

# Artistic research as an integrative force

A critical look at the role of master's research at Dutch music conservatoires

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the Bologna Process, most conservatoires in Europe spent considerable effort on the integration of research in their curricula. In this article,<sup>1</sup> I reflect upon what has been achieved in recent years, but most of all speculate about what is yet to come. My focus will be on current approaches to research at Dutch music conservatoires and is in particular inspired by recent curriculum reforms at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, where I hold a position as a research professor. However, I hope that these reflections will have relevance for other countries as well, despite differences in educational cultures and research policies.

## From academic demands to professional needs

The integration of research into the conservatoire curriculum is far from a completed mission. Nevertheless, it is my expectation that conservatoires will gradually shift their attention from the integration of research to the potential of research as an integrative force in itself. What I am referring to is a changing relationship between educational policy and research in higher arts education. Only a decade ago, the implementation of research in the master's curriculum was perceived by many as the intrusion of a strange element. Additional research components and assessment requirements tended to be conceived as obligatory 'supplements to the traditional diet of 1-to-1 lessons with a specialist teacher, master-classes and ensemble work'<sup>2</sup>. Even if the role of practice in artistic research was emphasised from the start, its integration into the curriculum meant an adaptation to standards that came from elsewhere. The attention that went to supervision, scholarly documentation, and assessment procedures testified to an arduous process of academisation. Enhancing the quality of these elements is still a matter of concern for many institutions, but meanwhile, a rapidly changing musical field has pushed other educational challenges to the foreground. Building a career as a soloist, composer, or director has always been the privilege of a very small number of musicians, but today the prospects of a stable job in a professional orchestra, ensemble, or music school are even less secure than they were before. On the other hand, the increasing importance of interdisciplinarity in the performing arts, and the burgeoning interest in music in fields such as healthcare or social-cultural work, offer new possibilities for professional musicians. As a result, music careers become more hybrid, which requires an update of curricula at conservatoires.

In addition, conservatoires have become more familiar with the open nature of artistic research,<sup>3</sup> and an implicit conviction seems to be settling that research at master's level can be turned into a versatile tool to respond to the aforementioned educational challenges in an integrative, and therefore also pragmatic and economic way. Thus, the viewing direction changes, and concerns about research shift from academic demands towards the needs and

expectations of the professional field and society at large. Or, stated differently: after an exploratory phase, conservatoires expect the research component in their curriculum to deliver.

There seem to be two main arguments to support the belief in an integrative potential of artistic research. Firstly, artistic research suggests a potential to transcend the practice-theory dichotomy which we may still encounter in the way courses such as music history, music theory, aesthetics, and all kinds of optional courses are offered separately from the main subject of study (for musical departments, this is usually an instrument, voice, composition, or music pedagogy<sup>4</sup>). Artistic research offers a combination of thinking and doing, and as such puts an educational pressure on this model. A pressure that, in its turn, is reinforced by an economic pressure of time. After all, time spent on artistic research cannot be spent on other, more general or theoretical courses, or on the main subject of study.

Secondly, the current instability of the musical landscape and the evolution towards 'portfolio careers'<sup>5</sup> make it increasingly difficult to offer a balanced curriculum that caters to both a broad musical and cultural education as well as to the extremely diversifying and specialised challenges of the professional music field. This leads conservatoires into the direction of offering a modular curriculum centred around one core, a main subject, and complemented by optional courses and research. Research fulfils a crucial role in this structure by providing a 'free zone' where students can define a topic of interest which adds personal focus and relevance. Ideally, the research project becomes a glue that makes all curriculum components stick together in a meaningful way. Thus, the responsibility to compose a relevant and complementary learning programme is put almost completely in the student's hands.

*"Training musicians for the 21st century requires that conservatoires expect students to become the engineers of their own education in order to prepare for a portfolio career in an ever changing musical landscape in which a lifelong learning attitude is a necessity."<sup>6</sup>*

The concept of artistic research offers a platform where elements of practice, theory, experimentation, and reflection can meet in a tailored, personal learning trajectory. The relevance of such a trajectory in the master curriculum 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. From this viewpoint, the integrative potential of artistic research does not only aim at specialisation, but also at learning *how* to learn.

In general, artistic research fits in a tendency to render theoretical knowledge more practical and to make practical or experiential knowledge more reflective. A conceptually important element in this pursuit is the concept of embodied knowledge, or 'knowledge in doing'. There is a growing awareness, also fed by the discourse surrounding artistic research, that knowledge is more than knowledge of facts and theories, but also includes experiential knowledge and knowledge how to do things. Although this is hardly surprising new,<sup>7</sup> it offers a conceptual framework for conservatoires to create more direct connections between the main subject, research, and other courses.

In what follows, I wish to discuss this potential along with some of the pitfalls in the approach to artistic research as an integrative force. In doing so, my focus will be on

research at master's level, since this is the level where a balance has to be found between the expectations of the professional field and the more specialised and fundamental research interests which typify third-cycle research.<sup>8</sup>

### **Master's research at Dutch conservatoires**

If we aim to find evidence for a shifting approach to research, it makes sense to look at how conservatoires communicate about the role of research in their curricula. The following quotes can be found on websites of different Dutch conservatoires:

*“Apart from being excellent musicians, we want students to be able to critically reflect on current practices and create new knowledge in the field of performance and composition. To this end, the curriculum includes an intensive lecture series on how to conduct artistic research. In addition to following the lecture series, you will be supervised by a research coach for your personal research project. The research project is your chance to delve into an aspect of your work as a musician that fascinates you and to contribute to knowledge.”<sup>9</sup>*

*“Your development in your main subject is the core of your studies. There is also room to work on your unique selling points by taking a variety of optional subjects and by doing research that is related to your future professional practice.”<sup>10</sup>*

*“During the master, you will develop yourself into a professional with a strong and clear identity (...) you will make your own study plan and get the space to experiment and investigate. A study coach and teachers will provide personal supervision. You will also do artistic research and participate in a practical workplace project.”<sup>11</sup>*

On most Dutch conservatoire websites, research is presented as an essential pillar of their master programmes. From this, we might conclude that the integration of research on the level of curriculum can be considered an established fact, at least formally. This doesn't mean that all resistances have been overcome. Even today some critics talk about artistic research as a regretful academisation which detaches art institutions from their artistic essence or soul. However, what these critics tend to underestimate or overlook is the speed and flexibility with which higher arts institutions are appropriating the notion of research. If artistic research is now all over the place, it does not necessarily mean that conservatoires have become more academic kinds of institutions, but rather that research models are being adapted and transformed to dovetail with the aims, standards and values of conservatories.

But what does this mean in practice, inside the conservatoire walls? Let us make a short comparison of the research approach in Dutch music conservatories, based on what can be found on their websites and in their study guides, as well as on personal communication<sup>12</sup> with some of their research coordinators. I will structure my comparison according to different research parameters such as research concepts, topics, methods, supervision, and outcomes.

*Research concepts:* few conservatoires define their research concept explicitly,<sup>13</sup> except for the strong connection with practice. A possible explanation is that even within one conservatoire there may be very different perspectives on research. Approaches to research in departments such as early music, jazz, or composition may vary greatly due to their

different educational cultures and their reliance on specific research sources.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, an overly rigid definition of what research at conservatoires requires can be counterproductive if you are involved in mixed research projects with universities or societal partners such as medical centres, organisations for social cultural work, etc.

*Research questions and topics:* the same openness can be found with regard to the content of research. In some conservatoires, students can participate in existing projects conducted by research groups at their institutions. In general, however, master students are expected to choose a research topic which fits their interests, albeit in consultation with their supervisors and/or their main subject teachers.

*Methods:* The freedom in terms of content and research concepts leads to an unlimited number of potential research topics, and thus also to a wide variety of research methods and processes. Although some methodological guidance is offered, mostly in the form of introductory courses or lecture series, in most conservatoires<sup>15</sup> the choice of a research method is left to the student. It goes without saying that this freedom might be a challenge for research coaching and supervision; I will develop this point further below.

*Supervision:* In most Dutch conservatoires, each master's student is assigned a research supervisor, although there are important differences in the amount of time a personal supervisor is available for individual students (from approximately five to twenty contact hours in total, depending on what is included in these hours). Some conservatoires put more emphasis on bringing students together in peer learning groups or have supervising teams that meet with the student a few times throughout the process. Combinations of these models are also to be found.

*Outcomes:* most conservatoires expect a self-contained research outcome, assessed by a research committee. This is usually a written and documented report or thesis in combination with a presentation, which may include artistic performance. Interestingly, however, the conservatoire of Maastricht doesn't require a written research outcome anymore at the end of the master's degree, but a presentation which is an integral part of a 'master project'.<sup>16</sup> My estimation is that more conservatoires will follow the example of dispensing with output requirements characteristic of traditional academic research in favour of formats that can be integrated with the main subject end presentations. Examples could be the contextualisation of a musical programme (investigating cultural origins, artistic choices, social relevance, etc.), a report of experiments with musical preparation, or reflections on the documented creation process of a composition. What is suggested by these examples is, again, a function of research as an integrative force, as a tool which connects with new perspectives and embeds musical practice in wider artistic, cultural, and academic fields.

From this brief overview, we might conclude that in a small country such as the Netherlands, there is quite some variety in how conservatoires define, support, assess, and integrate research. Closely reading the descriptions of their master's programmes suggests that the research approach can even become an element of profiling their identity as a conservatoire. Research resonates with reflectivity, innovation, and discovery. 'Artistic' research adds subjectivity, sensibility, creativity, entrepreneurship, emancipation, political

awareness, etc. Precisely this open nature of artistic research offers a richly filled dish from which conservatories can pick the elements they find useful to profile their identity and target specific musicians' interests.

### **Personalised research**

*“The two-year internationally-oriented and demanding Master’s degree programme is student-centred, gives you the chance to develop your talent and specialisation, and trains you to become a highly versatile professional musician of the highest level. Research in and into performance practice is important, and you are aware of the social, cultural and international context in which you practise your profession.<sup>17</sup>”*

Within this diversity, there is one recurring element in the communication of all conservatoires: their research approach is student-centred and personalised. This seems to be motivated by a belief that artistic research can help to form an ‘independent artistic personality’ that is able to adapt flexibly to the dynamics of the cultural field or to create an artist’s own professional ‘niche’. The assumption is that research can give you the skills and tools to follow your personal fascinations and can empower you to specialise in a way that will be relevant for your professional future. In a field such as classical music the student-centred approach is revolutionary, because it goes against the predominant association of classical music education with the master-apprentice model and the strong disciplining around standardised instruments and repertoires.

Can such a student-centred approach effectively help to turn personal fascinations into a viable specialisation or the development of a personal niche in the musical field? To my knowledge, there is no information available on the relationship between research choices during conservatoire studies and their effects on later professional careers. The perspective of future professional relevance could be a touchstone for evaluating research choices in the master curriculum. However, an overly concrete expectation of professional applicability would probably favour research topics that stay close to existing practice. More ‘fundamental’ or potentially disruptive artistic explorations and quests for understanding, which in the long term might be crucial to the vitality of the field, are more difficult to defend if direct and concrete usefulness is required.

Let me propose another perspective on the potential of a personalised research approach. When students are spurred to follow their personal fascinations, their research choices can become indicators for new interests and tendencies within upcoming generations of musicians, even before they lead to the creation of new niches and practices. As such, a sustained stimulation of individual interests, combined with structured monitoring and evaluation of students’ research choices, might become a valuable tool to reflect on what is offered in the curriculum. A modest example of such a tool is the Research Catalogue portal of the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, where all published<sup>18</sup> master’s research projects are tagged with five keywords in an alphabetical keyword list. The resulting overview brings the diversity of recent master research projects to the fore, but also the (possibly temporary) popularity of certain topics and research areas. In turn it also provides a precious tool for getting an idea of what might be lacking in current research: topical themes that students are not yet addressing and strands of research that need extra stimulation or support.

## The challenge of diversity

Personalised research comes with some challenges. The freedom that students have to choose their own research topic sometimes leads to projects which stretch far beyond the borders of their own disciplines. A jazz singer who investigates the potential of a historic Japanese poetry form as a source of inspiration for new work,<sup>19</sup> a baroque singer who creates speculative links between seventeenth-century music, architecture, and painting<sup>20</sup> or a performer researching memorisation techniques based on recent cognitive and scientific findings:<sup>21</sup> these are only a few examples that show the potential breadth of artistic research at conservatoires. They also point to one of its biggest challenges, that is, its boundary-crossing character:<sup>22</sup> artistic research is practice-based, but it always involves something more than the strategies and equipment of common practice. First of all, the reflective nature of research implies a (recurring) temporary halting or stepping away from actual doing or making and requires the help of a reflecting medium. This might be spoken or written language, but also auditory or visual media can play a crucial role. In its search for understanding, artistic research may, and almost always will, seek support in neighbouring or more peripheral knowledge fields.<sup>23</sup> Above all, intuition and curiosity may drive artistic research to experiment with radically new artistic approaches. The 'more' of artistic research points to that which is not yet part of common practice, and this is exactly what motivates the research.

But how do conservatoires cater for that 'more'? Adopting theoretical distance proves to be a serious hurdle for many a music student who is not familiar with critical thinking or scholarly perspectives. Preparing such master students for research often comes down to offering crash courses in basic reasoning, documenting, writing, and presenting skills. At this point, conservatoires are often confronted with their own staffing limitations. Likewise, the more ambitious and research-driven student has to be aware of limited research facilities. Conservatoires do not necessarily have the knowledge infrastructure or the means to professionally support and supervise a research project that connects jazz with Japanese poetry or music performance with neuropsychology. As long as a student has the maturity to enter into critical dialogue with these other fields, and if original artistic outcomes are the result, such adventurous research projects will be applauded. Nonetheless, more can be expected from a higher education institution than positive encouragement. What tools do students need to embark on a journey beyond the disciplinary borders? Is the artistic 'alternative perspective' a licence for uninformed, naive encounters with other knowledge fields? How should one deal with the challenges of a boundary practice without curtailing the freedom of the student?

These questions become all the more pressing if we observe that firm theoretical or methodical frameworks that can give orientation to such explorative research are often lacking.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, referring to my introduction, I dare to claim that there is a growing *distrust of theory without practice* in conservatoire education. In contrast, a sense of optimism lingers around the concept of artistic research, precisely because it represents a combination of reflecting and doing, and promises embodied – and thus practical and useful – knowledge as an outcome. The ensuing consequence is that one of the core arguments for the relevance of artistic research in both an artistic and academic field, namely its reliance on and direct access to embodied knowledge, becomes a task to be fulfilled: through artistic research, students are supposed not only to increase their knowledge (as well in an artistic

as an intellectual sense), but also to prove the relevance of this knowledge by showing how it can be embodied in musical practice.

### **Artistic research as a digestive system**

We are witnessing a shift away from the old-school learning model where theory or concepts precede practice, towards a model where concepts and theory have to *emerge from* practice. The first model entails a learning process that proceeds from explicit to implicit knowledge: after learning the names of the notes and intervals, one learns how to sing and internalise them, thus making them second nature. In the discourse around artistic research, we often hear of an opposite starting point: at the beginning, there is always already implicit knowledge in artistic practice, in the form of tacit bodily knowledge or intuitions, which through research can be made more explicit and aware, and which can be a starting point for experimentation and investigation.

From the perspective of the educational policy of conservatoires, the promise of artistic research is to have the best of both models. Starting from implicit knowledge suggests that the student does not need to begin with theory separated from practice, but with personal fascinations and intuitions emerging from practice. What research adds is trust – or is it hope? – that through a process of autonomous study, experimentation, and reflection the students will be able to expand their skills, knowledge, and understanding in an organic and piecemeal way. The course of such a process will be driven by the research questions and the interests and background of the student, rather than by a requirement to first internalise solid theoretical frameworks. Taken to the extreme and to put it rather polemically, radical integrative thinking forebodes a farewell to music theory, aesthetics, and even music history as independent, orientating building blocks of a music curriculum. From a radically practice-based perspective, everything that remains disconnected from actual doing or creating will need to rethink its role and relation with other elements within the curriculum.

In this respect, it is crucial to recall the educational function of research in the curriculum. The first objective of master's research is not the production of knowledge or innovation as such, but the learning experience of being able to create personal research tools in order to cope with challenges that also occur in the professional field. These research tools aim to install a feedback loop between practice, information, experimentation, and reflection. In this way, artistic research becomes a digestive system which promises an expansion of knowledge and understanding in close connection with practice and without the detour of disconnected theorising. The intended learning model is organic, rather than sequential.

But can we take the success of this learning model for granted? Can we expect master's students to integrate research with practice in such an autonomous way and in the short time frame of a master's research project? How do we protect students from getting lost in unknown territory? How can we avoid the image of a student who has to drag herself out of the swamp by her own hair? Any answer to these questions requires a clarification of the idea of knowledge integration through research, the role of the conservatoire in this process, and the time needed to gauge the impact of this integration on artistic development.

The idea that artistic research outcomes should be embodied in artistic practice generates an expectation that artistic research will not only lead to understanding and

innovation but also to 'better' musicians. This is the ultimate argument for artistic research from a conservatoire's perspective. But what exactly does this improvement mean? Investigating historical sources, alternative playing techniques or new modes of musical training will not automatically lead to a more convincing performance. What doing research offers is an enriching learning experience, but it might take years before investigations transform into musicianship. If we think of research as a digestive system, it may be one with a slow metabolism.

In fact, the more ambitious and ground-breaking a research topic, the longer it may take to fully integrate its learning outcomes into practice. Therefore, I believe that a nuanced and varied perspective on research expectations in conservatoire curricula is necessary. Research focusing on very concrete aspects of practice can be expected to deliver outcomes that are also embodied by practice. However, questions emerging from practice could also lead to reflections and insights that need more theoretical elaboration. Topics of a more general, theoretical, or experimental nature may be investigated partly in an integrated way, but this should not be the first criterion of evaluation. If students have significantly expanded their artistic and intellectual horizon, this could be considered a successful integration of knowledge at a more personal level, leading to a more informed and mature artistic personality. If we agree that the profile of a contemporary professional musician should not be reduced to mere craftsmanship, this should be reflected in our evaluation of research outcomes as well.

Besides a distinction between the integration of research into practice on the one hand, and into artistic personality on the other, we should take into account an integrative force of research at the level of the conservatoire or artistic community. In comparison to scientific research, collaborative forms of artistic research are still underdeveloped within the musical field. Stimulating exchange of knowledge and awareness of complementarity in artistic research is perhaps one of the most important tasks ahead in order to improve the research culture at conservatoires. This might lead to concrete research collaborations, but also to a division of tasks. The emphasis on personal and intuitive approaches which typify many research projects in the arts should not hinder the awareness of their potential complementarity and dialogue with other research projects. Moreover, a context of complementarity might also offer the orientation needed for students without clear prior research ambitions.

In a collaborative research vision, practice-based, applied as well as more theoretical, specialist or experimental forms of research may find a home. At the same time, complementarity within a shared research agenda raises the need to create an overview, which brings us back to a need for 'theory' in its etymological origin: a capacity to look from a distance and observe and speculate about relations between different actants in musical practice.

### **Towards a mature research perspective**

More than ever, conservatoires feel the pressure to redefine their role in the musical landscape. Being a supplier for the music market is no longer enough: there is a need to find a new role as a hub or a lab for the possibilities of music in society. Artistic research, in combination with other forms of research, can play a vital role here. Such an institutional view requires a shift from the exclusive focus on the preparation of individual musicians for an ever more unpredictable musical field towards the development of broader perspectives



on the role of music in society. This might help conservatoires orientate young musicians towards better formulated roles and functions that hopefully also mirror the diversity of their personalities, talents, and interests. Some will object that it is not the task of conservatoires to redesign the musical landscape, since competition and self-regulation are enough to keep the musical field in motion and in resonance with broader societal developments. Nevertheless, with artistic research, a reflective element has entered higher arts education which has the potential to be truly emancipatory not only for students, but also for institutions. The integrative force of research invites us to start rethinking paths for curriculum development on a longer term, and to look beyond the immediate threats of disappearing orchestras, declining support for music schools, and evaporating art subsidies.

Perhaps we have to start re-appreciating the word 'vision' here and be more reluctant to accept the current emphasis on 'flexibility' as a main response to the unpredictability of the musical profession. After all, the learning objective of flexibility seems to express a 'struggle for life' reality and the dependency of the individual (musician) on the whims of a shrinking music market. Shifting the focus from adaptive skills towards more proactive, curatorial, and engineering ones demands an all-encompassing effort in which experimentation, reflection, theorising, and practice-based investigation are all valued as necessary elements.

After the appropriation of research as an integral part of the master's curriculum, the time has come to develop a more mature, but also more ambitious perspective on research in conservatoires. In this article, I have indicated some potential benefits and dangers of the idea of using research as an integrative force in a music curriculum. The openness of artistic research and the ideal of a personalised research trajectory offer an interesting, and not yet fully exploited, potential for keeping one's finger on the pulse of today's cultural and societal dynamics. Therefore, conservatoires need to continue stimulating curiosity, support boundary-crossing practices, and monitor research choices and tendencies. A crucial task today is to find a balance between a student-centred research approach and the conservatoire's responsibility to guide, contextualise, and oversee research. Simultaneously, at a metalevel, there is a need for stronger institutional visions and perspectives on the musical profession. These might inspire conservatoires to not only carefully listen to what reaches them in a bottom-up fashion, but to take a part of the musical future in their own hands, and steer research into new and promising directions. Setting up a collaborative research agenda could create a helpful context for the development of such perspectives.

In sum, after the integration of research, it is a logical next ambition to strive towards ever-closer connections between practical, theoretical, and experimental or free elements in a music curriculum, and to look at the role of artistic research in this process. There is, however, also a danger in a too narrow concept of integration that would drive research towards immediately applicable outcomes, while simultaneously expecting that research should contribute to a theoretical grounding and understanding of practice. In a balanced research perspective, integration can be expected to happen at the level of practice, as well as the individual personality of the musician or the wider artistic community (and beyond).

Artistic research thrives where genuine curiosity and a willingness to understand and create are the driving force. Students should be maximally entrusted and stimulated to follow their interests, even if this sometimes produces unpredictable and seemingly useless outcomes. But they may also be invited to join collaborative research projects, which for many of them would enhance the relevance of doing research as part of their master's

trajectory. Some research topics benefit from a process which is firmly embedded in practice. In other cases, temporary isolation from common practice is necessary to create new perspectives. The conservatoire's task is to offer the student theoretical orientation, methodological guidance, and artistic feedback. Continuously working on and investing in the quality of a supporting knowledge infrastructure will be crucial in order to perform these duties and gain institutional authority in both the cultural and academic field.

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<sup>1</sup> The text is a revised and elaborated version of a lecture presented at the EPARM conference for artistic research 2019, held at the Gheorghe Dima Academy of Music in Cluj Napoca (Romania) on 28-30 March 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Darla Crispin, Tine Stolte, Evert Bisschop Boele. "Polyfonia Handbook – Perspectives on 2nd Cycle Programmes in Higher Music Education. Combining a research orientation with professional relevance". *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen*, 2014, <https://www.aec-music.eu/publications/perspectives-on-2nd-cycle-programmes-in-higher-music-education>, p. 70. Accessed on 22 July 2019.

<sup>3</sup> In the remainder of this text, I will use the notion of 'artistic research' very generically to refer to research that is carried out by artists, in this context more specifically at music conservatoires.

<sup>4</sup> I will not take specialised master tracks such as sound art, sonology or music theatre into consideration here.

<sup>5</sup> Except for teaching and managerial functions, steady, full-time jobs have become relatively scarce in music. Most professional musicians combine part-time and often short-term and temporary jobs. Attention for this phenomenon has grown in the past decade. See also: 'Portfolio Careers in Music', *Majoring in Music*, <https://majoringinmusic.com/portfolio-careers-in-music/>. Accessed on 19 July 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Boele, Evert Bisschop. "Polyfonia Handbook – Perspectives on 2nd Cycle Programmes in Higher Music Education. Combining a research orientation with professional relevance". *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen*, 2014, <https://www.aec-music.eu/publications/perspectives-on-2nd-cycle-programmes-in-higher-music-education>, p. 89. Accessed on 22 July 2019

<sup>7</sup> For a brief overview of terms and perspectives and a discussion of embodied knowledge in artistic research see Borgdorff, Henk. *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*. Leiden University Press, 2012, pp. 47-49.

<sup>8</sup> Third-cycle research offers artists with a master's degree the opportunity to engage in doctoral research. In Belgium and the Netherlands, this happens typically through trajectories in collaboration with a university, leading to an academic doctoral degree. At the time being, some institutes in the Netherlands advocate for a professional doctorate to be granted by art schools alone in the near future. Such developments could probably also have an impact on the research policy at master's level, although I believe it is much too early to speculate.

<sup>9</sup> "Research". *Fontys University of Applied Sciences*. <https://fontys.edu/Bachelors-masters/Masters/Master-of-Music/about-the-course-1/Course-structure-3/Research-1.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2019.

<sup>10</sup> "Master of Music". *Codarts University of the Arts*, <https://www.codarts.nl/en/master-of-music/>. Accessed 19 July 2019.

<sup>11</sup> "Master of Music, Performance." *HKU University of the Arts*, <https://www.hku.nl/Home/Education/Masters/MasterOfMusicPerformance.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Input for this article came partly from the yearly meeting between the research departments of Dutch conservatoires, hosted by Henrice Vonck (Codarts, Rotterdam) and Falk Hübner (HKU Utrecht Conservatoire) on 29 November 2018 at the Utrecht Conservatoire.

<sup>13</sup> At the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, the following research definition has been agreed upon: 'Research is a systematic investigation of some aspect of thought or reality which leads to transferable knowledge. Research at the Royal Conservatoire is motivated through artistic practice and carried out by students and staff. It leads to knowledge that is possibly embedded in compositional, performative or educational work, and may be expressed through diverse media, including but not confined to written text.'

<sup>14</sup> A striking difference, for example, in the master's research at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague is that sources in jazz research tend to be mainly of an auditory nature (recordings, practice), whereas, in early music, an intimate dialogue between written sources (texts as well as scores and manuscripts) and performance

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practice is more common. It is likely that the primacy of auditory or written sources also leads to different perspectives on research methodology.

<sup>15</sup> The conservatoire of Rotterdam (Codarts), forms an exception with a more structured and prescribed approach, from the preparation of a research proposal through a series of assignments, to the use of so-called ‘intervention cycles’ during the research process.

<sup>16</sup> The idea of an overarching ‘master project’ which includes the main subject, research, and entrepreneurship or professional integration is gaining ground in several conservatoires. However, what holds together such overarching project needs further investigation and clarification in my opinion.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Master the Master’. *Zuyd University of Applied Sciences*, <https://www.conservatoriummaastricht.nl/jazz/master>. Accessed on 19 July 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Although every finalised master research project is accessible for students within the conservatoire, only those research projects which are assessed as very good or excellent are publicly accessible and published in the [Research Catalogue](#), an online platform for artistic research.

<sup>19</sup> Kurek, Natasza. ‘Entwine – Finding Music within a Poem’, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/300915/467882>, 2018. Accessed 19 July 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Marcos, Anabela. ‘Monteverdi and the architecture of Emotions’, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/301178/464987>, 2018. Accessed 19 July 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Serrano Diogo, Ines. ‘Playing by Heart’, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/135920/135921>, 2015. Accessed 19 July 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Henk Borgdorff qualifies artistic research as ‘boundary work’, to be understood as “an activity undertaken in the borderland between the art world and the academic world”. See Borgdorff, Henk. *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*. Leiden University Press, 2012, p. 132.

From the perspective of master research, I prefer to look beyond the duality of the artistic and the academic and focus rather on the intrinsic transgressive character of artistic research.

<sup>23</sup> What belongs to a knowledge field or an artistic practice is not set in stone, and might also change under influence of research. The importance of studying original manuscripts or ‘facsimiles’ in early music performance is a good illustration. Following the example of pioneers of the early-music movement, this approach has become second nature and an integral part of early-music teaching.

<sup>24</sup> To respond to this issue, The Royal Conservatoire The Hague will introduce nine research areas to the master’s programme from the academic year 2019-20 onwards. These areas will cover a wide range of possible research topics, from interpretative to more technical, educational, or interdisciplinary ones. Students will be asked to choose a research area first, before defining their research projects. In each area, students will be introduced to methods and topical themes proper to the chosen area, and meet on a monthly basis to discuss their research progress. As such, the aim is to balance the research freedom of students with the institute’s capacity to orientate, support, and assess master’s research in a more focused way.