

HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

Let us now consider the state of teaching institutions in Higher Music Education (HME) at the time when artistic research was being introduced more broadly in Europe, in the early 2000s. The Bologna declaration, signed in 1999, marked the beginning of a process of unifying universities across Europe. By harmonising the qualification system, student mobility could, for instance, be enhanced. But the Bologna declaration also sought to set goals for enhanced quality, and states that education should be research-based, use student-centred teaching models aiming to activate students in their learning, and aim for students' lifelong learning.

While the one-to-one encounter is one of the powerful aspects of the teaching and learning of music performance, a recent literature review (Holmgren, 2022), indicates that the way the so-called master apprentice model has been applied, student-centred approaches have been slow to develop. As argued by Woodford, in HME, "curricula emphasise skills development, pedagogical methods, the acquisition of knowledge, national standards, and degree outcomes instead of teaching students how to research and develop arguments so they can think more critically about what they read, are told, see, hear, or do" (2019, p. 2). A case in point is the lack of tutoring in the practice of practising, prompting Evans and Bonneville-Roussy (2016) to note how "for the most dedicated music students, this means that a large proportion of their waking hours is spent on an activity that is relatively unguided and ill-defined" (p. 196). Jørgensen and Hallam (2014) review research on practice and note the striking narrowness of the material: "[i]ts focus has almost exclusively been in relation to the training of classical musicians and the individual practitioner" (p. 449). Given the broadening musical landscape within HME, there are several research gaps to be filled.

Recent studies indicate that HME does not always sufficiently prepare the student to meet the demand of the music industry, nor does it provide the tools to envision alternatives beyond traditional institutional contexts (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020; Minors et al., 2024). Eidsaa and Kharatyan (2024) note how

contemporary society has become increasingly complex, in ways that also affect the art worlds in which institutions and individual artists develop their practices, and these developments have caused a shift in the nature of job opportunities in the music industry. In response to these challenges, HME must challenge their students to develop a wide portfolio and to embrace diverse skills that allow them to engage in new and a wider range of musical practices. (p. 253)

Meanwhile, the Bologna process was a driving force in the implementation of artistic research in HME in Europe, and the relation between the discipline of artistic research and the ambitions of the declaration has been the source for much debate (see for instance Henke et al., 2020; Hovland, 2021). While it is beyond the scope of the present exposition to join that discussion, we will instead consider the challenges to HME in the process of creating teaching formats that are indeed student-centred and promote lifelong learning, but also address the need for developing employability-skills, and making inclusivity and equity into foundational qualities. This is not an easy task. We must consider how

the aim of decolonization points beyond the strife for diversity, toward a fundamental reconsideration, and a widening of the foundations of knowledge within academia. This also implies that in music research, not only do theory and methods need to be

decolonized but also the very foundations of our embodied practices, including our listening. (Östersjö, et al., 2023, p. 5)

Such processes demand rethinking relational and curricular perspectives (Minors et al., 2024; Stefánsdóttir, 2024), but most of all, developing new practices. It is our conviction that the artistic research laboratory provides some opportunities for such experimentation. But, as argued by Paul Craenen, reporting on a study of curriculum development in the master's program at the Royal Conservatoire the Hague, the impact of artistic research

depends not so much on its production of knowledge and innovation, but in *the learning experience* of creating connections between those elements through independent research: as an experience that is assumed to set a motivational example for processes of learning and adapting to different contexts in a future professional life or further education. (2020, From academic demands to professional needs section, para 5)

Similarly, our focus in reporting on the Labs we have created is on how contexts for musical learning have been developed, with attention also to the potential for student-driven and inclusive approaches.