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Popular Music

Popular Music Forum

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Postgraduate Research-Creation in Popular Music Technology & Creativity, Western University

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POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH-CREATION
Practice-Related Research in
Popular Music Technology & Creativity,
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Contextual Considerations

To understand the nature of postgraduate research-creation in popular music technology and creativity at Western, it helps to view MA and PhD studies in this area as an extension of the undergraduate program in Popular Music Studies.

Since its inception in 2006, the BA in Popular Music Studies has focused on music production, songwriting, and sound media, with research-creation as a core value. Courses devoted to creative processes, technology, and production lie at the heart of the module (77% of the offerings) and prepare students for careers as creative practitioners.

Graduates from the BA in Popular Music Studies regularly seek MA and PhD opportunities that allow them to further their technological and creative work – for example, recent PhD recipients at Western have focused on mastering, production, and songwriting.

Definitions

Research-Creation in Popular Music Technology & Creativity

- projects in this field combine creative processes and academic research practices to foster innovation and the development of knowledge through artistic expression and experimentation
- both the act of creating something novel and the processes, techniques, and methodologies belonging to technology and creativity in popular music are central to this work
- research-creation projects realize ideas through an exploration of new methods and techniques

Artist-Researcher

- an individual whose work embraces both the creation of art works *and* the research that underpins that creative activity

Artefact

- something that exists over time (songs, recordings, performances), which, when warranted, can be represented by an object (e.g., a recording, a video, and/or sheet music)

Categories of Practice-Related Research in Popular Music Technology & Creativity

Practice-as-Research (also known as Practice-Based Research)

- practice-as-research projects are designed to answer specific questions about art and the practice of it, questions which cannot be explored and answered successfully by other means
- this form of research-creation emphasizes creative exploration and innovation and draws on a range of methods and/or research processes within the framework of artistic practice
- because a practice-as-research dissertation focuses on the creation of an art work, the artefact on its own provides the contribution to knowledge
- moreover, since the originality of the dissertation is demonstrated through a work of art, a complete understanding of the significance of that artefact is achieved only by experiencing the art work as a whole
- in other words, the artefact is not merely an illustration of the strategies employed – it *is* the research
- practice-as-research projects regularly include a written text (the exegesis) which describes and/or explains the thinking that shaped the artistic practice, even if this description/ explanation differs from established points of view held in the scholarly community
- although the exegesis provides the context and methodological framework for the project, its primary function is to make readers aware of the thinking that led to the creation of the artefact – it is not a “research” document in any traditional sense
- in summary, practice-as-research articulates creative ideas and produces an artefact using relevant tools, techniques, and methodologies – new knowledge is gained through practice and the outcomes of that practice

Practice-Led Research

- research that leads to new understandings of practice
- it is concerned with the nature of practice and produces knowledge appropriate for practitioners
- this research includes practice as an integral part of its method, and although the research may be adequately explained through text alone, the advancement of knowledge is greatly enhanced by the presence of a creative artefact
- nonetheless, the primary goal of practice-led research is to generate new knowledge about artistic practice