

Welcome to the Orpheus Introduction to Artistic Research in Music. My name is Jonathan Impett, and I'm Director of Research here at the Orpheus Institute in Ghent.

Artistic research is one of the most exciting recent developments in the study and practice of music. It puts the musician and their practice at the centre of research. The musician and their work are no longer the object of study but the very generator of knowledge.

This has come about through major developments in how we view culture, music and the role of musicians. It has been informed by new understandings of what knowledge is, of how and where we find it. And it's the product of the new ways in which we explore, share, distribute and disseminate both culture and knowledge.

As the languages, the tools, the paths and contexts for music have proliferated, so musicians confront the exciting challenge of imagining, identifying and constructing their own place within these multiple networks.

Over the sections of this course, I and my colleagues will introduce you to some of the fundamental ideas of artistic research – its approaches, techniques, theories and issues – as they relate to practicing musicians.

We will explore the very concept of artistic research: what it means for different people and in different contexts, how and why it has come about and in what ways it can be useful both to us as musicians and in a broader cultural context.

We shall consider the various methods adopted – often from other disciplines, as artistic research is an inherently multi-disciplinary pursuit – and we'll look at how we can relate our work to different kinds of theory, how we can use ideas as tools to develop new knowledge through our practice. We'll look at academic techniques, the agreed norms that allow us to share more formal knowledge through language, and finally we will explore the various ways in which the new work, the new understanding we produce, can be documented and disseminated.

You will get to know some artist-researchers quite well. This is important. At the heart of artistic research is the balance between the unique relationship between an artist and their project, and the ways in which this might contribute to knowledge more widely. In this first section they will discuss their own background, how they arrived at artistic research and how they approach it.

You will hear various understandings of the nature and significance of artistic research, views on where that knowledge lies and how we recognise it – and through these views we will distil some common fundamentals. As in art, as in other forms of research, artistic research at its best combines openness of perception and imagination with rigorous, coherent thought and reflection.

What will we assume about you in this course? Well, that you have some kind of developed musical practice – as a performer, as a composer, as a sound artist or improviser, or perhaps as a curator or festival organiser. That you have an awareness of the historical and contemporary cultural context of your practice. And above all that you are curious, thirsty for ideas, and impatient to see how they can feed back into the richness, relevance and future of your own work.

Artistic research is personal. It requires intense creative and intellectual engagement. It is both a process of individual artistic development and a contribution to our common bodies of culture and knowledge. And at its best it will lead you to areas of your own practice you could not have previously imagined.

How might we characterise artistic research in brief? Well, I would identify three strands:

- coherence and rigour of thought
- an open, avaricious searching for ideas, methodologies and approaches: the multidisciplinary of artistic research
- and the articulating and sharing of knowledge

Forming a clear picture of your own identity as an artist is a vital place to start. At the end of this section we will ask you to consider your own practice, your motivations and interests. This is the initial step of a central feature of the course. Conceiving and articulating a research project is one of the principal challenges as you engage with the ideas of artistic research. By working through the assignments in each of these sections, you will address its main areas: your practice, questions, methodologies, theoretical context, and the documentation and dissemination of your work. You will find at the end that you have assembled a full proposal for your own artistic research project.

So let's get started!