconditioned. Based on this, and drawing on ecological, enactive, and post-phenomenological theories, I designed experiments to explore alternative possibilities—experiments that acknowledged that creativity emerges from human, environmental, and technological mediation. This paved the way for new forms of social interaction, which at times led to exploration through intermediary positioning and bypassing both power structures and the usual delivery modes of the art world.

[03:49]

But there is another and even more radical possibility offered through the artistic laboratory. Each experiment must be documented, generating what is called data or archival inscription (Rheinberger, 2023; Spatz, 2020). As I observed, this documentation can yield new material approaches (Stefánsdóttir, 2023). In my research, photography served dual roles both as ethnographic documentation and as artistic material. Through continued material engagement, the ethnographic material could become part of an artistic output, as demonstrated in this score.

[04:26]

(Stefánsdóttir, 2020)

[04:41]

(Stefánsdóttir, 2023)

[04:43]

Another artistic example is this music video. It features the recording of an aeolian violin performance alongside the documentation of its making. This is combined with the documentation of the making of a score, the performance of which is shared through the video.

[05:09]

Further altered orientations of laboratory practices are exemplified in how the method development of the laboratory approach results in different use of audio and video technologies. These technologies, as they are applied within a so-called stimulated recall method (Bloom, 1953; Stefánsdóttir & Östersjö, 2022), can be an integrated part not only of analysis, but also in artistic creation.

[05:38]

I have also experienced how the laboratory model can transform our understanding of “the work”. Rather than focusing on musical works in the traditional canonical sense, the artist enters a performance ecology (Waters, 2021) where they develop “in relation”. This process reveals multiple meaningful waypoints, essential to the extended sonic experimentation. For example, my work with wind phenomena has continued since 2017, reaching audiences through various formats and moments—most recently through experiments exploring the interplay between artist–researcher and algorithmically augmented instruments or system inventions (Stefánsdóttir & Magnusson, in-press).

[06:08]

(Stefánsdóttir, 2022)

[06:13]

(Stefánsdóttir, 2019)

[06:14]

(Olofsson, 2020)

[06:14]

(Olofsson, 2020)

[06:17]

(Stefánsdóttir, 2022)

[06:19]

(Wilson, 2018)

[06:29]

The project was part of my broader postdoctoral research at the Intelligent Instruments Lab at the University of Iceland, focusing on investigating artificial intelligence in new musical instruments. The experiment centred overall on designing an “intelligent violin” to explore the agencies at play, the altered affordances, and the sociality of such creative encounters—including the multiple roles involving responsibility and accountability. This research, which complements the predominantly technoscientific approach to music and AI research (Gioti et al., 2023), serves as a reminder that artistic research in music can extend to inter- and transdisciplinary forms of inquiry.

[07:20]

How artistic research is communicated is not exempt from experimentation, as exemplified in the format of video and audio papers that afford alternative modes of expression and new paths for sharing work. During my doctoral research, I partook in the development of the format of the audio paper. My audio papers enabled the blending of sound-art and electroacoustic compositions with documentation of their creation—creating an academic output that combines analytical, dramaturgical, performative, and compositional approaches.

Based on these experiences, I see the artistic research laboratory approach as vital for exploring new paths in sonic thinking—both in professional settings and in revising Higher Music Education pedagogy, as detailed in the two following videos.

[08:33]

Research documentation included in the video:

Performance of ‘an Urban Archive as an English Garden’ (Franzson, 2019)
at the SPOR festival, Aarhus, Denmark
Presentation of ‘VARP’ (Stefánsdóttir, 2016)
at the Inter Arts Center, Malmö, Sweden
Presentation of ‘Fjärilarna steg upp’ [The butterflies ascended]
(Stefánsdóttir, 2020) at the Botanical Garden, Lund, Sweden
Studio session with Angela Rawlings at the Inter Arts Center, Sweden
Onsite work with Stefan Östersjö in Bohuslän, Sweden
Stimulated recall with Liv Kaastrup Vesterskov
Intelligent Instruments Lab showcasing event
with Victor Riley Shepardson at Mengi, Reykjavík, Iceland