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ACADEMIC MUSIC IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE DALLIANCE WITH PRACTICE
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Lecture, Oxford University, 25 April 2023

Abstract: Traditionally there was a relatively clear distinction in the types of study available at tertiary level. On one hand there were the universities, which provided a broad holistic framework for studying music, typically involving such areas as historical study, theory and analysis, aesthetics and the study of plural musical cultures. Practice, in the form of composition and some aspects of established performance, would play a part but not be at the centre of such study. On the other hand there were the conservatoires, with a different model (at least since the establishment of the Paris Conservatoire in the 1790s, leading to the founding of a whole range of other institutions of a similar nature) for which practice was undoubtedly at the centre, focused upon the training of professional musicians.

In the United Kingdom since 1945, the period which saw the principal growth of music as a university subject to be studied at undergraduate level, the picture has for some time been more complicated, and has become increasingly so in recent decades. The relationship between academic study and both practice and the humanities was always less clearly defined than in Germany and the United States in particular, and went hand-in-hand with a certain 'gentleman amateur' distrust of highly rigorous and systematic scholarship. With the establishment of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 1996, becoming the Research Excellence Framework (REF) from 2014, a good deal changed. Now scholars were held to more exacting and explicit criteria for assessment of their research, such as some leading musicologists of earlier generations might have struggled to fulfil, but also over a period the exercise adopted various criteria to enable a variety of practitioners to submit, not only composers but also performers, sound artists, some involved in studio work, and others. At the same time, more and more conservatoires moved towards their primary offering being in the form of full undergraduate degree programmes (rather than performance courses and graduate diplomas, as was earlier the norm), and so they in turn were required to engage more consistently with academic music in order to satisfy regulatory standards for such degrees.

On the basis of recent detailed research into the UK music higher education sector from 1945 to the present day, I trace this development, alongside other developments such as the major growth of courses in commercial music, music technology and musical theatre in the period following the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. At the time of writing, these degrees account for the majority of music degrees in the sector, and as such often require a high degree of teaching input from active practitioners. I consider the conflicts this creates with the demands of REF, and question whether this model of undergraduate provision is really compatible research-centered departments, at least as research is defined by the REF.

I examine critically models such as John Butt's conception of the 'Kapellmeister' assumptions behind a music degree, and also draw upon the ongoing debates on the value of practice-research and artistic research, to which I have contributed. I also

provide detailed data on faculties and course contents to examine the conflict between a focus on practice and the future of musicological scholarship. In this context, I argue that there are now 'two cultures' in academic music departments, one founded upon humanities-style critical study of music, another linked to practice and embodying a new 'aesthetic economy', by which academic employment provides the primary means of sustenance for a range of practitioners, especially in new music. Such practitioners generally have careers and reputations outside of universities, in which the demands of dispassionate critical thinking are by no means necessarily paramount, compared to those of self-promotion and self-fashioning for the purposes of winning favour. I invite others to consider the implications and dangers of a situation whereby the research expertise of practitioners in academic music departments can be quite radically at odds with the types of musical work which has been demonstrated to attract students. I conclude with an appeal that musicology is not marginalised as a result of increasing practical focus in degree courses, and offer some thoughts on ways in which musicologists can act to ensure the survival of their discipline.

Lecture

Introduction

This lecture deals with the development of university music departments in the United Kingdom, and specifically of the role of practical music-making and other related forms of practice therein. It brings together a range of recurrent concerns about which I've written and spoken regularly in the last decade, whether in academic articles and presentations, in writings in publications for wider audiences, and also on my own blog. I will be speaking for around 60-70 minutes. I will first outline some experiences of issues in music academia over 20 years, then deal with the history of the sector and the resulting sector now, the second half about the development of the Research Assessment Exercise/Research Excellence Framework with respect to practice and practitioners, about the balance of faculties across the sector, leading to my final section on the relationship between scholarship and practice.

You should also have the handout, which is also being put in the chat for download on Zoom. Furthermore, it is available on the most recent page of my blog for download. - Oxford Lecture on 'Academic Music in the United Kingdom and the Dalliance with Practice', 25 April 2023 – Handout for download | Desiring Progress (wordpress.com)

Above all it emerges from perspectives developed through grappling with my own position in academia. I'm not going to give a 'positionality statement' or anything like that at this point, I just want to outline how experiences have informed my thinking. I pursued a pure performing career, centred around new music, for a little over a decade, after completing my postgraduate piano studies in 1992, at the same time also writing regularly on music, mostly relating to composers and work which I myself played, or to which I was drawn as a listener. In 2003, in my mid-30s I was awarded an 3-year AHRC Creative and Performing Arts Research Fellowship to be based at the University of Southampton. During this period I worked on my recording and monograph of Michael Finnissy's *The History of Photography in Sound*, as well as doing some undergraduate teaching. Seeking a permanent position afterwards, I started a late PhD on new music and its infrastructure in occupied Germany, but the

following year was appointed to a permanent lecturership at Dartington College of Arts. The PhD, which I had to work around other full-time teaching, research and playing, as well as submitting to two REF cycles, took rather a while to complete! In 2010 I took up a new position at City, University of London, where I have worked ever since, and am now Professor of Music and Strategic Advisor (Arts) there.

During the time at Southampton, first of all I spent a lot of time grappling with the contradictions between on one hand attempting to achieve some critical scholarly detachment in my writing on Finnissy's music, but at the same time keeping up a good professional working relationship with him. I wished to write about many of his aesthetic, technical and political concerns in ways which did more than simply reiterate his own views on the subjects (which most previous writers including myself had tended to do) and not be afraid to express some reservations where necessary. This was very hard and I came to moments of near-paralysis in my writing for this reason, but the experience fundamentally shaped how I saw a *non-identity* between the roles of critical scholar, and performer-advocate, whilst trying to inhabit both!

Also at Southampton during my time there, there was a fair concentration on the 'new musicology', which was still a relatively recent thing at that point, amongst faculty members there. So alongside my other work I spent some time immersing myself in this literature, and developed my own critical perspectives thereupon, including upon the work of Richard Taruskin, and especially his thoughts on performance, new music and Germany. At the same time I was also developing further an interest in historical performance practice which had gone back some years, and spending a lot of time with literature dealing both with specifics relating to a range of repertoire, and also the critical debates around the field, once again inevitably bringing in Richard Taruskin. I taught a module on this during my time at Southampton and started some work on performance practice in Brahms, which has yielded several papers and a forthcoming book, also on Liszt, and I wrote the chapter on instrumental performance in the nineteenth century for *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, which took me into the realms of hardcore primary source based research.

Dartington was one of the most advanced of any institutions in terms of embracing practice-research, as well as the extension of the concept of 'performance' well beyond the more familiar musical term. Much of this came as much from the departments of choreography, devised theatre, visual performance and performance writing there as that in music, which was bizarrely in some ways the most conventional. But such an environment enabled a further immersion in this world and the concepts which underlay it, as well as forms of ethnomusicology which were genuinely engaged with sounding music and non-Western traditions. My then Head of Department, himself an ethnomusicologist, often commented with some scepticism about the extent to which that field was being taken over by sociologists, and the problems in undertaking sustained musical engagement in a field which essentially came out of cultural and social anthropology. Meanwhile, in my PhD work, I was taken by a range of publications from the mid-2000s on related areas published by historians rather than musicologists, which went much further than any before them in terms of rigorous archival research into the institutions and policies which shaped post-war German musical policy and activity. I elected to pursue this approach myself without neglecting some aspects of analysis and aesthetics more common to musicology.

City was and is a different place - for obvious professional reasons I wouldn't wish to say so much about there as I remain an employee. In my early years there I developed a new approach to teaching music history, as an attempt to respond to debates about this which had developed in a wider scholarly community. What had previously existed, when it came to music of the twentieth century, was focused primarily on developments on compositional technique, such as informed a primarily modernist/avant-garde canon. In place of this, I developed an approach structured around the wider history of the period I was covering (from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day), which could then incorporate a diverse range of musics, by no means only or even primarily that from the Western classical tradition, as I covered a wide range of popular musics, jazz and more. All of this was to be considered *critically* in relationship to the wider context, without prior ideological assumptions which limited possible interpretations of such relationships, and also required engagement with sounding music, which I believed and still believe can not only reflect its context, but equally reflect back critically upon that context. Inevitably this occasioned some conflict with some from a wing of ethnomusicology who had what to my mind are much more closed and reductive views on the relationship between music and context, in ways which sometimes reduced sounding music to a peripheral role. That has fed into my writings and lectures on this subject, all focused especially on ethnomusicological work dealing specifically with Western classical music and music-making, a field I know very well but think extremely problematic for the most part. At the same time, in the mid-2010s I became involved as a protagonist in the debates around practice-as-research initiated by the publication of John Croft's essay 'Composition is not Research'. Also, as still very active as a performer, and as such involved in framing my own work in terms of research, and also in relation to my work on ethnomusicology, I became engaged with questions around ethnography and especially autoethnography, which overlapped with practice-as-research. I will return to these issues presently.

Furthermore, as City like many institutions, especially those I categorise as 'Mid-Ranking' (neither Russell Group, nor post-1992), faced questions of identity, recruitment, and response to a changing landscape for higher education, I found myself frustrated by debates, decision-making and pronouncements, both there and elsewhere, which appeared based upon conjecture, speculation and anecdote rather than proper data about the sector. After realising how little scholarship had been done about the history and development of the UK music higher education sector, I started upon this myself, and have worked on it for around the last six years, drawing together data from the Higher Education Standards Authority (HESA) together with everything else I could glean about departments, curricula, faculties, disciplinary demarcations, and so on. Some of the HESA data I am not at liberty to use outside my own institution, for which I have prepared a whole series of reports in my Strategic Advisor role, but for some I have received permission, and it undoubtedly informs my wider outlook.

So, that is where I am coming from!

Overview of the Music HE Sector in the UK until 1992

I want to begin with outlining as briefly as I can the development of the UK music higher education sector since 1945. To start with, let us consider the traditionally understood distinction between music study at a university and a conservatoire, for which the dominant model for modern institutions is the Paris Conservatoire, founded in 1795. The former considers music in a broad, holistic sense, the latter is much more focused upon practical professional training for those who seek careers, mostly as performers. Composition has long held a somewhat ambiguous position here, usually taught at conservatoires but equally at universities, with musical composition treated as akin to forms of academic research. Yet this classical distinction does not necessarily encapsulate the sector in the UK, both past and present.

I should just say that in terms of my sources here, I draw upon a range of occasional publications which I will list at the end of this talk, but also in particular through detailed survey of many editions of the *British Music Yearbook* and *British Music Education Yearbook*, for information on which courses were being offered at particular times, and from the latter some details of their content.

A handful of music undergraduate degrees existed before 1945, at Manchester, Cardiff, Aberystwyth, Birmingham, Sheffield and Glasgow. But the first major wave came between 1947 and 1954 with new music degrees created at Leeds, Durham, Cambridge, Queen's Belfast, Newcastle (then part of Durham), Bangor, Oxford, Reading, Bristol, Nottingham and Hull.

Traditionally, there were two degrees in music: the BMus (Bachelor of Music) and the BA in Music. In the late 1950s, there was already some noticeable distinctions between BMus degrees at different institutions. Those at Bristol, Durham, Leeds, London, Nottingham and Sheffield, and the BA at Oxford (the categorisation for most first degrees there) were strongly focused on compositional and other technique – harmony and counterpoint (especially in Renaissance and Baroque styles), orchestration, sometimes acoustics and score playing, together with general musical historical knowledge. Birmingham focused more upon literature – history, analysis and criticism and gave wider scope for composition styles, as well as offering a thesis option; Manchester was noteworthy in including instrumental and vocal instruction linked to the Royal Manchester College of Music (now part of the RNCM) and ensemble classes, and a range of alternatives in the final year – performance, conducting, history/criticism, composition. Cambridge had a wider emphasis on composition, editorial method, history of notation, musical palaeography and the theory of musical criticism, and diverse practical music making, including keyboard skills.[1] A BA in music, which was offered at Cambridge, Durham, Hull, Leeds, Nottingham, and Reading, was a special degree distinct from a BMus, which did not require extended musical exercise, an extended thesis, nor solo performance (which a few exceptions), a little practical keyboard work, smaller amounts of classwork in composition, but more emphasis on literature with 'searching questions demanding first-hand experience of music and some self-reliance of judgment', and fewer requirements in terms of knowledge of distinct musical languages.[2] Overall, solo

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[1] Noel Long, *Music in English Education: Grammar School, University and Conservatoire* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 118-120

[2] Ibid. pp. 120-21.

performance was not seen as a central concern, other than core performance skills such as keyboard harmony, score-reading, and choral/orchestral participation.[3] Since then, both BMus and BA courses have grown and morphed into different forms, so it is hard to generalise about the meanings of the titles.

But I want to emphasise here the central place of what I would now identify as practical skills – compositional technique, orchestration, score playing, and in a few places performance. Music history was a general but not necessarily central concern at many, with the exception of Birmingham, and there was a bit more focus on literature on music here and in some of the BA courses.

John Butt has argued that during this period, at least up to the mid-1970s, most music degrees followed the 'Kapellmeister' model, to produce 'generally competent musical organiser, director or teacher, able to undertake a whole range of expected (and indeed unexpected) leadership roles.' In this context, history in particular was 'an uncritical, factually based discipline aimed at teaching basic knowledge of the classical canon',[4] in contrast to later developments which have encouraged much greater critical historiographical and methodological awareness. Butt's study is based upon a rather thin amount of data which is used to form quite sweeping claims, but nonetheless in the 1950s at least there were certainly departments which did demonstrate what he describes. The alternative to this type of degree, which was in many ways quite *practically*-focused, was one more routed in rigorous study inherited from the humanities and sciences, in the form of deeper history, analysis, philology, wider contextual study, and so on. Some of these aspects were present in earlier degrees, for sure, but the model was far from consistent. There was little comparable to the more hard-core humanities approach found in Germany and the United States at the same time.

There appears to have been something of a 'bad conscience' about intensive and rigorous musicological study in the early decades of British post-war music higher education. If one considers some of the leading figures who steered departments – Thurston Dart at King's College, London, Paul Steinitz at Goldsmiths, Wilfred Mellers at York or Alun Hoddinott at Cardiff – it is hard to imagine that much of their work (including Hoddinott's compositions) being submitted to the REF today. Even Dart's thorough work on *The Interpretation of Music*,[5] written while he was still a lecturer at Cambridge, might be viewed more as a 'survey text' than a major piece of original research, while Steinitz's *Bach's Passions*,[6] undoubtedly a sensitive and knowledgeable piece of writing, demonstrates little in the way of sophisticated theoretical models, major new source-based information, detailed analysis, and so on. Today this type of writing might be more likely to be undertaken by journalists or non-academic musicians. The model of the 'gentleman amateur' lived on for some time, in contrast to the more heavy-duty academic musical study being pursued in

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[3] Ibid. p. 137.

[4] John Butt, 'Should there be a twenty-first century "Complete Kapellmeister"? The Skills, content and purpose of a university music degree', in Björn Heile, Eva Moreda Rodriguez and Jane Stanley (eds.), *Higher Education in Music in the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 11-12.

[5] Thurston Dart, *The Interpretation of Music* (London: Hutchinson, 1954).

[6] Paul Steinitz, *Bach's Passions* (London: Elek, 1979).

many German and US institutions in particular. I would argue that it has not gone away and continues to inform some sub-sections of British musical academia

Following the publication of the Robbins Report in 1963, which recommended expansion of higher education, another wave of music degrees were launched between 1964 and 1975, at the London universities at King's and Goldsmiths, later Royal Holloway, as Liverpool, Edinburgh, St Andrew's, Exeter and later Dartington College and City, and the 'New Universities' of York, East Anglia, Sussex, Surrey, Essex, Lancaster, Keele and Salford.

One factor which brought about a change was from 1968 the replacement of a fixed core curriculum in traditional universities by one in which elective choices were available in the third year – the University of Sheffield appears to have been quite pioneering in this respect, bringing in electives covering ensembles, twentieth-century analysis, editorial techniques, acoustics, Italian or German language, or music and television.[7] Nowadays it is common in many departments to find this in the second year as well, and core curricula have become weakened as a result. In some departments, the various 'units' of a degree course were relatively autonomous entities, and so could be shared with other courses, which led Bill Tamblyn in 1976 to articulate concern for what this meant for the integrity of music degrees, not to mention the amount of practice and self-directed study that was required for students to attain a reasonable standard.[8]

But this development went hand-in-hand with the beginnings of a different part of the sector, the growth of polytechnics from 1965 following a speech by Education Secretary Tony Crosland, with degrees usually validated by the UK Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Whilst their original remit was to provide practical sciences and professional degrees, early exponents including Eric E. Robinson, viewed them as an important vehicle for making higher education available to a wider range of young people, and advocated their expansion to include business studies, social sciences and the arts.[9] Polytechnics, arts colleges or colleges of higher education began to introduce their own music degrees, beginning with Huddersfield in 1969, [10] North-East Technical College in 1971, and Dartington College of Arts in 1974, followed later in the decade by Kingston, West London Institute, St Martin's Lancaster, Bretton Hall, Bath College, Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology, West Sussex Institute, and polytechnics in Newcastle, Leicester, Nottingham, Oxford and elsewhere.

Many of the new departments found their own niches. Keele, founded in 1974, had a special focus on American music, including some popular music,[11] while City, founded the following year, emphasised electronic music and non-Western musical

[7] Dorothy Taylor, *Music Now: A Guide to Recent Developments and Current Opportunities in Music Education* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1979), pp. 81-2.
[8] Bill Tamblyn, 'Can Music Survive in H.E.?', *Music in Education*, vol. 40, no. 380 (1976), pp. 165-7.
[9] Eric E. Robinson, *The New Polytechnics* (London: Cornmarket Press, 1968), as cited in John Pratt, *The Polytechnic Experiment 1965-1992* (Buckingham: St Edmundsbury Press, 1997), pp. 108-110.
[10] John O'Connell, *The Making of a University: The Path to Higher Education at Huddersfield* (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press, 2016), p. 61. The department had its origins in the appointment of one full-time lecturer back in 1948, and a tradition of orchestral and other concerts from 1950 (ibid. p. 57).
[11] Peter Dickinson, 'Biography', at Peter Dickinson - Keele University (accessed 30 October 2022).

traditions.[12] Ethnomusicology and new music had been featured at the department at King's ever since it was founded by Dart in 1967,[13] and would also be part of the first music degree at Dartington College of Arts offered from 1974 under the leadership of Jack Dobbs.[14] Queen's University, Belfast, however, hived this off into a degree in social anthropology, where John Blacking was appointed Professor in 1970.[15] Theory of some types became noticeable at the departments in Southampton and Sussex. With the advent of the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in 1978, Huddersfield Polytechnic itself came to be associated with new music, as would Cambridge College of Arts and Technology, York and City. Keele offered a range of joint degrees, while Sussex emphasised the contextual study of music, in conjunction with other departments.[16]

At this point the Royal College of Music and Royal Academy of Music, as well as the Royal Manchester College (from 1973 the Royal Northern College) were offering joint degree courses with the universities of London and Manchester, but many of their students continued to do graduate diplomas or performers' courses, a situation which would remain until the 1990s.

From this point in the late 1970s up to the 1992 Education Act, most of the remaining developments would be of a wider disciplinary nature rather than specifically institutional.

Music Analysis had become a major part of American academic musical life since the heavily modified renditions of Heinrich Schenker's work from his student Hans Weisse from 1931, and in the post-war era through Felix Salzer and Oswald Jones, followed by other intense analytical approaches from Rudolph Réti, Milton Babbitt, Allen Forte, George Perle, David Lewin and others. In the UK, by contrast, there was just occasional interest in Réti's work, some of the 'functional analysis' of Hans Keller, and a smattering of other work from Alan Walker, David Osmond Smith and others, which was occasional and patchy. It was not until the founding of the journal *Music Analysis* in 1982 by Arnold Whittall and Jonathan Dunsby, and Whittall's appointment to a chair of Theory and Analysis at King's the same year, that more systematic analysis would begin to be established in a more solid footing.

Other forms of scholarship were pursued relatively thoroughly but often with a relative aversion to overtly theoretical approaches. While I have yet to undertake a more comprehensive survey of British musicology in the 1960s and 1970s, I believe that the real spur towards a greater engagement with theory and the humanities likely came with the publication of Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music*, published in the UK under the title *Musicology*, in 1985, which is often seen as inaugurating the 'new musicology'.

For all my reservations about this development (for which the British equivalent is sometimes known as 'Critical Musicology'), and what could be narrow and

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[12] Steve Stanton, 'Remembering Malcolm Troup' at [Remembering Malcolm Troup, founder of City's Department of Music – City Alumni Network]() (currently unavailable)
[13] Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 28.
[14] Michael Young, *The Elmhirsts of Dartington*, (London, Boston, etc.: Routledge, 1982), p. 251.
[15] John Blacking, 'Ethnomusicology', *Acta Musicologica*, vol. 52, fasc. 1 (1980), pp. 62-64.
[16] Taylor, *Music Now*, p. 80.

ideologically loaded approaches carried out under the auspices of either term, there were certainly major advances and many new questions asked in a *British* context (I would question more how 'new' some of the 'new musicology' was relative to the discipline in an international context). Furthermore, many of the new musicologists were certainly focused on particular types of 'close reading' of the music they examined. But an anecdote told to me by colleague and friend Eva Moreda Rodriguez demonstrates how this work has dated in the context of wider educational developments. She was playing students some work of Beethoven, Schubert, Chaikovsky, and explaining some of the arguments made by musicological theorists of gender and sexuality about how different sexual preferences have been argued to be sedimented in the specific musical language and its structural properties employed by these. But to today's students (at a Russell Group department), these impressed primarily as examples of 'classical music' of a certain type, amongst which internal differentiations were a secondary matter.

As this whole body of music has, I would say, become 'othered' by some in academia and elsewhere, the best work of the new musicology can seem somewhat trivial in comparison to the basic business of getting students to engage with such music at all, or even academics having the freedom to teach it. I have encountered similar issues, relating to the teaching of radical approaches to musical history and historiography, in the face of a preference that any type of history or historical music is not taught at all. Many of the once iconoclastic arguments attacking the domination of particular musical 'canons', often developed by those who themselves had undergone a very canonically-based education and were looking for alternatives, are relatively meaningless to students who have never encountered many of the canonical works in the first place. Today musical theory and analysis also regularly come under scrutiny for the fact that they require a fair amount of prior notational and theoretical skills, which does not necessarily find amongst students coming to music technology or popular music courses. This is all an outcome of the developments over the next three decades which would change the field for many.

Overview of the Sector since 1992

1992 is a pivotal year in the history of UK Higher Education in general, because of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, which changed the whole landscape, in ways about which I continue to have mixed feelings, by abolishing the distinction between universities and polytechnics, allowing the latter to apply to become the former. This is naturally of huge importance in terms of the relationship between scholarly- or practice-focused education in higher education institutions, as institutions traditionally more strongly associated with one or the other were no longer identified differently by virtue of their title.

Nonetheless, I believe many of the pre-92 distinctions essentially remained, and remain to this day. It was only two years later that 17 research-intensive institutions, nearly all 'old universities', came together to form the Russell Group. The membership would change somewhat over the next three decades, but the basic nature of the group remained the same. There is no absolutely necessary reason to assume that attainment in research necessarily leads to high-quality teaching, but this message does not seem to have filtered down to applicants, parents and teachers. I attended the Higher Education Conference last October and heard an interesting presentation by

Unifrog, and organisation which assists applicants with their choices. They reported that by some considerable lead the most common criterion informing such applicants' searches was 'Is this institution a member of the Russell Group?' Clearly to some it has come to be the UK equivalent of the Ivy League.

But it is with both the 1992 Education Act and the beginning of the Russell Group that my category of 'Mid-Ranking', which you will find on the handout, emerges, to indicate institutions which are neither members of the Russell Group nor became universities after the 1992 Act. This is an amorphous and varied category nonetheless – it is not entirely clear what separates Royal Holloway from the Russell Group, or Keele today from the post-92 sector, just as post-92 institutions in Huddersfield or Oxford Brookes could plausibly be members of the mid-ranking group. Finding an identity of their own, and determining which types of students to target for recruitment, is challenging for these institutions – only perhaps a few such as LIPA, Salford, or the Open University really do this in a way which distinguishes them clearly from either group of 'neighbours'. Others such as Keele, Kent, SOAS, Sussex and Ulster have changed significantly in their profile over the last two decades, or suffered from very poor recruitment.

New types of degrees popped up regularly in the post-92 sector, and to a lesser extent the mid-ranking and even some Russell Group institutions. Some of these drew upon areas which had featured in earlier degrees but rarely with the same central focus. The first institution to create a dedicated Institute of Popular Music was the University of Liverpool, in 1988,[17] though it appears to have taken a number of years for them to offer a dedicated undergraduate degree in the subject. Salford introduced BA Popular Music and Recording around 1991 (which appears to have been the first), Breton Hall a BA Popular Music Studies (described as a 'vocationally directed course including recording and computer studies') around 1993, and Westminster a BA Commercial Music around 1994. This latter would become one of the most prominent and renowned courses of its type. The Leeds College of Music (now Leeds Conservatoire) also introduced a BA Jazz Studies around 1995,[18] and then Liverpool began their BA Music/Popular Music around the same time.[19] The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, founded by Paul McCartney in 1996, did not call their degree courses 'popular' or 'commercial', but the nature of the institute made this clear. While other courses may have included popular music either as an option or even a primary focus, these were the first degree courses explicitly *designated* as such through their title. In the next decade, as detailed on your hand-out, various other institutions followed suit, one of the most notable being Goldsmiths College, who launched their Popular Music degree on 2004, and a wide range of others did so in the 2010s, including one other Russell Group institution, Newcastle, which brought in a BA Contemporary and Popular Music in 2012. Nonetheless, it should be noted that by 2020-21 the number of students doing popular music degrees remained only around half those doing plain

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[17] See University of Liverpool, 'Popular Music BA (Hons)', at [Popular,Music,(W340).pdf (liverpool.ac.uk)]() (accessed 17 April 2023).
[18] The first reference I have found to this is in Felicity Rich (ed.), *British Music Yearbook 1995* (London: Rhinegold Publishing, 1994), p. 369.
[19] The first reference I have found to this degree is in Rich. *British Music Yearbook 1995*, p. 365, and also in 'UK Music Degree Courses: A Complete Guide', *The Musical Times*, vol. 136 no. 1830 (1995), p. 420.

music courses, though some of them do include some or a good deal of popular music themselves.

A more spectacular growth was that of courses focused on music technology. While technology was an important element in some long-established degree courses (including that at City), before 1992 there were few courses explicitly named as such, a major exception being the high-level *Tonmeister* course at Surrey, established in 1970,[20] and to this day viewed as one of the most advanced and rigorous courses of its type. The 1991 *British Music Yearbook* lists a range of courses for studying music recording and technology, some of them linked to established universities, but these do not appear to be degree courses. By 1997, Edinburgh, Huddersfield, Keele, Leeds Metropolitan, Salford, Surrey and York were offering degrees with technology in the title; by 2007 the list included Anglia Ruskin, Bath Spa, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Kingston, Lancaster, LIPA, Liverpool Hope, Queen's Belfast, Winchester and Wolverhampton. Today students doing the courses featuring technology, production, recording, sound design, etc. form the largest sub-group, around 31% at universities, and around 26% across the sector.

Also, from the early 1990s, various of the conservatoires received their own degree-awarding powers, drew upon existing ones, or worked with other validating institutions, to move towards much wider concentration on degree-level courses, of a different nature to the older joint courses, able now to incorporate a greater practical element into an undergraduate degree, with fewer worries about how they would compare with more established universities. These were not only in classical fields: as well as at Leeds, presently courses in popular music or jazz were introduced at the conservatoires in Birmingham, Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow.

Clear divides became clear in the sector by the 2000s, between the Russell Group and the majority of mid-ranking universities offering mostly plain Music and joint courses, and post-92 institutions featuring music technology and popular music (and occasionally music management and the like). The divide was not absolute, as witnessed by the examples of RG institutions Liverpool and Newcastle for popular music, York and Queen's Belfast for music tech, also offered in the mid-ranking institutions Essex, Hull and Kent. The last decade has seen a slight shift towards more RG/mid-ranking institutions offering of the types of courses offered by post-1992 institutions.

This has had an effect on the career opportunities for those seeking to work in music higher education, especially for those specialising in one or other type of musicology or ethnomusicology. At the time of writing, a cursory glance at job opportunities presented will generally reveal a majority of those in one or other form of music technology, practical popular music-making, and sometimes composition for screen and video. Critical study of music in the humanities tradition, not necessarily linked primarily to practice, appears a diminishing and beleaguered field, and plenty of anecdotal evidence points to those pursuing this feeling ostracised and disliked in

[20] *Developments in Recorded Sound: Catalogue of Oral History Interviews* (London: British Library/National Sound Archive, 1989), p. 6; University of Surrey, 'Celebrating 50 Years of Music and Tonmeister degrees', at Celebrating 50 Years of Music and Tonmeister degrees | University Archives & Special Collections Blog (surrey.ac.uk) (accessed 24 April 2023).

institutions of all types, with other academics seeking to marginalise their area of study further.

However, in some ways this development for a while simply reflected expansion in new directions rather than significant diminution of established forms of study. In 1975-76 there were 1700 students in 32 university music departments. As of 2020 there are 7087 in 89 departments (not including conservatoires, Colleges of HE or private providers), thus a 317% increase. With 1641 doing plain ‘music’ courses, which accounted for most of those in 1975-76, the numbers in this respect have not changed significantly.

One other disciplinary development in the 2000s and especially 2010s should be noted: the major growth of musical theatre programmes to become fully-fledged degrees, through the validation of courses at existing musical theatre schools or acquisition of the latter by the Universities of Greenwich (Doreen Bird School), Surrey (Guildford School of Acting), and East London, later Anglia Ruskin, Birmingham then City (all for the Urdang Academy). Rose Bruford introduced an Actor-Musician degree in 2012, and around the same time Chichester, West London and Central Lancashire introduced their own highly successful musical theatre degrees, with others following suit. Major and rapid growth came especially in Staffordshire (which introduced musical theatre in 2016, then linked to the Wilkes Academy in 2020),[21] Greenwich and Chichester, the latter now the highest recruiting university music department at UG level in the country.

All of these developments have to be considered amongst other factors. A Labour government introduced tuition fees in 1998, initially at £1000 per year, rising to a maximum of £3000 in 2006, but the new Tory/Lib Dem coalition government allowed these to be trebled in 2010 (effective from 2012), with corresponding cuts to government funding and a more elaborate new loans scheme. In 2017 they were frozen at £9250, and remain there today. The amount of debt which would then be incurred often instilled a new student mentality (encouraged by many in government), seeing themselves as consumers and sometimes demanding as much of institutions as they were prepared to contribute. In 2014, then Education Secretary Nicky Morgan poured cold water on school students taking too many arts and humanities subjects, claiming that in the process they were restricting life choices. In 2015 caps on recruitment numbers for individual departments were abolished, creating a culture of more ruthless competition between institutions. Provision of music in secondary education declined sharply during the 2010s, and a major 2019 study found that schools and colleges offering A Level in Music had fallen by over 38% between 2010 and 2018 (with a 38% drop in entries), those offering Music Technology by 31.7% (with a 10.6% drop in students).[22] And then of course there was Brexit, effective from the beginning of 2020, meaning that EU students now had to pay higher fees, and the COVID-19 pandemic very soon afterwards, limiting for a period all live music and rehearsal, and depressing further career prospects for musicians.

[21] Staffordshire University, ‘Wilkes Academy joins forces with Staffordshire University to deliver Musical Theatre degree’, at Wilkes Academy joins forces with Staffordshire University to deliver Musical Theatre degree (staffs.ac.uk) (accessed 24 April 2023).
[22] ‘Music Education: State of the Nation’ (2019), Report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music education, the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the University of Sussex, at State-of-the-Nation-Music-Education-WEB.pdf (ism.org) (accessed 14 April 2023), p. 15.

However, despite all of these factors the total number of students taking a first degree in music continued to marginally *rise*. The rise in PGT recruitment has been more striking and significant following the introduction of the Master's Degree Loan Scheme in 2016. But financial and competitive pressures took their tool on various departments. Prior to the 2000s, only a few had closed – St Andrew's, Leicester and Aberystwyth in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and temporarily Aberdeen. But from 2004 on, major departments closed at Reading, Exeter, Roehampton, East Anglia, Lancaster and Essex, and smaller ones have closed or stopped running UG programmes, including Abertay Dundee, Cumbria and Wolverhampton. Kingston and Keele removed their plain 'music' degrees, with some loss of jobs, and staffing cuts have also happened in recent years at Surrey, Southampton, Royal Holloway and Huddersfield.

One final development which should be registered, the implications of which are ongoing private providers offering full degree courses, some at first with validating institutions, but a few acquiring their own degree-awarding powers and ability to access student loans. This process began with the Institute of Contemporary Music offering BMus degrees in 1996,[23] followed by the Academy of Contemporary Music, British and Irish Modern Music Institute (BIMM), Liverpool Media Academy and others. The Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation from 2015 to 2018, Jo Johnson (now Lord Johnson), brother of the former Prime Minister, made clear recently his aim that the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act, which established the Office for Students (OfS), would lead to the encouragement of 'alternative education providers',[24] paralleling the growth of academics and free schools at primary/secondary level. As such, some private music providers have been able to obtain university status and/or access to student loans. The growth of these institutions has also in some ways undercut the rest of the sector, subject to fewer checks and balances, not required to share information about recruitment, progression, and so on, often offering 2-year degrees, having little if any research dimension, and in general no more than at most token academic content. A similar phenomenon has been surveyed very critically in the US by economics professor Dennis A. Ahlburg, with warnings for the UK.[25]

The UK Music HE Sector Now

Of all the developments I have outlined, beyond the major expansion of the sector after 1992, though in different directions compared to hitherto, I believe the most significant have been the lifting of caps on recruitment and the new form of competition it has brought about, has been amongst the most significant, especially when combined with the freezing of tuition fees at a rate of £9250 in 2017, with institutions unable to increase them in line with inflation (and so take account of

[23] Gareth Dylan Smith, 'Pedagogy for Employability in a Foundation Degree (FdA) in Creative Musicianship: Introducing Peer Collaboration', in Helena Gaunt and Heidi Westerlund (eds.), *Collaborative Learning in Higher Music Education* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 193.

[24] Tom Williams, 'Johnson: OfS hasn't stopped universities "operating like cartel"', *Times Higher Education*, 14 March 2023.

[25] Dennis A. Ahlburg, 'Skunks in an English Woodland: Should England embrace For-Profit Higher Education?', *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 90, no. 2 (2019).

increased costs due to the recent cost-of-living crisis), thus incurring extra debts. All of this has made the situation of individual departments and academic more precarious. The largest number of students attend post-92 institutions, and mid-ranking and even some Russell Group ones have often felt a need to change some of their offerings in line with these, especially with decreasing numbers of students receiving traditional musical skills at secondary level. What had been predicted but has not materialised was that the Russell Group would 'hoover up' many students who went to other institutions. But numbers have been problematic in much of the mid-ranking sector, with the notable exception of Goldsmiths and Surrey. This part of the sector as a whole has not really benefited even from the growth in PGT students which followed the extension of student loans to them in the mid-2010s.

The impact of an enhanced status and access to loans on the part of private providers has yet to be seen, but this has the potential to cause as much change to the sector as the result of the 1992 Act.

But this should also be viewed in light of *ideological* changes in the sector, some of which I have considered in other writings, most notably pieces in the *Spectator* and *Critic*.[26] The new musicology encouraged highly ideological readings of music, sometimes preferring moral to aesthetic judgement, and some of their writings could have a loaded and stentorian tone, with a tendency to rely on a combination of rhetoric, sometimes buried beneath jargon-loaded prose. Nonetheless, on the whole they continued for the most part to focus upon detailed readings of sounding music. Some of them, not least Susan McClary, ventured into the 'high vs. low' culture debate which was considerably more advanced in other fields, especially cultural studies, inevitably coming down on the side of the 'low'. This was constructed as a democratising and more egalitarian argument, in contradistinction to the positions of Theodor Adorno, despite the fact some musicologists (including McClary) were keen to cite him.

But more significant, in my view, were such things as the growth of a branch of popular music studies out of cultural studies, focused primarily factors other than the music. I believe most reasonable people would appreciate that there are multiple factors involved in the cultural and other impact of popular music, but to bracket out the sounding music almost entirely, as some (certainly not all) do is to lose its defining element, and indeed that which many will most often encounter when hearing music piped into various environments. The ethnomusicologist John O'Connell once coined the term 'Eth-No-Musicology',[27] in recognition of the fact that some work in this field was getting further and further away from musical engagement, just as my former HoD at Dartington had bemoaned. A branch of this which I have studied at depth and published on (and have further publications

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[26] Ian Pace, 'Roll over, Beethoven' (online title 'How the culture wars are killing Western classical music'), *The Spectator*, 9 October 2021; available at How the culture wars are killing Western classical music | The Spectator (accessed 2 April 2023); 'Is classical colonial? Naïve proposals to "decolonise" Western classical music risk losing the richness of its history', *The Critic*, July 2022, available at Is classical colonial? | Ian Pace | The Critic Magazine (accessed 2 April 2023).

[27] John O'Connell, 'The Sounds of Ethnomusicology: Ethnomusicology, Eth-No-Musicology and the Fragmented Condition of Music Studies', paper given at British Forum for Ethnomusicology annual conference, Cambridge 1998, cited in Stephen Cottrell, *Professional Music-Making in London: Ethnography and Experience* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)

forthcoming),[28] the 'ethnomusicology of Western art music', is especially problematic in this respect, though its protagonists rarely cease to proclaim the superiority of their approaches to all others which have preceded them. Both of these developments eschew many of the traditional skills required for music education, and thus opening the door to marginalising or eliminating their teaching. Such an approach can seem welcome in a climate in which, due to cuts in secondary musical provision, it is necessary to accept a larger number of what I would call relatively 'deskilled' students, without a background in notation, theory, history, aural skills, etc. Such a move in recruitment may indeed be necessary, but I personally believe the response should be to increase their provision from a more foundational level in tertiary level, rather than treat them as unnecessary, not least because there amongst the things which differentiate musicologists and music students from those in other disciplines, and such give a reason for music departments to exist at all, rather than becoming small parts of those in sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and so on.

One academic in particular has reacted very strongly to my positions on this, arguing that they and others have those traditional skills, just choose to go in other directions. I have heard similar arguments from ethnomusicologists, noting how many people in that field have traditional musical backgrounds. Those things may be, but the consequences of therefore decreasing the ability to obtain such skills in music education, then choose whether or not to pursue them further, is a different matter. Some forms of rebellion by the educationally privileged can deprive others of what the former have always been able to take for granted, and in the process *increase* the 'elitism' of these.

If these types of ideological positions have not, or at least not yet, succeeded in significantly diminishing study in more established fields of musicology – in most of which I think there is still huge amounts of productive work to be done and new directions to explore, they may have served as an impetus working against those fields wider expansion, compared to that in newer areas of pop music, music technology, and musical theatre (sound studies or 'ethnomusicology at home' are really tiny fields at least in terms of teaching, in comparison).

So, at the end of section C you will see the numbers of students on different types of courses as of 2020 – in the universities (not conservatoires), 31.2% doing music tech, 22% doing musical theatre, 19.5% doing plain music, 10.9% doing popular music, 6.4% doing performance (this category refers to courses the majority of which are in

[28] See Ian Pace, 'Ethnographic Approaches to the Study of Western Art Music: Questions of Context, Realism, Evidence, Description and Analysis', and 'When Ethnography Becomes Hagiography: Uncritical Musical Perspectives', in Christopher Wiley and Ian Pace (eds.), *Researching and Writing on Contemporary Art and Artists: Challenges, Practices, and Complexities* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 91-148, and 'The Ethnomusicology of Western Art Music: Territorial and Methodological Concerns', in Ian Pace, Peter Tregear and Rose Dodd (eds.), *Rethinking Contemporary Musicology: Perspectives on Interdisciplinarity, Skills and Deskilling* (London and New York: Routledge, forthcoming). See also 'My contribution to the debate "Are we all ethnomusicologists now?"', 9 June 2016, at My contribution to the debate 'Are we all ethnomusicologists now?' | Desiring Progress (wordpress.com), 'Quilting Points and Ethnomusicology', 12 June 2016, at Quilting Points and Ethnomusicology | Desiring Progress (wordpress.com) and 'Ethnographically sourced experiences of Ethnomusicology – a further response to the debate', 14 August 2016, at Ethnographically sourced experiences of Ethnomusicology – a further response to the debate | Desiring Progress (wordpress.com) (all accessed 24 April 2023).

the post-92 sector and are often centred around pop performance). So this means fewer than 20% of university students are doing courses in which historical music, or for that matter geographically varied music from very different cultures, vocal music in different languages, and also theory and analysis, would play any central role. This gives the lie to any idle claims that classical music is somehow dominant in the sector.

But I wish to question the notion that a general move towards popular music, music technology and music business/industry, as typically found in the post-1992 sector, constitutes increased 'diversity'. It is in the types of music degrees sometimes labelled 'traditional', often called simply 'Music', where one can encounter the study of 1000 or more years of music rather than just that of at most a few decades, and it is in the Russell Group and mid-ranking institutions where the study of non-Western traditions is most common. To this can be added a diversity of approaches, incorporating aspects of wider history and historiography, analysis, sociology, ethnography, sometimes psychology, all fundamentally associated with *scholarship* rather than so much with *practice*. The removal of modification degree programmes towards a sole focus on music technology at Kingston or Keele, as well as leading to a fall in the overall number of students, was a *reduction* of diversity, and I put it to you that overall the post-92 sector, with an absolute domination of Western commercial music of now, are amongst the *least* diverse offerings.

The RAE/REF and the Impact on Practitioners

Now I would like to talk about the Research Assessment Exercise, introduced by the Thatcher government in 1986, as a means for institutions to bid for government research funding on the basic of their achievements to date. Research outputs were submitted and given star ratings after being peer-assessed according to specific criteria. The RAE was then also conducted in 1989, 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008, with modifications each time, then replaced by the Research Excellence Framework, which ran in 2014 and 2021. This now changed the nature of the assessment to be based upon three components – outputs, impact (in the form of case studies and a general narrative for a department) and environment. I produced a relatively detailed history of the exercise on my blog five years ago;[29] the most comprehensive published history is the highly critical book by Derek Sayer.[30] It has been very roundly criticised, and rarely emulated elsewhere. However, one thing which has been noted is that following the 2008 exercise in particular, a greater number of institutions shared the bulk of the funding. Also some academics coming from continental Europe have argued to me the REF allows a possibility for younger academics to get ahead if they produce strong outputs, an alternative to questionable systems of patronage they have experienced elsewhere.

My focus here is the effect upon practitioners and practice in universities. The 1996 RAE introduced new criteria to allow for a wider range of practice-based outputs to

[29] Ian Pace, 'The RAE and REF: Resources and Critiques', 3 April 2018, at The RAE and REF: Resources and Critiques | Desiring Progress (wordpress.com) (accessed 25 April 2023).
[30] Derek Sayer, *Rank Hypocrisies: The Insult of the REF* (London: Sage, 2014).

be submitted, in particular performances.[31] These proved difficult, and indeed earlier criteria for composition were also found to be problematic, especially if the panels were to consider submissions of film and commercial music. Market success, recognition by peers or ideals of originality all seemed insufficient, so instead the following definitions were employed:

> 2.12. 'Research' for the purpose of the RAE is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It excludes routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.
>
> 3.58.12 d. Performances: in accordance with the RAE definition of research, performance will be accepted as research where it applies or embodies new or substantially improved knowledge or insights, for instance in terms of interpretation, historical performance practice, or technical innovation. Performance is understood to include conducting and direction as well as instrumental or vocal execution; all forms of public output are eligible for submission, including publicly disseminated live or studio recordings, broadcasts, and public performances. In the case of broadcasts and public performances, institutions must be able to supply a recording (which need not be in the public domain). Reference may be made to such factors as the venue of the performance, the standing of broadcasting organizations or record companies involved in its dissemination, and prizes or other marks of recognition); relevant information should be provided in the 'Other relevant details' field of form RA2.[32]

Subsequent definitions have essentially been variants of this.

In theory, I find this a basically good definition, though it is difficult to define when interpretation does or does not embody 'new or substantially improved knowledge or insights' (I would say most good performances do), and I worry about 'the standing of broadcasting organizations or record companies' acting as a proxy for judging work in terms of its standing in economies of prestige or market utility.

But any definition is only as good as the possible interpretations of it by examiners, and throughout the intervening 27 years there has been much ink spilt on the question of when or whether practice is research, and which types of practice may be

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[31] See 'Performing Research: Some Institutional Perspectives', in Mine Doğantan-Dack (ed), *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015) pp. 11-32 for more details on the process at this stage.

[32] Reproduced at [ARCHIVED CONTENT] RAE 2008 : Quality profiles (nationalarchives.gov.uk) (accessed 24 April 2023).

artificially favoured in the process, especially as institutions attempt to game the system.

In the 2001 RAE report, an option was presented for a statement to be submitted of up to 300 words to accompany outputs. This was not strictly mandatory but came to be seen as such by many.[33] This raised further questions about the purest conception of 'practice as research', and whether a verbal component was necessary, as some including theatre professor Robin Nelson or pianist Luk Vaes believed.[34]

Having this made it possible to employ practitioners other than composers, in particular performers, on full research contracts in universities, so long as their work was thought of a level to be worthy of submission to the RAE/REF. This distinguished the UK from many other countries in which performers might be at most employed by adjunct 'Music Schools' linked to university departments (though sometimes with similar career structures), [35] as often in the US, or simply were not considered ever academics, unlike composers, as in France.

I would also note here the difference between this new phenomenon of practice-researchers in the United Kingdom and that of artistic researchers such as was developing in continental Europe at the same time, of which Vaes is a prominent exponent. The latter constitute those who produce outputs generally in standard written form, but are also active practitioners whose writing draws upon their practical experience. At various conference, I have noted little love lost between some practice-researchers and artistic researchers. Artistic research has never yet really made any major advances in the United Kingdom, unlike in Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Norway in particular. But the types of outputs involved would in theory have been perfectly usable from the very beginning of the RAE and required no necessary special criteria. That said, in many cases, including when encountering those seeking to undertake PhDs or research fellowships in either practice-research or artistic research, the motivation often appears simply to be to continue one's practical activity but find the patronage of a university for doing this, rather than any commitment to concrete research plans. And various 300-word REF statements or commentaries accompanying PhD submissions appear as retrospective attempts to 'spin' work as research, not often involving the type of sustained critical approach one would associate with other types of research. I will return to this question in my concluding section.

In the UK, prominent critiques of the implications of the RAE/REF for musical practice were made by opera scholar Nicholas Till in 2013,[36] composer Piers

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[33] See my 'Those 300-word statements on Practice-as-Research for the RAE/REF – origins and stipulations – 'academic butt-covering' or more problematic?', 16 December 2015, at Those 300-word statements on Practice-as-Research for the RAE/REF – origins and stipulations – 'academic butt-covering' or more problematic? | Desiring Progress (wordpress.com) (accessed 25 April 2023).

[34] See Robin Nelson, 'Introduction', in Nelson (ed.), *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 7-8; and a range of articles by Luk Vaes on his blog, 'Artistic research reports', Artistic research reports (accessed 24 April 2023).

[35] See Manfred Bukofzer, 'The Place of Musicology in American Institutions of Higher Learning' (1957), reproduced in *The Place of Musicology in American Institutions of Higher Learning/Some Aspects of Musicology* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), pp. 18-20 for a critique of this.

[36] Nicholas Till, 'Opus versus output', *Times Higher Education*, 7 March 2013.

Hellawell in 2014,[37] then most prominently by composer John Croft in 2015, in an article roundly called 'Composition is not Research'.[38] Croft's article, polemically challenged the application of what he saw as an inappropriate model for gauging compositional work, derived from other disciplines, and noted the ways it could be artificially gamed. Both Camden Reeves and myself wrote responses;[39] all three articles are regularly cited today, not least by PhD practitioners wading into the debate with respect to their own work. Reeves was sceptical about tendencies towards scientism and the ways in which work involving technology was privileged by research paradigms. I argued first that the debate was too centred exclusively around composition, while performance needed proper consideration as well. But at the same time I argued against what I felt was a sense of entitlement on the part of some composers, expecting all the benefits of academia without having to demonstrate the importance of their work in the ways other academics did, a position I still hold to. Then and now I questioned whether a lot of practice-based outputs, and composition and performance-based PhDs, could really be said to demonstrate the same sort of effort, depth and rigor as more conventional types, and further questioned why composers and performers were deemed able to teach 'academic' subjects, but academics much less often composition and performance. My basic argument was that the question of 'is practice research' is not very interesting, as much practice can be conceived in such terms; what matters is the *quality* of such practice-research and whether it can be said to achieve *parity* with other types. Furthermore, input is needed from a wider range of scholars into practice-based outputs, not just from those producing practice-based work themselves, who often have obvious vested interests in playing up the merits of certain types of work. I would extend this argument across musicological sub-disciplines as well.

Faculties[40]

The RAE/REF since 1996 is certainly a factor in the growth of practitioners in academia, in institutions which are at least to some extent research-active, or seeking to be, while at others in the post-92 sector which do not participate in the REF, a move towards popular music, music technology and musical theatre, and the continual claims that students desire to be taught by active industry professionals rather than 'academics', tended to result in the employment of practitioners rather than scholars producing traditional formats of outputs.

If you look at section D of the handout, you will find breakdowns of salaried faculties for different parts of the sector. There is some approximation involved here; the data comes from institutions websites, some of which are incomplete or unreliable, and it is not always clear which staff are part-time or on temporary contracts. But the overall picture is clear – historical musicology, theory and analysis, are heavily concentrated in the Russell Group, and the post-92s are dominated by music technology and

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[37] Piers Hellawell, 'Treating Composers as Researchers is Bonkers', *Standpoint*, May 2014.
[38] John Croft, 'Composition is not Research', *TEMPO,* vol. 69, issue 272 (April 2015), pp. 6-11.
[39] Ian Pace, 'Composition and Performance can be, and often have been, research', *TEMPO*, vol. 70, issue 275, pp. 60-70; Camden Reeves, 'Composition, Research and Pseudo-Science', *TEMPO*, vol. 70, issue 275, pp. 50-59; also John Croft's reply, 'Composing, Researching and Ways of Talking', *TEMPO*, vol. 70, issue 275, pp. 71-77.
[40] For much more detail on this, see my 'Music in Higher Education 1: Departments and Faculties', 23 April 2023, at Music in UK Higher Education 1: Departments and Faculties | Desiring Progress (wordpress.com) (accessed 24 April 2023).

production, composition and performance. Popular music and jazz *scholarship* actually crosses reasonably evenly across categories.

In the Russell Group, 65.5% of salaried faculty are scholars, 33.8% practitioners; in the post-92 sector the numbers are 26.3% and 71.2% respectively. It may be hard to find any other discipline with such a stark chasm between different sub-sectors.

Scholarship and Practice

So for the last section of my talk, I wish to concentrate fundamentally on the relationship, interactions, and tensions between scholarship and practice. To be clear about definitions here, I define *scholarship* fundamentally as the type of academic work and teaching generally produced in written format, often to be published in conventionally academic outlets such as journals or scholarly monographs, or sometimes in online or other formats when these are hosted by a reputable academic organisation. It entails scholarly inquiry into all aspects of music and music-making, generally undertaken from a somewhat detached critical perspective, which can involve degrees of advocacy or rejection, but is not bound to either. *Practice* generally involves practical music-making, whether in the form of composition, performance, installation work, sound recording or production, sound design, and so on, or possibly some other form of external activity such as arts administration or even non-academic teaching. There are of course certainly areas which cross between the two.

The key distinction between these two realms, in my view is the fact that the latter can be and frequently is undertaken outside of an academic environment, and does not necessarily rely upon such an environment for its existence, which could not be said of the former. This is a distinction which does not map onto, say, that between the 'pure' and 'applied' sciences, as the latter may be equally bound to an academic environment. To use REF jargon, being in an 'applied' field by no means necessarily guarantees a fruitful impact narrative.

It is to this distinction that I would attribute what I have observed throughout my time in academia, different 'cultures' around practice and scholarship. Active practitioners, especially those who (like myself) pursued practice-based careers before entering academic at a late stage, are used to operating in particular environments of patronage, prestige and favour, in which common and advantageous behaviours include saying the right things to the right people, not dissenting from a dominant ideology found amongst a group of others, and sometimes even demonstrating qualities of subservience and submission (in certain types of commercial fields in which some practitioners undoubtedly play a secondary role). This is a long way from the attitude of critical independence and detachment which I believe characterise the humanities at their best. It was precisely my awareness of such distinct cultures which led me to some initial grief in my work on Michael Finnissy. Furthermore, I have regularly encountered a scepticism or even marked hostility from many practitioners towards the attitude of the scholar, in ways which have unfortunate consequences I will describe in a moment.

Attending a range of conferences last year, several of which involved a significant number of practitioners, emphasised to me the difference of these cultures. Practice-

researchers were generally involved in 'spinning' some practical work they did, to make claims about its importance to try and convince others, but not really engaged in any wider critical debates. Theories were basically a means to seem to bolster the intellectual credentials of their work. There could be self-critical elements, for sure, but there was little to suggest engagement with wider academic and musicological issues. This separated them out from most others involved in the heterogeneous field of 'performance studies'.

Anecdotally, I note how little engaged or interested are most academic practitioners in many of the critical issues which have occupied musicologists for several decades, other than when they serve to bolster their own work. Composers can often teach music history in a manner so as to construct primary lines of development for which their own work forms the *telos*, uninterested in wider historiographical concerns or other theories of history.

Many are oblivious to critiques of modernism and new music such as those of Richard Taruskin and Nicholas Cook if they produce such music, and if they do encounter them, can just be blithely dismissive rather than attempting to engage with and counter such arguments. It should maybe not be surprising if some would be hostile to the types of debates which could potentially lead to a decentring of themselves and their own positions in academia, but that in no sense makes pursuing such debates an 'uncollegiate' act on the part of others, as I have heard suggested. As universities become more and more like businesses, and departments like brands, the pressures amongst those in the same department to conform to some type of collective ideology and avoid any critical perspectives on each other's work, can be strong, but are very damaging for scholarship and academic freedom. The duty of a scholar is not to 'sell' the work of their colleagues.

And I am especially concerned at the extent to which I see some breeds of scholars emerge who appear to see uncritical and unreflective advocacy as their primary task, especially when writing about the work of practitioners to whom they are personally close. This can also apply to writings on practitioners from marginalised groups, which can sometimes be defensive and unmeasured, as if to do anything else were somehow to give ammunition to malign forces. This is a siege mentality rather than one which belongs in scholarship.

In a conference co-organised by Christopher Wiley and myself in 2017 on 'Writing about Contemporary Artists', it was striking to discover that a range of scholars working in different artistic fields, writing about living artists, had encountered very similar issues of conflicts of interests if they also had wider connections or personal relationships with the artists in question, many of whom unsurprisingly wanted the most flattering things written about them. This issue is vivid when practitioners are still alive, and even more so if they work in the same department as oneself.

I have argued in print that some forms of musical ethnography, because of their tendencies towards description rather than analysis, eschewing much questioning of their subjects, can amount essentially to a form of hagiography.[41] Pirkko Moisala's

[41] See my 'Ethnographic Approaches to the Study of Western Art Music' and 'When Ethnography Becomes Hagiography'.

book on composer Kaija Saariaho, practically void of musical engagement, with a highly defensive tone when encountering any writing which does not wholly share her idolising view of the composer, and making exalted claims of Bakhtinian heteroglossalia for the not-at-all-new process of quoting from positive newspaper reviews, is an especially egregious example of this,[42] but I have seen how this has legitimised other subsequent work in this domain. A milder version of the same can be found in quite a bit of writing on contemporary composers, as for example in the series of books published by Intellect. Richard Taruskin has argued that some popular music scholarship comes close to fanzine writing,[43] though Christopher Wiley, in a forthcoming book chapter, challenges some of this.[44] This is to say nothing of autoethnographic writing, not least in the context of practice-based PhDs, when it entails primarily description and documentation, with a certain amount of name-checking of appropriate theorists and other practitioners, rather than critical self-reflection.

Overall, the incorporation of practitioners has tended to favour a certain type, often whose work is seen as most 'REF'-able – composers working with technology or very systematic forms of composition, or other forms which can be 'explained' via lots of name-checking of voguish theorists; amongst performers, those involved in new music, developing new instruments (though which rarely gain wider currency), or in historically-informed performance. Few mainstream classical, jazz, popular, folk or community performers, nor mainstream commercial composers, which creates a distance between research and student interests.

Here is a related quote from the composer Christopher Fox:

> Many musicians also subsidise their work by teaching and one of the not very well-kept secrets is that the universities and conservatoires have become de facto patrons of new music in the UK. Indeed university music departments now employ so many composers, sound artists and performers that they may well be new music's principal sponsors. As in the USA, however, there is a Faustian pact between musicians and institutions: students learn the techniques they need to become artists but do so in an environment where their teachers' art is usually referred to as 'research', because research is the only non-teaching, non-managerial activity that higher education institutions recognise. Whether these institutions will one day realise that they have bought the souls of several generations of artists, and what retribution they will exact when they do, is uncertain.[45]

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[42] Pirkko Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009); and also the accompanying article 'reflections on an Ethnomusicological Study of a Contemporary Western Art Music Composer', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2011), pp. 443-51. See my 'When Ethnography becomes Hagiography' for a more comprehensive critique.

[43] Richard Taruskin, 'Material Gains: Assessing Susan McClary', *Music & Letters*, vol. 90, no. 3 (2009), p. 466.

[44] Christopher Wiley, 'On the Music in Higher Education Popular Music: The context/content debate revisited', in *Rethinking Contemporary Musicologies* (forthcoming).

[45] Christopher Fox, 'Music for a Dis-Uniting Kingdom', *Journal of Music*, 22 June 2015, at Music for a Dis-Uniting Kingdom? | Christopher Fox | The Journal of Music – Irish Music, News, Reviews, Opinion, Concerts, Festivals and Opportunities (accessed 24 April 2023).

Fox's view, which echoes some earlier critiques by Pierre Boulez and Igor Stravinsky of 'university composers',[46] is a rather bleak but not inaccurate one. Universities have become a type of financial support system for a range of new music practitioners, on the condition that their work satisfies certain REF criteria. And as a result these can come to supersede any different aesthetic or other criteria for music-making, and unduly privilege certain types of work for reasons which are not necessarily primarily related to the aesthetic effect it might have for listeners. I have before now sarcastically proposed a new music festival in which the bottom line is that one would only programme works which are thought to have achieved 4 stars in the REF.

Here is the musicologist Nicholas Cook on the place of new music in British universities and more widely, compared to in other countries:

> Solornos's key observation, however, is that "en France, où les subventions existent, la musique contemporaine a un public". It does in Britain and America too, of course, but there the audience has traditionally been one of contemporary music buffs, a niche within a niche. (One should recognize the potential for change not only through the cross-over musical styles of composers like Glass or Zorn, but also through the incorporation of contemporary music within educational and outreach programmes, which is why I said "traditionally": all part of the crumbling of barriers to which I referred in my Foreword.) And when taking part in conferences or workshops in such countries as Holland, Belgium, and Germany I have always been struck by the centrality of contemporary composition within the definition of what "music" is and what an intelligent interest in the subject might mean: it is simply taken for granted that one has an interest in and commitment to contemporary music, in a way that it would never be in a similar situation in Britain or America. But it seems that the position of contemporary music is even more varied than this might suggest, to judge by the comments of Robert Walker (who writes from the University of New South Wales, Sydney): "it is indeed ironic", he says,"that the academy can now include Beatles songs in analysis classes and research reports, but still not Berio's vocal music". And later he talks of Messiaen, Britten, Cage, and electronic music, and comments that "The music academy has shown comparatively scant interest in all this". That surprised me, not only because new music was high on the agenda when I was teaching at Sydney University (though that was back in 1988), but also because music from Messiaen and Cage to Berio and beyond is well represented in the British academy, far beyond any possible measure of the music's dissemination throughout society at large. It is popular music that is under-represented, resulting in a situation where the few PhDs in this area get quickly snapped up by university departments anxious to respond to the interests of their students.[47]

Also:

> Writers on contemporary 'art' music—what they often call 'new music'—generally act as apologists, in the same sense as the earliest analysts did: writing in

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[46] Boulez and Stravinsky's views are cited in my 'University departments need a broad range of active performing artists', *Times Higher Education*, 22 May 2022, online only, at [Universities need active performing artists | Times Higher Education (THE)] (accessed 24 April 2023).
[47] Nicholas Cook, 'On Qualifying Relativism', *Musica Scientiae*, vol. 5, issue 2 supplement (September 2001).

> the early decades of the 19th century, these analysts' basic purpose was to explain the coherence and hence the greatness of Beethoven's music, despite its discontinuities and sudden irruptions and otherwise incoherent appearance (it would hardly be exaggeration to say that the whole genre of musical analysis developed as an act of advocacy for Beethoven). In the same way, writers on new music either argue that the music is aesthetically attractive even though it might appear otherwise on first acquaintance, or they argue that its aesthetic unattractiveness is integral to its cultural significance (and sometimes, just to make sure, they argue both). Their advocacy is prompted by the increasingly marginalised nature of the music—now even to some extent within academia—and this apologetic function is built into the genre: if you pick a book on new music off the shelf, you expect it to fulfil this role of advocacy, and again the few books that have attacked new music have appeared anomalous against this background. [….] I've noticed that, when I go to conferences or similar events in continental Europe, people make the assumption that, because I'm interested in music, I must have an interest in and commitment to new music; that's not an expectation about me in particular, but a taken-for-granted assumption about what it means to be seriously engaged in music. (In the UK or the USA, people make no such assumption.)[48]

In terms of the make-up of university music departments today, two decades later, some aspects of Cook's picture hold, but not all. Scholars of popular music have a modest presence amongst salaried staff, around 8.7%, a larger number than those primarily theorists/analysts, ethnomusicologists, or music psychologists. But many involved with music technology/production/recording, and quite a number of performers, are firmly rooted in the popular/commercial field. Scholars of contemporary music are not so many in number – a handful including Björn Heile, Martin Iddon, Robert Adlington, Alistair Williams, Edward Campbell and myself, but composers working within these traditions are very strongly represented indeed, and there are a fair number of performers too.

Now, as I have argued in multiple articles in *Times Higher Education*, I think a practical dimension, and regular engagement with practice are essential in musical academia.[49] The latter does not necessarily require the presence of practitioners – after all, a music analyst is fundamentally engaging with musical practice in the form of composition – but overall I think it is vital that there is such a regular presence, including those whose activities take place outside of academia.

However, at the same time I do not believe it is valuable to elide the distinction between practitioners and scholars, practice and scholarship. And I will add the following contentious view: *a practitioner is not necessarily a scholar, any more than a scholar is necessarily a practitioner*, though of course there are various people involved in both activities, of which I count myself one. No-one, however, would take seriously a claim that I am a studio composer, or a jazz trumpeter. Yet some whose primary work is in either of these fields are sometimes thought to be qualified to teach and judge music history, analysis, aesthetics and other fields. This is to devalue the specific training and experience of musicologists who have spent considerable

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[48] Nicholas Cook, 'Writing on Music or Axes to Grind: road rage and musical community', *Music Education Research*, vol. 5, no. 3 (November 2003).

[49] See Ian Pace, 'Performing Arts need a Research and Practice Excellence Framework', *Times Higher Education*, 10 May 2022, and 'University departments need a broad range of performing artists'.

amounts of times developing their skills in such fields. Furthermore, I believe such musicologists have unique skills and knowledge to bring to bear upon such other academic activities as curriculum design, teaching and learning coordination, tutoring, administration, assessing research, and so on. So do practitioners, but neither group has a monopoly of wisdom here.

I would not wish to argue for a stark bifurcation or segregation of scholars and practitioners in academia. But I do believe the different skills and attitudes involved should be equally respected and supported in academia, in ways which can encourage dialogue without requiring the erasure of difference. Some of this is simply down to constructive and sophisticated leadership which allows for dialogue between diverse intellectual and disciplinary groups without descending into simple wars for utter domination of territory, such as one can of course also encounter between different scholarly factions.

But this is difficult when there is such a strong domination of practitioners *of certain types* in the post-92 sector, and many fields of scholarly inquiry are highly marginalised or entirely absent. Of course the counter-argument might be made about the Russell Group with the decreased presence of practitioners, relatively speaking. It would be simplistic to prescribe some fixed quotas of either, which would then inevitably require further quotas of particular varieties within both categories.

Ultimately, however, I do think there is a strong reason for protecting, throughout the sector, those involved in scholarly inquiry, for the simple reason that these are *defining* of academia, and could not really pursue their activity elsewhere, which is not the case for practitioners. And with this in mind, I do have some questions about the extent to which some of the post-92 institutions, or the private providers, really warrant being categorised as 'universities' in any established sense of the term. This argument should not be confused with an antipathy to vocational or technically-oriented tertiary education; it is about maintaining academic *independence* and the ability of institutions not just to reflect the wishes of external bodies and practices, but also reflect back critically upon them, which is a form of scholarly inquiry.[50]

Looking back to Cook's view, I do believe such a large presence of practitioners involved specifically in new music should be questioned, not least because of the extent to which this shuts out wider scholarly inquiry, especially in the post-92 sector. Furthermore, whether such a concentration of new music, only slightly less than that of scholars working on historical music and pop/jazz combined, best represents the interests of students, is far from conclusively established. Rather I believe that this phenomenon constitutes a questionable set of recruitment policies designed to favour a constructed 'diverse' present against the bad past, whilst at the same time bringing in primarily those with extremely niche interests which nonetheless may work well in the REF.

Naturally one would expect those who benefit from this situation favour it, but I find cause for concern in the marginalisation of scholarly inquiry in large swathes of the sector, and in the parallel push by institutions and bureaucracies to focus degrees

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[50] For more on this, see my 'Critical Engagement with Practice is not the same as subservience, or being a Practitioner', 3 August 2022, at [Critical Engagement with Practice is not the same as subservience, or being a practitioner | Desiring Progress (wordpress.com)] (accessed 25 April 2023).

primarily on what they believe will make students most employable (by no means an illegitimate concern, but not the only one) to the expense of wider investigation and education. To use an anecdote I have often cited, when at Dartington I once started working on a new module called 'Music and the Marketplace', which was to entail a critical engagement with the effects of the marketplace and market forces upon music-making, which would allow for diverse perspectives on the positives and negatives of this. But I had to be away for a few weeks, and another colleague took over this. By the time I had returned, it had morphed into a module on 'How to get ahead in the musical marketplace', which was a wholly different type of entity.

An I have not mentioned, more prominent at PGT than undergraduate level, the study of music business and industry, can cross between the scholarly and the practical. But from a not-unrelated position, Martin Cloonan and John Williamson have examined this area and raised some concerns about scholarship and teaching assuming a benign view of the industries, a conflation of the 'popular' and the 'commercial', and other eschewals of more critical engagement.[51] Inevitably one should not assume that various manifestations of the 'industry' or 'professions' will necessarily favour more critical and challenging scholarly work relating to what they do.

Conclusion

UK music academia was quite deeply embroiled with certain forms of practical teaching for several decades, then for a short period beginning in the early- to mid-1980s, there was a new level of theoretical and analytical rigour and exploration, and a real move to situate musical study within the humanities. But in the new century, with the effects of the growth of post-1992 institutions, the introduction and raising of tuition fees, the end of recruitment caps, and the incursion of private providers, combined with the decimation of musical provision in secondary education, the pendulum has in many sense swung back again, but now towards at least claims of training commercial musicians, rather than musical directors or teachers as identified by Butt.

It is not enough simply to diagnose what is wrong. I have four proposals for steps which could change the situation I have outlined. The first two of these I have argued for in articles in *Times Higher Education*.[52]

The first is modification of the REF, at least with respect to music and other performing arts, to become a Research and Practice Excellence Framework, with distinct criteria for assessing work in terms of its quality as practice, rather than having to make it fit those which derive from other types of research, however much modified. This need not preclude still being able to submit some types of practice as research, but would enable fuller integration of a more diverse range of practitioners.

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[51] Martin Cloonan and John Williamson, 'The music industries: Theory, practice and vocations – a polemical intervention', in Heile, Rodriguez and Stanley, *Higher Education in Music in the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 112-125.

[52] Ian Pace, 'Performing Arts need a Research and Practice Excellence Framework', *Times Higher Education*, 10 May 2022, and 'We need a statutory qualification for practitioners in higher education', *Times Higher Education*, 22 December 2022.

Then, the introduction of a statutory qualification for practitioners seeking to work in higher education, a type of induction into the values and attitudes of higher education. This would be distinct from a practice-based PhD, though it is also possible that the nature of both practice-based and non-practice-based PhDs could be modified to include a greater degree of taught and assessed content.

Thirdly, when a new organisation is designated by the Office for Students to replace the Quality Assurance Agency (which withdrew in July 2022), or the OfS simply continues to undertake the role itself, for stronger subject benchmarks that assure the scholarly and intellectual content of degrees is not marginalised or token, but at the same time work in more sophisticated benchmarks which are at least an option and relate to practice.

Finally, for the Office of Students and the Department of Education to stipulate stronger requirements for institutions applying for university status or degree-awarding powers, to insist that a certain minimum number or percentage of scholars are included within the salaried faculties of all departments which award degrees.

Some of these points will be controversial, and if ever considered at government level or by organisations working with government, would take some time to plan and implement successfully. But I believe some things along these lines are necessary if university departments are to be able to develop meaningful working engagement with practice while still deserving to be called university departments.