Practice-as-research: a method for articulating creativity for practitioner-researchers

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What is a composer doing in a conservatoire and what is a performer doing in a university? In 2007, the Polifonia 3rd Cycle Working Group which was established to explore the potential for doctoral study within the conservatoire sector reported that '…conservatoires traditionally offer vocational training that leads to a career as a professional musician…[and] universities have been seen as the locus of research activity' (Polifonia, 2007: 9), so to respond to the question we might suggest that the composer is pursuing a 'professional' career as a musician and the performer is developing a career as an 'academic'. Indeed, this formulation assumes that one institution constructs practical environments where the focus of study is on the 'making' of work while the other institution is concerned with constructing modes of thought to articulate issues and ideas concerning the making of the work (normally the work of others) – this might be seen as constructing environments for 'thinking' about art. However, as John Dewey reminds us '[t]he odd notion that an artist does not think and a scientific enquirer does nothing else is the result of converting a difference of tempo and emphasis into a difference in kind' (Dewey, 1934: 14). Research, where practice constitutes a significant element of the inquiry is now well established within the university sector and following the recommendations of the Polifonia 3rd Cycle Working Group, conservatoires have been developing 3rd cycle doctoral programmes for practitioner-researchers. PhD students wishing to develop their creative practice, not only as a researcher 'making' work, but also, as a practitioner 'thinking' about the theoretical, contextual and critical implications of the work within a research inquiry, can do so through the structures of a conservatoire and/or a university. However, how the detail of the research inquiry is formulated; what methodologies and resulting methods are used to carry out the research; and, the development of skills required to recognize when moments of significance occur through the research process and how this is documented remain points of contention.

This chapter will consider the position of practitioner-researcher doctoral students within

higher music education. It will consider recent developments in practice-as-research (PaR) methodology, a research methodology that has developed in other performing arts disciplines but has only recently been taken up within the music community; the chapter will discuss how the work of the Department of Contemporary Arts at Manchester Metropolitan University UK (MMU) has contributed to the development of PaR methods in relation to the performing arts with a particular focus on practical music PhD projects, and will then consider the collaborative partnership it has with the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) in relation to its PhD programme and how the PaR methodology is being used to generate appropriate methods in relation to individual projects. The chapter will use two case studies, one from MMU (a jazz improviser/performer) and one from the RNCM (a composer) and will draw on my role as Director of Studies for practitioner-researchers registered at both institutions. The chapter will conclude with a review of the work achieved so far as it considers the development of a method for PaR within the Higher Education (HE) sector.

Whilst precise definitions of the term creativity remain elusive, most commentators agree that creative teaching and learning occur when conditions prevail. Klausen claims the 'standard definition of creativity as the production of something that is both novel and appropriate' remains 'problematic', (Klausen, 2010: 347) and Burnard reminds us that 'musical creativities [can] assume many forms (Burnard, 2012: 213). Nagy has suggested that, '[t]o investigate the apperception of musical creativity is, first and foremost, an exploration of the structure of musical imagination', and that to do so 'offers a direct link between creativity and a path of self-critical development, gradually evolving a personal attitude to musical creation' (Nagy, 2015: 69). Sullivan offers a similar articulation of how creative environments might be constructed when he identifies three dominant strands of activity in his work that he sees as necessary for creative learning to manifest. He suggests that creativity might be explained through the cognitive processes of 'thinking in a medium…thinking in a language…[and]…thinking in a context' (Sullivan, 2011: 115). This resonates with my own approach to developing creative environments for students where the thinking and making of

practice is exposed through the medium of the artwork, through a range of performative and compositional languages that contextualize and critically evaluate the final product as well as the working processes that have come to generate the work, and through the external constraints imposed on arts practices through institutional, professional and commercial need. Artistic medium, contextual/critical reflection and institutional/professional contexts are explored as pathways through which musical creativities flow.

PaR within HE

The practice-as-research initiative, begun over two decade ago in the wider performing arts community, has enabled practitioner-researchers to position their practice within an academic context. The construction of appropriate contextual frameworks, the implementation of embodied practitioner/professional knowledge acquired through training as a practitioner and the development of practitioner skills in critical reflection have each encouraged academic practitioners to expose creative insights into the making of their work as well as making these insights into creative practices available to both academic and non-academic communities. For some, practice may stand-alone as evidence of a research inquiry, with its research imperatives clearly articulated through the practice, for example, through the production of a notated score and/or a performance of the work. For others, as suggested by Robin Nelson, 'it may be helpful, particularly in an academic institutional context where much rides on judgement made about research worthiness, for other evidence to be adduced' (Nelson, 2006: 112). Here, there is a suggestion that, for Nelson, the production of new knowledge and/or substantial new insights within a research inquiry, may not only be an outcome as evidenced within the product, but may also reside in the processes that have led to the making of the work.

As the UK Higher Education research communities prepared for a research audit in Autumn 2013, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) published criteria for its

Research Excellence Framework[1] (REF) on the articulation of practice-led research. The criteria included the statement that research outputs '*may* include a statement of up to 300 words in cases where the research imperatives and research process … might *further* be made evident by description and contextualising information' (REF, 2012: 87). [Italics are mine.] Whilst this statement is welcomed and offers some guidance to practitioner-researchers on how to make the results of a research inquiry explicit for the purpose of the REF exercise, and by implication, allows those outside of this practice to gain access to the key stages of the creative process that have led to the making of the final product, it only partly addresses the issue of how practitioners working within an academic institutional context can best disseminate their research insights for the benefit of their respective research communities. At a time in the UK when HEFCE made the decision to bring together the research communities of Music, and the research communities of Drama, Dance and the Performing Arts for the REF process, I would suggest that it is pertinent for music practitioners working within academia to consider the relationship between arts PaR and methodologies for research dissemination; by doing so this can shed new light into the workings of a creative process.

Whilst there have been some initiatives within the music academic community to develop methodologies for practice-led research, much has centred around performance practice and the community has not dealt specifically with the development of appropriate methods for the dissemination of research resulting from the practice of composition. In 2007-2009, the University of London ran a project: Practice-as-research in music online (PRIMO). One of the outcomes of the project was to provide a resource for 'capturing and disseminating what was once an ephemeral event'. It also, however, made the assumption that 'traditional modes of dissemination, for musical scores…are well developed' (PRIMO, 2007). In England, within the wider context of arts practice, the PaR initiative over the last two decades has begun to establish new practice-led methods for practitioner-researchers across the arts communities.

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[1] REF is the system, in the UK, for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions.

Practice as Research in Performance (PARIP) was a 5-year Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) project that ran between 2001 and 2006 aiming to 'develop national frameworks for the encouragement of the highest standards in representing practical-creative research within academic contexts' (PARIP, n.d.). More recently, an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) project: Practice-as-Research Consortium North West (PARCNorthWest), led by MMU, has invited postgraduate research students, project partners and other interested parties to share experiences and exchange knowledge and to explore the development of appropriate methods for the dissemination of research where practice remains a substantial element of the research inquiry. This has resulted in arts practitioners from across a wide range of arts disciplines coming together to share their research insights and to discuss issues in research dissemination. By doing so, practitioner-researchers are capturing and documenting key moments of a creative process that would otherwise pass unnoticed.

Articulations of PaR

At the core of the PaR initiative, debates have focused on what constitutes knowledge in arts research where practice is used as the dominant methodology, and how what is understood as knowledge can be captured and disseminated within academically established research methodologies. Of course, this debate remains ongoing, continues to challenge the dominant research methodologies established within the sector, has generated a variety of bespoke approaches and is discipline specific. Brad Haseman has challenged established quantitative and qualitative research methodologies as being inappropriate for what he describes as 'practice-led research', using Carole Gray's term for 'research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners' (Gray, 1996: 3), and suggests that this approach 'captures the nuances and subtleties of their research process and accurately represents that process to research funding bodies' (Haseman, 2007: 147); his use of the term 'practice-led research' suggests something very similar to the concerns of the PaR initiative. Haseman suggests that the established research paradigms of quantitative and qualitative

research do not resonate with practice-led research and therefore new methodologies are required. He points out that practice-led researchers normally construct 'experiential starting points from which practice follows' (Haseman, 2006: 100) and that this conflicts with the established positivist research paradigm whereby researchers begin their research inquiry by first constructing a 'problem' and then working through that problem towards a solution; in practice-led research, problems (or what might better be described as research questions) normally emerge after the practice element has begun. From this position Haseman suggests that a third paradigm is emerging, which he calls 'performative research', whereby practitioner-researchers develop research methods appropriate to the individual needs of specific practices. Although these methods are likely to be project specific, Haseman has suggested that these might include a reinterpretation of some of the practices currently exploited within qualitative methodology such as: 'reflective practice, participant observation, performance ethnography, ethnodrama, biographical/autobiographical/ narrative inquiry, and the inquiry cycle from action research' (Haseman, 2006: 104). In performative research, practice is seen as the principal activity for the research, and researchers desire to express its findings in 'forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text' (Haseman, 2006: 103). For Haseman both the process of creation and the final product are positioned as research.

Barbara Bolt offers a different perspective: she suggests that arts researchers can 'demonstrate a very specific sort of knowing, a knowing that arises through handling materials in practice' (Bolt, 2007: 29). For Bolt this form of knowing occurs when materials and processes of production 'come into play in interaction with the artist's creative intelligence' (Bolt, 2007: 30). Bolt uses Paul Carter's terminology when she calls this process 'material thinking' (Carter, 2004: xi) and suggests that this process is pivotal to the creative process. Drawing on the philosophy of Heidegger she states that 'we come to know the world theoretically only after we have come to understand it through handling' (Bolt, 2007: 30). She suggests that the resulting praxical knowledge that this approach may produce is likely to take a number of

different forms and it is the teasing out of the subsequent knowledge forming relationships exposed through the handling of materials and processes that gives 'practice-led research' its distinctive quality. Bolt's formulation of the term 'practice-led research' resonates with the concerns of the PaR initiative. Of relevance to our discussion, Bolt regards the articulation of praxical knowledge exposed during the process of creating practice as an essential element of the research inquiry. Whilst she believes that an artwork can be 'imminently articulate and eloquent in its own right, tacit knowing and the generative potential of process have the potential to reveal new insights' (Bolt, 2007: 31), and she concludes that these are best articulated through written text. Furthermore, she sees the articulation of the research processes that have been exposed through material thinking as being of significant benefit to the wider community. When relating her argument to postgraduate research study, for example, she argues that 'research can disable practice-led research by confusing practice with praxical knowledge and severing the link between the artwork and the work of art' (Bolt, 2007: 34).

Hazel Smith and Roger Dean suggest that '[arts] knowledge can take many different forms and occur at various different levels of precision and stability' (Smith and Dean, 2009: 4). In an attempt to tease out these forms and give a general overview of the potential for the PaR methodology within HE, Smith and Dean have developed the iterative cyclic web. The model presents as a map of potential starting points for developing ideas. The model suggests that arts research has the potential to move between, and be located in, three specific areas of activity: practice-led research, research-led practice, and more traditional forms of academic research. In this particular model practice-led research is defined as practice that generates 'research insights which might then be documented, theorised and generalised' and research-led practice is defined as 'scholarly research [that] can lead to creative work' (Smith and Dean, 2009: 7). As the name suggests, the iterative cycle web offers the practitioner-researcher a complex network of pathways, potential methodologies and subsequent opportunities for constructing a research inquiry; of course, it is important to emphasise that a

research journey for arts practitioner-researchers must be led by the concerns of the project under consideration. However, the iterative cycle web is a useful tool for locating practice within the wider context of research; the concept of iteration within the cycle is offered as a way of developing and refining the work and is seen as 'fundamental to both the creative and research process' (Smith and Dean, 2009: 19).

Focusing specifically on the articulation of a research inquiry where practice is a substantial element of the research output, Nelson's formulation of PaR has much to offer. He suggests that:

> Poststructuralism fosters a sceptical and radical mode of thought which resonates with experimentation in arts practices insofar as *play* is a method of inquiry, aiming not to establish findings by way of data to support a demonstrable and finite answer to a research question, but to put in *play* elements in a *bricolage* which afford insights through deliberate and careful juxtaposition (Nelson, 2006: 109). [Italics are mine, except *bricolage.*]

From this position, Nelson offers a model that combines three specific areas for consideration: practitioner knowledge; conceptual framework; and critical reflection. This tripartite structure encourages the practitioner-researcher to move freely between these positions as the research unfolds and suggests that the model may encourage the production of new knowledge and/or substantial new insights through the interplay of encounters exposed throughout the research inquiry, what Nelson refers to as 'Praxis (theory imbricated within practice)' (Nelson, 2006: 115). Nelson's triangulation is conceived within a larger portfolio of evidence. For Nelson, 'a PaR submission is comprised of multiple modes of evidence reflecting a multi-mode research inquiry' (Nelson, 2013: 26). This is of particular significance for a practitioner-researcher exploring approaches to the dissemination of research intended for both specialist and non-specialist audiences, as it requires the

practitioner-research to go through the process of selecting, exposing and refining key moments from the inquiry. Communicating with diverse audiences is an important skill for practitioner-researchers to develop; one example of this being when approaching potential funders and promoters to support the development of creative work. The portfolio should include a product (score or performance) providing a durable record for further reference, and a contextual document that draws out and further articulates the insights present in the product. Nelson suggests that PaR dissemination is also likely to include some documentation of the process. The presenting of documentation is also inferred from the dissemination models suggested by Haseman (2006, 2007), Bolt (2007), and Smith and Dean (2009). I see the use of a variety of contextual frameworks as being pivotal for the practitioner-researcher to expose the material thinking embedded within the creative practice using an insider's perspective on the work. I am not suggesting that practitioners should be required to develop the specialist skills associated with other specialist areas of musicology, although this may be possible; I am suggesting that practitioners draw on these areas as contextual frameworks to articulate a practitioner-informed position, or material thinking through practice.

As part of a research journey it is important for a practitioner-researcher to be able to position their practice within the wider context of a research community; Nelson defines this area of exploration within his model as the conceptual framework, and suggests that 'one way in which creative practice becomes innovative is by being informed by theoretical perspectives, either new in themselves, or perhaps newly explored in a given medium' (Nelson, 2006: 114). Here, both the researcher and the research community, I would suggest, have a responsibility to each other to disseminate the results of research, allowing the community to engage fully with current thinking in creative music practice. Whilst the 300-word statement required by the assessors for the REF exercise, to draw out the 'research imperatives and research process' (REF, 2012: 87), may provide sufficient information for the panel to make an informed judgement regarding the quality of the research, I would suggest that this particular method of research dissemination may not be of significant benefit to the wider research

community. Here, this is where elements of Nelson's model may be of value, and I would suggest that practitioner-researchers consider alternative ways of disseminating their research to their research community. Critical reflection in the form of attention to the processes that have contributed to the making of a work is an important element of the research journey. This may include reflection, using a specific conceptual framework drawing on the sub-components of the practitioner knowledge element of the model. However, it is important to stress that in Nelson's model, the triangulation and the relationship between each element should remain fluid.

PaR at MMU

Whilst there have been many significant achievements in the development of PaR as a methodology for practitioner-researchers working in higher education institutions, for some practitioner-researchers, there remains confusion, for example, regarding what a submission for a practitioner-researcher might look like and what evidence should be presented to validate the new knowledge claims. A decade ago, Huib Schippers raised his concerns that '[a]lthough music making involves research [this] does not necessarily qualify all music making as research' (Schippers, 2007: 2), and feedback from the REF 2014 panel suggests that the articulation of PaR projects remains problematic. In relation to PaR, the REF panel stated that 'generally, the 300 word statements too often displayed a misunderstanding of what was being asked for and provided evidence of impact from the research, or a descriptive account akin to a programme note, rather than making the case for practice as research' (REF, 2015: 100). So what should we expect from practitioner-researchers and how might this be aligned with PhD training and supervision? The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education providers; it takes its definitions of research from both the Frascati Manual[2] and the REF audit. The Frascati Manual defines research as, 'creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of

[2] Internationally recognized document on research practices prepared and published by OECD.

knowledge to devise new applications (QAA, 2015: 6), and for REF, research is 'defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared' (REF, 2011: 48). Working within these, and similar, definitions of research within the UK and beyond, practitioner-researchers are continuing to develop appropriate methods of inquiry and dissemination strategies for PaR projects.

At MMU, within the Department of Contemporary Arts, the PaR methodology is embedded within the curricular at all levels. Research training in PaR is delivered through the MA in Contemporary Arts programme to postgraduate students and practitioner-researchers registered for PhD projects, and provides a contextual understanding of PaR as a methodology for practitioner-research before students go on to explore the potential of the model within their own practice. Similar to Sullivan's construction of creative thinking, students at MMU develop 'thinking' strategies in the 'medium', and 'languages' of their arts practice tradition and this is contextualized within the wider context of institutional, professional and personal directives. At MMU, practitioner-researchers working within and across art forms develop research methods appropriate to their specific inquiry. In addition to the PaR work that is developing at MMU, the Royal Northern College of Music, since 2008, has entered into a Collaborative Partnership for the validation of its MPhil and PhD programmes. The collaboration is providing opportunities for university and conservatoire practitioner-researchers to come together to share good practice. To offer a flavour of how the PaR methodology is being applied by practitioner-researchers at both institutions, I offer two case studies as exemplars. Each case study will identify the methods used within the research project and will align with current definition(s) of research.

Creative teaching of research methods align with the four key areas embedded in the Frascati and REF definitions of research. These being that the research inquiry: 1) must be a systematic study and/or an investigative process; 2) must produce new knowledge or establish new insights; 3) must be applied to practice; and, 4) be effectively shared. In the case studies

presented here, each case study will map an individual student's research journey through the four areas of research as defined by Frascati and REF and aligned to the musical creativities exposed within the development of appropriate languages (contextual frameworks, critical reflection), and mediums (composition, performance). Both case studies identify a specific practice 'problem' relevant to each student's own creative work. Through the development and application of a PaR method each student has been able to engage with the process of developing and articulating their own creative identity.

Case Study: Adam Fairhall (2008): *Intertextuality and the Dialogic Principle in Jazz*

Adam Fairhall is a performer/improviser working in a university. His doctoral study 'examines the central issue of intertextuality and dialogism in jazz from a range of critical, analytical and practical perspectives' (Fairhall, 2008: iii). Fairhall was well placed to undertake this research: his inquiry had been taking shape sometime before he decided to register for the programme – so, he was able to navigate the drafting of a research proposal early in the process; at the time of enrolment he was an accomplished performer/improviser; and, through his practice he was familiar with some of the academic 'issues' he wanted to explore.

Locating his practice within the performance traditions of jazz and contemporary improvised music, Fairhall identified a disparity between how music of this particular genre was being discussed in academic texts and how he understood the music to be working in and through his practice. As a practitioner with experience of developing improvisational strategies for performance in this genre, he was aware that analytical accounts of how this music was being positioned, read and understood, did not align with his own understanding. So, developing an 'insider' music analysis of particular works from the genre, previously discussed within the academic literature, provided a useful starting point for this research. From this 'insider' position, Fairhall, pursued three lines of inquiry: to develop more appropriate analytical techniques to understand how this music might be operating by placing the music within its

cultural context and considering theories of code-mixing already established in some areas of jazz studies but not fully appropriated into the design of traditional music analysis at the time of study; locating the practice within the wider context of contemporary arts with particular attention given to theories of intercultural and hybridic practices afforded across the arts to further inform this practitioner's improvisational performance strategies; and, the development of a personal practical improvisational performance vocabulary that emerges from the previous two strands.

The outcomes of the research have directly impacted on the professional development of Fairhall as a performer/improviser. Through contextual, critical and musical analysis, Fairhall identified particular performance and compositional strategies embedded within the practices of others working in related fields and has incorporated and further developed these insights into his working practices. Fairhall's research into the use of intertextual and dialogic principles in jazz has resulted in a body of performance work. Fairhall's improvisations explore and combine the mixing of jazz styles both sequentially as differently-coded blocks of material set in opposition with each other, and vertically where blocks of material are performed as independent simultaneous layers each with identifying musical elements from different musical styles. In addition, Fairhall uses the vertical alignment of coded blocks of material to further develop the notions of hybridity within his practice. Here, musical parameters of one music tradition are processed through the musical parameters of another tradition: for example, Fairhall discusses how Eric Dolphy explores hybridity in his work through '[Charlie] Parker's idiom providing the rhythm, and a non-Parker idiom providing the harmonic-intervallic content' (Fairhall, 2008: 74). We can hear this process operating in Fairhall's practice – the opening section of *Cow Cow* from the CD that accompanies Fairhall's PhD submission, combines the 'recognizable shapes and accent patterns derived from bop-related jazz with a pointillistic type of texture' (Fairhall, 2008: 87), found in

contemporary improvised music.[3]

This PhD submission contains a written thesis and a CD recoding of the final performance that took place the evening before the Viva Voce examination. The thesis positions the research and practice within the wider context of contemporary arts, and provides a contextual and musical analysis of the practice of others through what Fairhall defines as 'Rhetorical Formulae' – that is, a combination of 'syncretic' and 'hybridic' practices used by jazz and contemporary music practitioners. The final performance (documented on the CD recording that accompanies the submission) is an articulation, through practice, of the research findings. The research findings have informed Fairhall's practice. Whilst the performance/improvisation was for the purposes of the examination team, Fairhall was keen to allow the general public to attend the event. The examiners had read the thesis before attending the concert so would have been aware of what Fairhall was attempting to achieve through this performance: the audience (and the examiners) were also provided with detailed programme notes written for a general concert audience. The thesis, the concert, and the programme note were used to disseminate Fairhall's research and practice to a specialist and non-specialist audience.

Case Study: Jacob Thompson-Bell (2014): *Deconstructed Narratives: A Composer's Perspective on Form, Process and Review*

Jacob Thompson-Bell is a composer working in a conservatoire. His doctoral study directly related to, and informed the work he was undertaking as a professional practitioner. Whilst undertaking the research he received commissions from a variety of organisations to develop work; he initiated collaborative interdisciplinary projects that explored non-traditional forms of musical notation, and he devised installation work and curated exhibitions of both works he had produced as well as the works of other emerging composers within his community -

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[3] More information about Adam Fairhall can be found at http://www.adamfairhall.co.uk

each of these activities had a significant role to play in the development of this research project.

Thompson-Bell's research inquiry takes three distinct, but interconnected, pathways. These can be defined as narrative, non-narrative and anti-narrative articulations of musical time through compositional practice. The inquiry begins from a structuralist approach to composition where 'narrative' is defined as 'temporal syntax – its presence, or absence, and [their] implications for reception and critical discourse' (Thompson-Bell, 2014: ix). Developing the work of Jonathan Kramer, Thomson-Bell identifies two types of narratives at work in his compositions for this particular strand of inquiry: multi-linearity, where time is experienced as a series of dislocated events; and, non-linearity, to be experienced as cyclic structures. Further compositions are developed to test these constructions of time and then problematized within the second strand of inquiry where non-narrativity in music is explored from a post-structuralist position. In this strand, scores are developed in a variety of non-temporal media and are to be negotiated in performance as collaborative projects between performers and this composer. Here, process and product are the focus of the inquiry; the relationship between them is explored and contextualized within post-structural and performance studies frameworks. The third pathway considers sound as a non-temporal structure, what Thopmson-Bell defines as 'a tangible, sensate medium that implicates all of us in its production' (Thompson-Bell, 2014: xiii); here, the creative relationships that develops between the composer, the performer/interpreter and the listener are explored through curated and other performative events.

Thompson-Bell's research into how time works in musical structures has directly impacted on his compositional practice. Within the narrative/structuralist strand of his inquiry *Waiting For You* is an example of how groups of interlocking textures, some constructed as multi-linear

units and others constructed as non-linear units, are integrated into his work.[4] Whilst at the local level of operation this work appears to juxtapose blocks of contrasting material, at the global level similar blocks of material presented within the work throughout the work are perceived as being connected through a process of implied voice-leading techniques. The resulting knowledge gained through the manipulation of multi-linear (dynamic) and non-linear (static) structures is then further developed within the non-narrative and anti-narrative strands of the research inquiry. One example of this is in the development of the *Songmaking project* where traditional notation, transcribed from images of museum artefacts, a graphic score derived from photographs, and an Alaskan traditional song are combined and used as source material for a collaborative performance project. The resulting realization of this work presents with elements of both multi-linear and non-linear structures. Commenting on this project, Thompson-Bell reports that 'given the apparent open qualities, *Songmaking* has provided me with fresh approaches to [the composing of] fixed structure' (Thompson-Bell, 2014: 41).

Thompson-Bell's PhD submission contained a portfolio of practice and a written thesis. The portfolio of practice includes musical scores, CD recordings of performance, and DVDs recordings, presented as documentaries, articulating the process of making of some of the works. The thesis claims to document 'significant activities and insights as they arose during the course of the investigation. The documentation aims to mimic the compositional techniques employed in the scores referenced, and is consequently delivered through a mixture of media — this includes written word, graphical analysis, illustration and audio deconstruction' (Thompson-Bell, 2014: ix).

The narrative pathway is documented through the medium of text. Multi-linearity and non-linearity are critiqued, drawing on the writings of Kramer and others. Within this section Thompson-Bell disrupts his text by inserting descriptions of his work *Waiting For You*. When

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[4] More information about Jacob Thompson-Bell can be found at http://jacobthompsonbell.com

reading the critique of narrative structures, the interjection of musical descriptions about the work being discussed recalls the experience of listening to this particular music. Graphical analysis demonstrating compositional processes are offered as part of an *Analytical Sketchbook*, and are used to disseminate the findings of works explored within the non-narrative section of the research. An example of this is where personal reflections on the works of others are offered as potential starting points for new compositions. The processes and methods of constructing works are then transcribed into visual forms. Finally the work undertaken exploring anti-narrative structures is documented through contextualized video documentaries. Following Haseman's suggestion that practitioner-researches may express their findings through non-text media, Thompson-Bell's video documentaries are art works in their own right.

Initial conclusions

PaR is now an established methodology used by practitioner-researchers working in higher education. Whilst some remain unconvinced by the methodology and suspicious of the resulting methods that have emerged from individuals articulating the outcomes of their research for the benefit of both specialist and non-specialist audiences, arguing that the research outcomes are evident within the artwork and needed no 'further' articulation from the maker of the work, others are embracing the opportunities PaR affords in articulating the complexities of arts research projects. All of this has far reaching consequences for the status of so-called 'objective' knowledge generally, particularly for those who value the positivist research ideology developed through the sciences, not to mention the political implications regarding *who* knows and *how* they know *what* they know. As Thompson-Bell suggests:

> Much institutionalised research is conducted as though the researcher is
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> generating a commodity that can be 'sold' on to would-be
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> 'knowers'…[PaR] is a direct challenge to this kind of product, operating
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> instead in a grey area between action and reflection, blending together the
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> carrying out of research and its dissemination. The responsibility of the

researcher is thus shifted from producing a sealed (hopefully unassailable) product, to providing a means for others to engage in a process of open-ended investigation. (Thompson-Bell, 2014: 23).

For both students, developing individualized models of PaR has been a liberating experience and this has enabled specific practice focused 'problems', that have emerged in their work, to receive critical attention and provide personal practical solutions that have enable their professional work to developed. One of the key guiding principles of this process for both students, as discussed by me elsewhere, is that the designing and application of an appropriate PaR method should be that the practitioner-researcher does not need to do anything very much different from their work as a professional artist (Blain, 2013: 132). As Burnard suggests when discussing musical creativities, 'different paths can be taken to reach to the same place…[but] there is no need to be a slave to them' (Burnard, 2013: 238). Fairhall's inquiry began with a specific 'problem' that related to his own practice; he developed and applied analytical and critical reflections on both the practice of others and his own work and this has led to aesthetic discoveries in his own thinking about his practice that has manifest in the making of new work. For Thompson-Bell, compositional 'problems' and solutions emerged throughout the period of inquiry and through a process of iteration, similar to the model proposed by Smith and Dean, this compositional work had the potential to follow other creative paths – Thompson-Bell, of course, may return to paths untrodden in the future. For me, in my role of Director of Studies for both Fairhall and Thompson-Bell, drawing on the achievements of Haseman, Carter, Gray, Bolt and Nelson has provided opportunities to examine the relationship between the making and the thinking of work. The PaR methodology and the resulting PaR methods proposed by each practitioner-research is one way of developing, implementing and reflecting on creative strategies that impact directly on the development of practice. So, returning to, but refining our initial question: what is Thompson-Bell doing in a conservatoire and what is Fairhall doing in a university? We might suggest that they are doing something very similar. They are developing methods through the

PaR methodology to disseminate the very exciting creative practices their work engages with.

By doing this they are also contributing to a research culture where knowledge of 'doing' and

'thinking' are celebrated.

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