IASPM JOURNAL
ISSN 2079 - 3871

Learning Music for Fun, Not Credit: The Value of Popular Music Practice in the Extra-curricular University Jazz Ensemble

Tom Sykes
Liverpool Hope University
sykest@hope.ac.uk

Abstract

This article is a critical reflection of a small, practice research project involving a university big band. Music was written specially for the project by the author, who is the band director, and this big band is an extra-curricular ensemble made up of both students and musicians from the local community. The project uses an approach based partly on artistic research, in which insights are gained through the practice and for which the artistic artefacts (in this case two pieces of music) form a significant part of the research. After the performances some of the band members were interviewed about their experience of the project and other aspects of playing in the band, using a participant-based ethnographic approach. Artistic research is an increasingly used practice-based method in jazz research and there is scope for it to be utilized more widely in popular music.

KEYWORDS: extra-curricular activity, artistic research, big band, community.

Introduction

Popular music practice in higher education institutions can be a formalized part of degree programmes or an extra-curricular activity (or both). The benefits of practical work in, for example, jazz on aural perception, rhythm and articulation, notation and chord symbol reading skills and music theory are documented in pedagogical literature (see, for instance, Haley 2018). In addition, there is a growing body of

IASPM Journal vol.13 no.1 (2023)
Journal of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music
ISSN 2079-3871 | DOI 10.5429/2079-3871(2023) v13i1.6 | www.iaspmjournal.net

research on extra-curricular music activity among students (Kokotsaki and Hallam 2011; Pitts 2013). There are university students not pursuing popular music or jazz majors but who are interested in taking part in extra-curricular jazz ensembles, but there is little scholarly research – particularly practice-based or led – into why they choose to do it and what they gain from it.

In this article I investigate, through practice research and ethnographic methods, the creative engagement with popular music under the broad umbrella of jazz as an extra-curricular activity, of musicians from a variety of musical backgrounds. The overall goal of this research is to create sharable knowledge about how reconciling musical, pedagogical and community-building goals in the creation and rehearsal of jazz arrangements may be achieved. This has been pursued via a project involving my university big band, using specially written music designed to challenge the players in some aspects of their practice while working towards a recorded performance. At the end of the project, band members willing to be interviewed were asked what they had gained from the experience of the project and of working in a band with both student and non-student members. It therefore involved a combination of practice research and participant-based ethnography as well as, in the self-reflection of my own practice, an element of autoethnography. To clarify my position, my background is in jazz performance, pedagogy, and jazz studies, and this is the first project that involves artistic research principles that I have undertaken. As well as being the researcher in this study I was also actively involved in the object of the research by directing the band in rehearsal and performance.

I begin the main part of this article with a brief contextual background of research into extra-curricular music in British secondary higher education, and a background to Liverpool Hope Big Band. This is followed by an overview of artistic research, elements of which this study incorporates, and then an explanation of the aims and methods used in this project. I continue with a self-reflective account of the composition and rehearsal process, followed by analysis of participant responses in two sets of interviews: the first about encountering jazz and participation in the big band and the second about the music written for the project. Finally, a conclusion draws together the findings of this study in relation to my research aim above.

Background and Rationale

There is some existing research into extra-curricular music in general education, and I will begin with a brief context of extra-curricular music in British schools. Stephanie Pitts (2008: 2) begins her article on the topic by stating: “Secondary schools in Britain are often flourishing centres for musical activities, where students are involved in teacher-directed orchestras, choirs and ensembles, and in student-led bands and informal groups”. She describes her case study examples of these as “part of a long tradition of teacher-directed extra-curricular activities that have contributed to British music education throughout the past century” (ibid., 14). This is corroborated in a more recent paper by Bath et al. (2020: 444): “In schools, there is often a range of extra-curricular opportunities to learn and practice music in orchestras, bands and choirs, which are usually free at the point of access”. These authors’ view, however, is that the place of music education is in decline in English schools at least, and that it "is therefore imperative that extra-curricular cultural education complements classroom-based, curriculum-led music education and does not replace it" (ibid., 453). The authors cite recent threats to music education such as: increasing autonomy of schools from local authority control; the prioritisation of 'core' subjects to the detriment of music and the arts; the pressures resulting from standardised testing of primary school children; and the introduction in 2010 of the English Baccalaureate, which does not include music in the suite of subjects students are expected to take at GCSE level (national examinations at the age of 16).

In addition to her research in secondary schools, Pitts (2013) has conducted a study of the engagement of university students in extra-curricular music activities, and in her abstract she suggests several reasons for valuing them:

> [T]he current political and economic climate poses several significant threats to their survival, including uncertain funding, demands on students' time (including the need to undertake paid employment), and, potentially, the reduction of music in the school curriculum, limiting the number of students equipped to study music in higher education. (Pitts 2013: 194).

During their research project Pitts et al. (2012) gathered data from an online survey of staff in HE music departments and case studies of three UK university music departments with varying approaches to expectations of student involvement in extra-curricular music. It would be interesting to compare the findings of this study with my own department, but this is outside the scope of this paper. One aspect that is pertinent is the element of compulsion: my students are not required to attend the big band, but those that do seem to value it; Pitts et al. (2012: 14) note that there "is a sense that departmental culture is the most significant factor in engaging students in [extra-curricular music]". Other studies have been made regarding the participation of non-music university students in extra-curricular music in the UK (Kokotsaki and Hallam 2011) and the US (Mantie 2013).

The development of social networks and transferable skills resulting from extra-curricular music activities is discussed by Pitts and others, and the opportunities for creativity in ensemble participation have been studied by Bishop (2018). Moving onto popular music and jazz more specifically, the benefits of jazz education in improving other aspects of musical skills, knowledge and musicianship have been argued by, among others, Haley (2018) and Nichols et al. (2018). In addition, Norgaard et al. (2019) compare the effects of different methods of jazz improvisation pedagogy on non-music cognitive skills. The most effective ways of delivering jazz education have been contested for some time, however, and with the historic decline of the apprenticeship tradition in jazz (see Berliner 1994: 56) for those students not studying jazz formally the extra-curricular big band may be thought of as a community of practice, a concept alluded to by Pitts (2013). In a previous study into extra-curricular big band participation (Sykes 2021), for some of my interviewees such extra-curricular jazz activities had commenced during secondary education; their first encounters with jazz had occurred before starting university, providing the first such community of practice.

Liverpool Hope Big Band in 2021–22

Liverpool Hope University (LHU) is the smallest of Liverpool's three universities and has a long-established music department that began including popular music in its curriculum under the 1991–2012 leadership of Professor Stephen Pratt (Liverpool Hope University 2021). A big band had existed since at least 1979 for students across the Liverpool area (Music for Youth 1994). Extra-curricular jazz/funk ensembles and big bands have been available at LHU at various times since the music department relocated to the Creative Campus in the early 2000s, with the main performance venue, the Capstone Theatre, hosting an annual jazz festival since 2013 (The Capstone Theatre 2022). Following a period of unavoidable disruption caused by staffing changes in the department and the Covid-19 pandemic (during which all ensemble rehearsals were suspended in the periods of national lockdowns) I joined the department in September 2020 and was given directorship of the Liverpool Hope Big Band as part of my role. Covid-19 restrictions were in place during much of the 2020–21 academic year, meaning that no visitors from outside the university were allowed on campus. Due to a shortage of student woodwind and brass players, the band operated as a somewhat smaller ensemble than a typical big band and was unable to perform in public, though weekly rehearsals were able to take place in a large, well-ventilated hall for most of the year.

During the 2021–22 academic year restrictions were eased, although a continued lack of front-line players necessitated a new approach if we were to make this ensemble into one more like a typical big band. Given the history of student big bands in Liverpool and LHU's ethos of community engagement (Liverpool Hope University 2022), it seemed appropriate that to enable something approaching a big band we should invite musicians from outside the university. Therefore, since October 2021, the band has consisted of approximately two-thirds students and one-third visiting players, with performances taking place at least once per term. For the present study I decided to involve Liverpool Hope Big Band in a small practice research project, incorporating methods used in artistic research.

Artistic research in popular music/jazz

Artistic research "may be defined as *a form of research that possesses a solid basis in artistic practice and which creates new knowledge and/or insight and perspectives within the arts, contributing both to artistry and to innovation*" (AEC 2015: 2, italics in original). It is a relatively recently established concept, having been in development in, for example, Sweden since the 1970s and offered in a doctoral programme in Helsinki since 1997 (Hannula et al. 2005: 5). It can be considered as a way of providing a formalized framework or set of principles, and in its White Paper aimed at European conservatoires, the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) suggests that

> Artistic Research commonly displays all, or most, of the following features:
> - It is usually conducted by the artist-researcher or through the collaboration of artists within a research team.

- It promotes critical dialogue within the artistic field, with other relevant fields of knowledge and between the scholarly and professional domains.
- It is supported by critical reflection on the content and/or context of the research topic.
- It articulates and reflects on methods and work processes.
- It shares relevant professional knowledge with the wider artistic community and disseminates it in the public sphere to the enrichment of cultural understanding (AEC 2015: 2).

As a distinct type of practice-based research, artistic research has been documented in the fields of, among others, visual arts (Michelkevičius 2018), graduate education (Wilson and van Ruiten Eds. 2013), performance through collaboration (Blain and Minor Eds. 2020), as well as music (de Assis 2018). Acceptance of artistic research as scholarly activity has not been universal within academia (Borgdorff 2012; Huber et al. Eds. 2021) but is becoming increasingly recognized as a form of research output (Vienna Declaration 2020). Artistic research in music now has established centres in various institutions around Europe and elsewhere, such as in Australia (Griffith University 2022), Belgium (Orpheus Institute 2022), Norway (Norwegian Academy of Music 2022) and Austria (MDW 2022). At the time of writing, a Center for Artistic Research in Jazz and Popular Music Vienna is being established (JAM Music Lab University 2023).

Popular music as a whole appears to be a new field for artistic research, but in jazz studies there is an established and growing body of work, as well as distinct methodological perspectives being established (Kahr Ed. 2022). It seems appropriate, then, to try to pave the way for artistic research in popular music by using an example of big band music, which falls under both jazz and popular music studies. Some artistic research projects in jazz have been explicitly designed as such, for example those of Moreira (2013), Fairhall (2017), Kahr (2017) and Sampaio (2021). Others, such as Medbøe (2013), may have the characteristics of artistic research without being labelled this way by the authors.

Aims and Methods of this Project

There were three aims for this project: through arranging, rehearsing and performing music written for Liverpool Hope Big Band to investigate the creative engagement with jazz/big band music of students from a variety of musical backgrounds; to gain an understanding of the value placed on taking part in extra-curricular jazz/popular music practice; and (due to having visiting musicians in the band) to find out how students and community musicians interact and work alongside one another in a university ensemble.

The artistic artefact created for this project consists of two original arrangements that I have written for the band. The composition/arranging process itself presented challenges, due to the nature of the band in terms of the instrumentation available (and availability of players generally), lack of experience of some of the musicians and limited rehearsal time. The pieces have been publicly performed and it was hoped that good quality recordings could be made, but due to time and logistical constraints it has not yet been possible to make the recordings, though video recordings were taken of performances (scores and video recordings can be made available on request). I will reflect on these aspects in more detail below.

The two pieces were rehearsed during regular rehearsal sessions (alongside other repertoire) for several weeks in each of the spring and summer terms in 2022 and performed separately at end of term departmental concerts. While the technical requirements were deliberately kept at a level that players could manage given their abilities and with limited rehearsal time, some rhythmic complexities were included as well as improvisation in a modal context. For those players unused to reading syncopated Latin rhythm patterns, playing in jazz waltz feel or performing improvised solos, the music did indeed present challenges.

Band members were asked if they would be prepared to be interviewed at the end of the project about their experience of playing the pieces, their reasons for playing in the band and their experience of working in an ensemble with both students and musicians from the community. My intention was to gain an insight into the extent to which they valued the opportunity to play in the band and with their fellow band members, and what they gain from the practice.

The idea for this study was inspired by a project by Austrian pianist and researcher Michael Kahr, in which the author's specially written compositions were rehearsed, performed and recorded by members of two ensembles, the High Styria Big Band and the traditional folk group Die Pfeilstöcker (Kahr 2013). Because Kahr was investigating notions of identity and authenticity in his project, elements of "traditional melodic, harmonic and rhythmic material" (Kahr 2013) were incorporated and developed within the compositions. For one of my pieces I arranged the English folk song "Scarborough Fair" (Morris 2014), the other piece being an original composition, "El Barranco Francés". Due to the ensemble not comprising standard big band instrumentation, particularly during regular rehearsals, the scoring included doubled melody and harmony parts to cover missing instruments; for the performances I was able to call upon a few more players who were able to attend the brief dress rehearsal.

Following the performance of the second piece, I asked for volunteers from within the regular attendees to be interviewed about their experience of playing the two pieces, and of taking part in an extra-curricular ensemble made up of students and community musicians. These largely structured interviews took place via video call or email, and the responses are discussed below with respondents identified only as student or non-student or by a number to preserve anonymity, in line with university research ethics (ethical approval had been acquired prior to this research taking place).

Reflection on the Composition and Rehearsal Process

Critical reflection is a key aspect of practice research (Candy 2006) and artistic research (AEC 2015). Here, I will reflect on both the composing/arranging process and the rehearsal sessions involving the two pieces (score extracts are my own, taken or adapted from the full score). The orchestration was based on standard big band instrumentation (five saxophones, four trumpets, four trombones, four rhythm) with the following exceptions: the fourth trombone part was written for tuba and there was the addition of a flute part, along with a second guitar part in the first piece. Some brass parts were doubled by other instruments to allow for low numbers of brass players, and the actual instrumentation used in rehearsals and performance consisted of two alto saxophones, two tenor saxophones, two trumpets and a clarinet playing the third trumpet part, one trombone, tuba, two guitars, piano, bass guitar and drum kit. The overall level of student performers was between grades 6 and 8 (see ABRSM 2023) with around three quarters having had popular music (though not necessarily jazz/big band) experience. The overall level of visiting musicians was at least grade 8 with considerable big band experience. During the period of this project there were approximately twelve rehearsals involving these pieces and one public performance of each piece (along with a separate performance for a student's ensemble examination). My own background in jazz and big band music includes performing in many small groups and big bands around the northwest of England, and arranging for and directing big bands, most often in an educational context.

The first piece to be written for this project, "El Barranco Francés", is in a Cuban mambo/Latin jazz feel using a 3-2 clave pattern (Figure 1). It was composed as a lead sheet some years previously and orchestrated in 2016 for two other ensembles, Mindset Ensemble and Jazz Flute Big Band. For the Liverpool Hope Big Band project the piece was substantially re-orchestrated and arranged for practical, musical and pedagogical reasons: First, compared to a standard big band there was a particular shortage of brass players (other than a tuba-playing student) but two guitarists were keen to play, along with two flautists. I therefore decided to feature the tuba playing a typically syncopated Cuban-style bass line at the beginning (Figure 2) with the drummer playing the clave pattern as a side-stick click on the snare drum rim. In rehearsals the tuba player found the syncopated bass line difficult, at least until the guitars joined in after 8 bars with a partially harmonised montuno-style pattern. The creation of the tuba part was in response to the student's disappointment at the beginning of the year that most big band arrangements were lacking dedicated tuba parts, and after gaining confidence with it the player seemed to appreciate having this short solo. The guitarists appeared to enjoy playing their patterns (Figure 3), once learned; this was initially achieved via aural demonstration rather than sight reading and one of them later revealed in an interview that a subtle change in the pattern had not been noticed in the part. The flutes were featured playing the main melody and suited the piece well, as expected – the version for Jazz Flute Big Band was for an ensemble of only flutes (of various sizes) plus rhythm section. The resulting sound was perhaps more like that of a Cuban charanga ensemble than a big band, but this is not surprising given the style and orchestration of the piece.

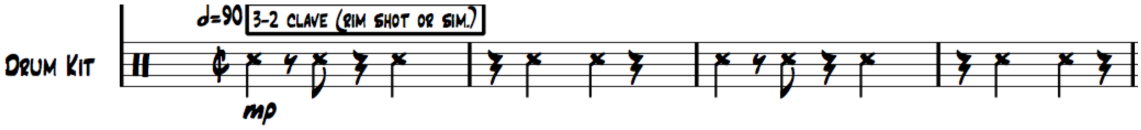

FIGURE 1. 3-2 clave pattern (played on the drum kit at the beginning).

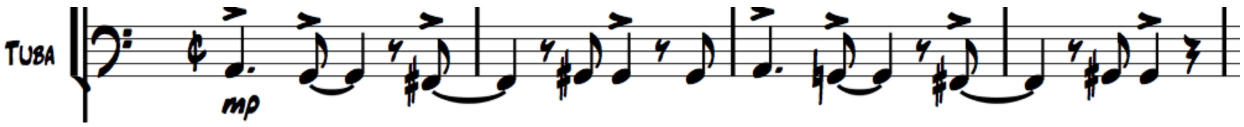

FIGURE 2. Tuba bass line, played at the beginning.

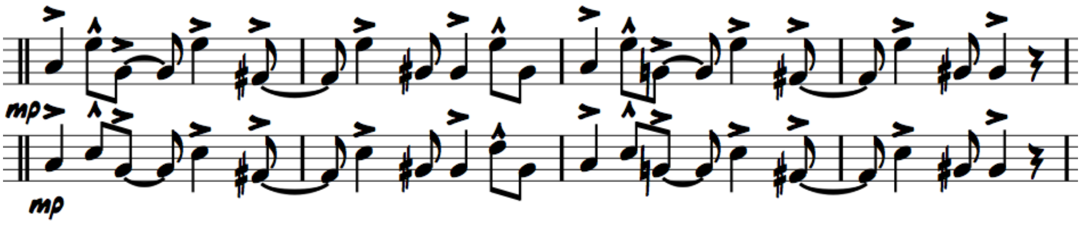

FIGURE 3. Montuno-style accompaniment in the two guitar parts (treble clef).

The second, musical aspect of this arrangement is one of orchestration: the original composition was written with montuno piano patterns in mind, supporting simple melody lines, syncopated transition sections to a new key and back, and the solo section. For this project I orchestrated the patterns in the transition sections for the saxophones and tuba, leaving out the rhythm section except for the clave pattern played on the snare drum rim (Figure 4). The textural contrast was effective, but the rhythmic difficulties experienced by many players were indicative of the difference between playing the whole pattern using both hands on the piano and playing a single line of it with other instrumentalists, some of whom have the same rhythm and others something quite different. For the players to play these passages with reasonable confidence required substantial rehearsal time, and on reflection a greater proportion of that time could have been spent on clapping or similar rhythmic exercises away from the instrument, before playing them. The third, pedagogical aspect included the challenges of internalising the rhythmic patterns as well as building confidence in improvising. The solo section was devised as a series of repeated, alternating 2-5 chords, starting in the key of G before modulating to A and then A flat (Figure 5). Such unresolving 2-5 patterns are typical of some Latin jazz compositions (for example, "La Charanga" by José A. Fajardo, "Oferere" by Oscar Hernández and "Recuerdos De Arcaño" by Johnny Pacheco, Sher Ed. 1997) and lend themselves to Dorian modal improvisation, in this case the Dorian modes starting on A, B and B flat respectively. Many players in the band were not familiar with modal improvisation or had only come across modes as a theoretical concept, and for some, improvisation in a jazz/Latin music context was a new experience. With gentle encouragement, most players attempted improvising in rehearsals and some felt confident enough to perform a solo in the concert.

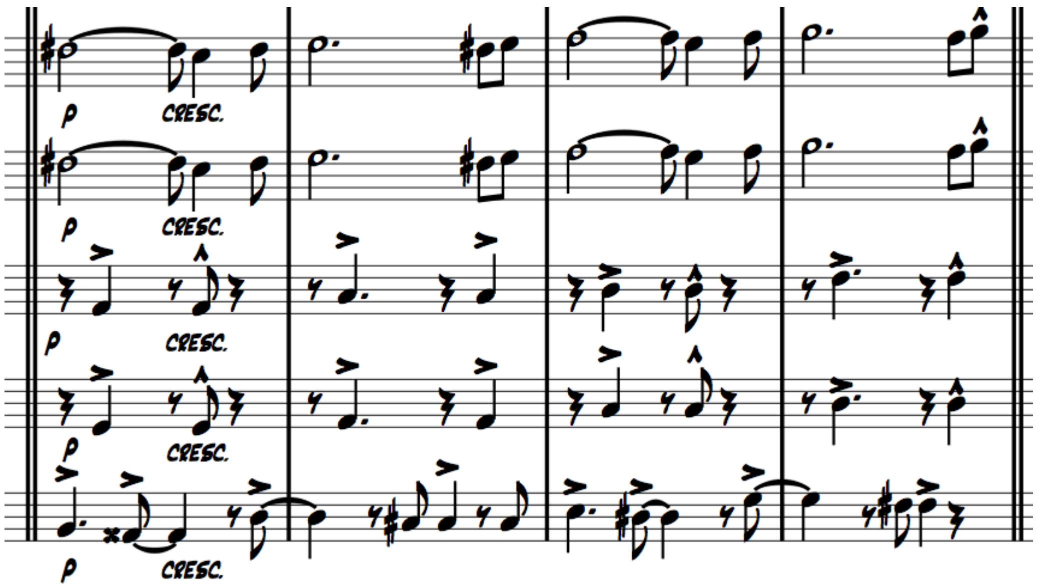
p
CRESC.
p
CRESC.
p
CRESC.
p
CRESC.
p
CRESC.

FIGURE 4. Transition section 1 (saxophone section, to illustrate rhythms).

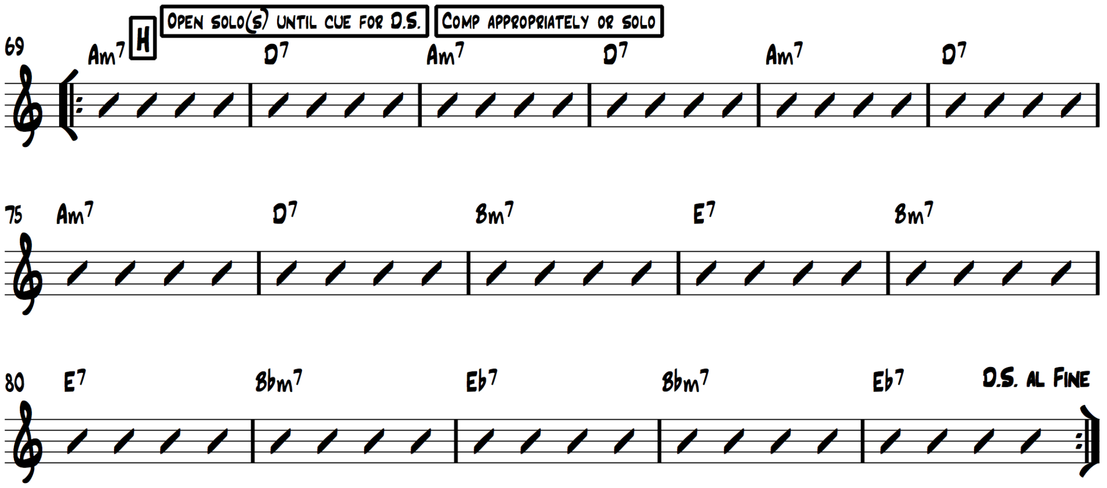
H
OPEN SOLO(S) UNTIL CUE FOR D.S.
COMP APPROPRIATELY OR SOLO
69
Am7
D7
Am7
D7
Am7
D7
75
Am7
D7
Bm7
E7
Bm7
80
E7
Bbm7
Eb7
Bbm7
Eb7
D.S. AL FINE

FIGURE 5. Guitar 1 part with chord symbols for the improvised solo section.

A further issue when attempting to communicate stylistic traits of unfamiliar popular music is regarding the rhythm section. This can provide particular pedagogical difficulties where students have a background in classical music or different styles of popular music such as rock, and this is a common problem when playing music in swing feel (see, for example, Stevenson 2019 and Yasinitsky 2019). This extends to Latin grooves and, along with the difficulties the tuba player had playing a syncopated bass line, the bass guitarist (whose training is in classical piano) had found similar challenges in playing the bass line and its variants in this piece, as well as the jazz waltz pattern in “Scarborough Fair”. The drummer, being more experienced in playing and reading big band music, was more comfortable in both pieces. Once they had become familiar with their parts, the two guitarists played the notated sections and solos confidently, though were a little less confident about varying their rhythm playing behind other soloists. Had I had more rehearsal time it would have been productive to work with the rhythm section separately. On reflection, more examples for listening (including during rehearsal sessions) would have been beneficial for the whole band, in addition to the MIDI recordings of the arrangements that were shared electronically with band members (Clayton 2019).

"Scarborough Fair" is an original arrangement of an old English folk song made popular in recent times by performers such as Martin Carthy and Simon & Garfunkel (Humphries 2003). Following the example set by Kahr (2013), the intention was to introduce an element of English identity to the music, in this case using the well-known version of the melody (Figure 6) with aspects of jazz and big band arranging techniques. It is frequently performed in triple time, and my arrangement is in a jazz waltz feel (Figure 7). As with the other composition, the orchestration is designed to take account of the instrumentation and abilities of the available players, and the melody is in the Dorian mode. During the late 1950s some jazz musicians experimented with modal compositions as an alternative to major/minor tonality and established popular song forms, perhaps most famously with the work of Miles Davis. Davis's 1959 album *Kind of Blue* is described on the official Miles Davis website as "a harbinger of modal jazz" (milesdavis.com 2022). The Davis composition from this album, "So What", is an example of a composition using the Dorian mode that also contains a figure harmonised mainly in fourths (quartal voicing) often known as the So What chords (Levine 1989: 97). In my arrangement of "Scarborough Fair" I make reference to the piece by utilizing the So What chords (in an augmented rhythm, Figure 8) in a repeated background figure behind the improvised solo, over a static Dm7 harmony similar to that of "So What". Pleasingly, one of the band members recognized the figure as the So What chords after the first play through, though it was not as effective as I had hoped in subsequent rehearsals and the performance, particularly when some band members forgot to play the figure at the intended time!

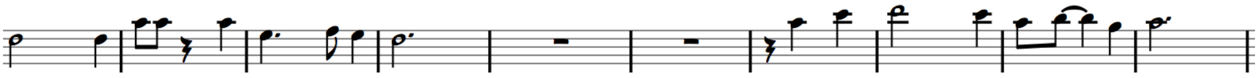

FIGURE 6. First 10 bars of the melody as played by the flute (treble clef).

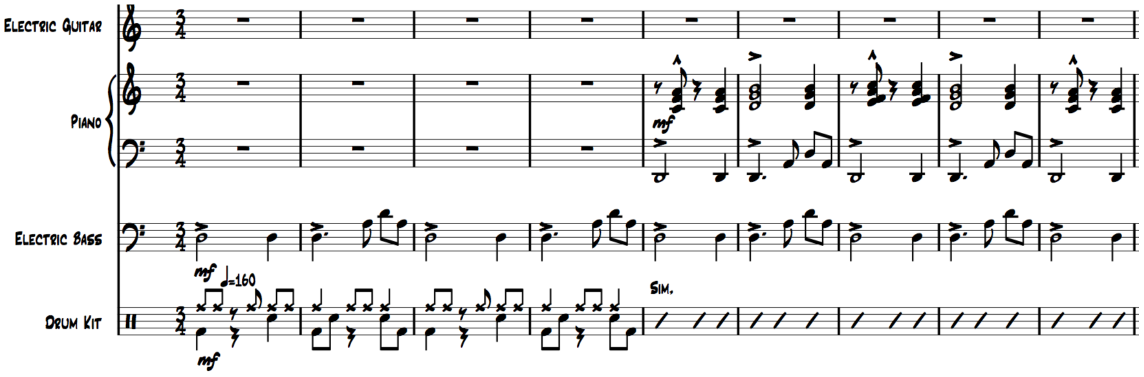

FIGURE 7. Rhythm section parts at the beginning.

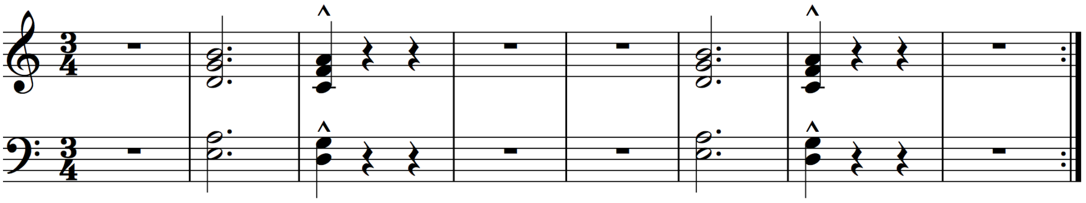

FIGURE 8. So What chords played by front-line instruments as background figures behind a soloist, notated here for clarity as a concert pitch short score.

As with "El Barranco Francés", some players initially struggled a little with the rhythmic aspects of "Scarborough Fair" but became comfortable with the arrangement quite quickly, perhaps due to many of them being familiar with the folk song (particularly Simon & Garfunkel's version, which was mentioned by several band members). Some players who were previously reticent about improvising felt a little more confident in soloing, due to the static harmony of the solo section, and the piece was performed well in the concert overall, despite the rehearsal schedule having been disrupted by student examinations (for practical reasons the concert was held during the week following the examination period).

Working with an ensemble where attendance is voluntary can present difficulties in a project for which music has been specially written and raises wider questions about extra-curricular music participation in higher education. In her 2013 study of undergraduate engagement in extra-curricular music activities (or performance-related activities, PRAs, as she calls them), Pitts found that student participation was an issue in her case studies:

> While apathy or lack of commitment (…) was sometimes reported, the general perception was that students were increasingly busy, either within or outside the department (…) A change in culture remains a risk as students commit to higher levels of debt by coming to university, and perhaps requires staff to be more proactive in asserting the value of PRAs to learning and development (Pitts 2013: 200).

Varying levels of attendance at rehearsals were evident among visiting musicians as well as students, absences being for legitimate reasons such as work commitments and illness (there were several instances of band members contracting Covid-19 during the rehearsal period). While it may not have been a contributory factor in attendance, for autoethnographic and pedagogical purposes it would be useful for me in future to reflect on my own approach to band leadership and seek band members' thoughts on this – this topic was not included in the interview questions but could be a contributory factor to the way in which players value playing in Liverpool Hope Big Band (Kokotsaki and Hallam 2011).

Encountering Jazz at University

In a previous participant-based study I interviewed several Liverpool Hope Big Band members along with a former student that had taken part in an extra-curricular big band at a previous institution (Sykes 2021). Their responses are worth discussing

TABLE 1. Interview responses from previous study (Sykes 2021).

Question/theme	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**
Early musical influences	Musical theatre, pop	Nothing in particular	Iron Maiden – rock and metal	Blues and classical to some extent	No particular styles	Various including rock & classical
Musical family background?	No	Yes, to some extent	Dad liked rock & used to play a bit	Not really	No but dad used to play in a band	To some extent
Early music education	Choir	Guitar lessons at primary school	Not much	Self-taught at first (piano)	(Steel band at primary school)	Yes (in Greece)
Secondary music education	A bit	Continued guitar lessons, got into rock	Yes, and started playing guitar	Classroom music teacher gave encouragement	Mostly seems to have been extracurricular	Did a range of music study for baccalaureate
Extracurricular music activity	Various instruments and dance	Jazz band in later secondary years, also funk & soul at college	Played in bands with other students & staff, & school jazz band	Being one of the only pianists in the school, got asked to do a lot	Junior band, senior band and jazz band from age 16	School band and playing & song writing with band outside school
Musical interests when starting HE	Soul, jazzy popular music	Blues, electronic music & jazz	Mainly rock and metal	Starting to explore jazz more	Electronic & noise music mostly	Classical, rock & composition
Influence of HE staff and students	A lot from teachers (broadening exposure to jazz)	Guitar teacher & other students of differing backgrounds but with a common interest in jazz	Guitar teacher sparked an interest in jazz	Piano teacher re technique & opportunity to play in big band etc.	Started doing a creative writing but changed to music after a year. Great respect for drum teacher.	None specifically mentioned, but playing in big band has sparked curiosity & confidence in jazz
Reasons for joining HE big	First experience of singing with a big	Opportunity to play jazz with other	Wanted to do extracurricular music	To be immersed with like-minded people	Keen to join big band as soon as	Likes the music & the opportunity to

Question/theme	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**
band/jazz ensembles & enjoyment	band & excitement of improvisation	students who are interested in it	but couldn't play in classical ensembles. Enjoys reading challenge	who understood jazz. Loves the sense of belonging & fun!	heard about it. Finds playing in big band exhilarating!	solo, as well as the challenges of learning tricky arrangements
Development of other skills	Listening skills, following a leader/ director, communication & music therapy	Subconscious influence of jazz in playing & in band compositions, creating a distinct personal sound	Music theory, sight reading, improvement of other areas of musicianship	Piano skills and improvisation, reading chord sheets	Varying patterns e.g. swing ride cymbal, and improvisation	Connections between genres, understanding of chord progressions, performance skills

briefly here, to provide further insight into their backgrounds and experiences, and are summarised in Table 1 below (interviewees are given letters A-F):

What emerges from this small sample is that:

- none of these musicians come from backgrounds in which jazz was significant, or from particularly musical families;
- formal music education has had some impact on the musical interests of the students, but extracurricular musical activity has had much more impact on the development of those interests;
- while most had encountered jazz before university, the influence of university teachers and opportunities to play jazz with other students have developed their interest in and enjoyment of the music.

In addition, all the interviewees stated that their involvement in jazz activities at university had contributed to their broader development as musicians, composers, and in one case a music therapist.

Before starting this 2021 study I suspected that for some students, taking part in a university big band might have been their first encounter with jazz, at least on a practical level. This turned out not to be the case with these respondents, though one or two admitted that they had not necessarily considered studying jazz or performing it before coming to university, and most had had their musical horizons broadened considerably as a result of their university encounters with jazz. I was not surprised to find that individual teachers – particularly for one-to-one lessons – had a major influence on students' engagement with, and development of, jazz interests and skills. What emerged as worthy of further investigation (and forms part of the current study) is the value of extracurricular activities, even if it is as much for a "sense of belonging" (as interviewee E put it) to a community of practice as a vehicle for developing skills in areas such as jazz ensemble playing and improvisation. Interestingly, in contrast to Mantie's (2013: 54) view that "institutionalised music education is unavoidably implicated in maintaining specific class relations" (basing his theory on the work of Bourdieu), Liverpool Hope Big Band seems to break down cultural barriers, bringing together students from different *musical* backgrounds at least (though I am not implying that this is necessarily the case with all extra-curricular big bands). This resonates with Pitts' argument about the importance of extra-curricular performance activities:

> Through the provision of PRAs, departments provide not just a public musical face and an entry for a student's CV: there is something much more profound in the opportunities to make music together at this formative juncture in a student's professional musical identity. (Pitts 2013: 201).

Extra-curricular Participation: Being in the Big Band

Pitts makes an interesting point about extra-curricular music activities in university music departments and the differing perspectives on their value (from students and staff):

> Students' initial impressions of what it means to be a university musician are (…) shaped by the departmental culture and the invitations that are extended to them to become part of it – both explicitly, through audition processes for ensembles or the award of credits for participation and concert attendance, and implicitly, through the status afforded to PRAs by staff involvement and the behaviour of established students in the department. (Pitts 2013: 197).

To encourage participation during a pandemic in which public music performance activities were highly restricted, from October 2020 students were invited to join the big band based on their known interest in jazz or big band music with no audition. When students became aware that the big band was due to recommence (after a seven-month hiatus) a final-year pianist who had not had an invitation emailed me to ask to join the band; that student subsequently became the band's main pianist that year. Because of the shortage of woodwind and brass players among the students and a ban on visiting musicians, the band operated as a medium sized ensemble playing small band arrangements. The students interviewed valued the experience despite the logistical difficulties and lack of performance opportunities.

From October 2021 restrictions were largely lifted, and as well as containing invited students the band could be opened to visiting musicians. As in the previous year, once word spread around the Liverpool area that a big band was available, I began receiving requests to play in it (as I knew many of these players, they were not asked to audition). The addition of community musicians made it possible to attempt full big band arrangements, and in our Christmas concert in particular the ensemble achieved a full big band sound for the first time since I had taken it over.

My interviewees for this project were asked about their experience of working in a university band that included both students and non-students, as well as any thoughts they had about the possible role the band could take in the wider community. The responses are summarized and discussed below; they should be taken as indicative rather than representative, the number of volunteers willing to be interviewed being around half of the regular attendees for this project (interviews were all conducted during July 2022, via video call and email).

The musical background of interviewees was largely classical with some rock. There was a mixture of classical training with self-taught learning in particular instruments and popular music performance. When asked about their specialisms in music, I received quite general answers such as teacher, performer, composer/arranger, sight reader and electronic musician/producer. One respondent felt an affinity for solo improvisation (rather than in an ensemble) but, notably, none claimed specifically to be a specialist in jazz or big band playing, although the non-students had substantial experience of this before joining Liverpool Hope Big Band (indeed, they seemed to value the opportunity to play in the band at a time when they were available and, in one case, on an instrument not played elsewhere).

Reasons for participating in the big band given by students included:

- to increase self-confidence initially, and now for pleasure;
- an openness to take part in activities since starting university;
- to take advantage of what is on offer as part of making music a full-time activity.

The last of these came from a student in receipt of a music scholarship (Respondent 4). Under this scheme the recipient is entitled to extra individual tuition on their main instrument in addition to free university accommodation. The resulting financial saving thus freed this student from having to take on paid work, such time demands being one of the threats to the survival of extra-curricular activities that Pitts et al. (2012: 1) identify.

When asked what members gained from being in the band, there was a range of responses: an expansion of knowledge and understanding of improvisation and composition; the chance to meet "some great people" (Respondent 5, over the three years of participation); playing unfamiliar repertoire; gaining a greater appreciation of jazz through practical involvement than listening alone; and the benefits of having access to other musicians. Music students have access to their peers, of course, but being able to interact directly with more experienced musicians (students or otherwise) seems to be valued highly.

All the interviewees placed high importance on extra-curricular music/playing in an ensemble. One non-student appreciated being "part of a group doing something greater than the sum of its parts" (Respondent 1) and another recognized the opportunity to develop skills "as well as consciously and unconsciously learning from other band members" (Respondent 3). The students interviewed valued the chance to put their learning into practice and improve music reading, to be there for the same outcome and make new friends, and to develop professional skills. These aspects correlate with the findings of Kokotsaki and Hallam (2011) and (from staff members' perspective) Pitts et al. (2012). One student insisted that, personally, extra-curricular music activity "is a vital part of life both as a student and as not" (Respondent 5).

All respondents were positive about having both students and non-students in the band. According to one of the students, "it didn't really bother us if you're external or not" (Respondent 2), and all student interviewees agreed that they had benefited from the visiting musicians' skills, knowledge and experience, as well as networking opportunities. One non-student said that "it has been a pleasure to work with student musicians and I think students and non-students can benefit from each other – youthful energy and older experience!" (Respondent 3) and another was relieved not to be "outclassed" by the student players ("I think, as non-students, we have to be patient" [Respondent 1]).

Interviewees identified several possible roles for Liverpool Hope Big Band as something more than just an extra-curricular activity for students, such as a way in which alumni may stay connected with the university and meet in a friendly space, and as an ensemble that can perform a full evening of music at a community or city centre venue (as part of the local jazz scene) and for external events to promote the musicians and the music department. These suggestions reflect the views of university staff in Pitts et al. (2012) in which extra-curricular music activities can be valued in terms of their benefits to music students, community relations and student recruitment. I would add to these the following observation: involving community musicians in extra-curricular ensembles can benefit those musicians as well as the students and music department.

Thoughts on the Music

The interviewees were asked for their thoughts on the music written for the project, which reveal considerable insights into the practice and artistic research aspects from the performers' perspectives. They found the compositions to be "accessible and enjoyable" (Respondent 5), "original and well written" (Respondent 3) and straightforward technically, though one student admitted that counting rests was a challenge (judging by the performance, other players also struggled with this in certain places). One of the non-students recognized that the music "reflected an awareness of music outside mainstream jazz – Latin American and English folk music […] placed into a jazz context" (Respondent 3). Some interviewees had not consciously improvised in a modal context before but enjoyed the challenge: "you have to wrap your head around it, and once you've done that […] it's alright" (Respondent 1).

A non-student involved in music education identified features that are found in repertoire of this type, in that

> both pieces have many broad references to the jazz tradition such as the use of Latin and jazz waltz rhythms, the use of familiar jazz/big band form (head/solo(s)/head), use of background figures, modal and "So What" quartal harmonies, instrumentation, etc. From an educational perspective they would serve to introduce a person with little or no jazz experience with many of the features of the idiom. They are also good 'stand alone' pieces in their own right too, enjoyable to play! (Respondent 3).

Similarly, one of the students suggested making the arrangements even more flexible to allow for unexpected changes in instrumentation: "I would relate it to flexi-band scores" (Respondent 5; for examples of such arrangements see TES 2022). Another student asked for guitar tablature to be included (Respondent 2). Although this is not common practice in jazz and big band scoring, it may be something to consider in making the music more inclusive for non-readers.

When asked about the effect of this project on their creativity, the student interviewees replied that the "Scarborough Fair" arrangement had inspired them to write ensemble arrangements. One student admitted: "When arranging I don't particularly change the style of the piece so I would definitely look into that when I am arranging for concert bands!" (Respondent 5). Other ways in which students' creativity had been influenced by these pieces involved improvisation: putting theory knowledge into practice and trying to combine a personal style with the style of the piece.

From these responses there appear to be some aspects of the music written for this project that succeeded in their intended purpose and others which, perhaps unexpectedly, provide opportunities for development. The jazz content of the pieces introduced students to features of the music with which they may have been unfamiliar, including the modal/improvisation aspects, and the more experienced players appreciated the playability but also the challenge of being creative while improvising: "Technically I found the pieces straightforward to play, my main concern was trying to produce a reasonable improvised solo!" (Respondent 3). In attempting to score the pieces for a band with an unpredictable line-up I thought I had allowed sufficiently for missing instruments, but respondent 5's suggestion of utilizing the flexi-band approach (of having generic numbered parts for C, B-flat, E-flat and bass clef instruments) is worthy of consideration, as is respondent 2's request for guitar tablature. These, however, are slightly contentious from both a musical and a pedagogical standpoint: the orchestration of a piece is an intrinsic part of its character, which is compromised in the flexi-band approach; and guitar tablature is not a standard format in the notation of jazz and big band scores, the player being expected to be able to read notation, though there is an argument for allowing students to use their existing skills to facilitate performance (Thompson 2011).

Conclusion: Artistic Research, Extra-curricular Ensembles and Popular Music Practice

The practice-based artistic research aspect of this small project, two pieces written for, rehearsed and performed by Liverpool Hope Big Band, has resulted in new repertoire for jazz ensemble. Artistically, the use of styles/grooves not frequently used in mainstream jazz/big band music (mambo and jazz waltz) and an English folk tune offers a degree of originality within the genre. The way in which the pieces have been scored provides the opportunity for ensembles of differing sizes/instrumentation to perform them, as well as a standard big band, with space for improvised solos by any band members. Although it has not yet been possible (at the time of writing) to produce high quality recordings of the pieces, it is hoped that this will take place in the near future. Notwithstanding this, the practice of doing this project has helped to clarify my thoughts on the overall goal stated in my introduction in the following ways. The arrangements have offered new musical experiences to band members while providing some technical and stylistic difficulties, which in turn have created pedagogical challenges that I can take into consideration when planning repertoire and rehearsals. The way in which experienced visiting musicians not only collaborated productively with students but also willingly helped them indicates that inviting these players to take part in a university big band can be an effective way of building a community of practice and enhancing student experience, and this observation through practice is supported by the ethnographic participant responses.

In my autoethnographic reflection I realise, regrettably, that the effect on composition, rehearsal and performance processes by various unexpected factors resulted in a less than ideal amount of time for the practice, and this is something that requires careful consideration in any practice research project. Additionally, for the concert performances the regular band was slightly augmented by extra musicians on the day. While this resulted in more of a big band sound, the fact that those players had only one short run-through before the performance meant that sight reading mistakes were made that would have been less likely had they been able to attend rehearsals.

Unpredictable attendance of rehearsals by students affected the preparation of the pieces for performance, partly because of illness. This could also have been due to the extra-curricular nature of the band, being non-compulsory and not credit bearing. As Pitts (2013: 202) points out:

> The contradictory views of staff and students in our study regarding the award of credits for participation show that this is not necessarily an easy route to guaranteeing commitment; instead there needs to be a clear framework of opportunities and sufficient chance to reflect on and take responsibility for the cultural life of the department, university and wider community.

It should be noted that among the students, commitment to big band rehearsals has been highest from those in receipt of music scholarships, which are awarded partially for engagement in departmental life and can be rescinded. In general, though, students who choose to participate in the big band do seem to value and enjoy it, as I found in my previous participant-based ethnographic study (Sykes 2021). Liverpool Hope Big Band differs from many extra-curricular university ensembles in having members invited from the community. Not only is their participation necessary to form a big band, but they also benefit from the activity themselves. There are reciprocal benefits for students, including an awareness of, and opportunity to work with, experienced local musicians, and the students interviewed in the ethnographic part of the research value this.

Reflecting on the project as a musician and educator, achieving a balance between producing artistically satisfying compositions, writing big band arrangements that can be performed by smaller ensembles, and providing sufficient challenges for students and community musicians alike has not been straightforward. The insights that this project has provided will certainly inform my practice in developing the big band and extra-curricular music at LHU, and I would like to pursue further research into the interaction that is created between town and gown by university ensembles that include community musicians. A practice research project like this, inspired as it was from an artistic research big band project (Kahr 2013), works well for this type of ensemble for which commissioned works are not uncommon. There is, however, no reason why a similar approach could not be taken with other forms of popular music practice in an educational or community-based context, and more artistic research projects in popular music other than jazz would be welcome.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my colleagues and the members of Liverpool Hope Big Band for their support and forbearance in the rehearsal and performance of the music written for this project, and for those band members who participated in interviews.

References

Bibliography

AEC. 2015. *Key Concepts for AEC Members: Artistic Research. An AEC Council "White Paper", 2015.* Brussels: AEC. https://aec-music.eu/publication/white-paper-on-artistic-research-key-concepts-for-aec-members/. Accessed 29 June 2021.

Bath, N., A. Daubney, D. Mackrill and G. Spruce. 2020. The Declining Place of Music Education in Schools in England. *Children & Society* 34: 443-457. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/chso.12386.

Berliner, P. F. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bishop, L. 2018. Collaborative Musical Creativity: How Ensembles Coordinate Spontaneity. *Frontiers in Psychology* 9: 1285. http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01285.

Blain, M. and H. J. Minors Eds. 2020. *Artistic Research in Performance through Collaboration* (eBook). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38599-6.

Borgdorff, H. A. 2012. *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*. PhD. Leiden University. https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/18704. Accessed 20 July 2021.

Candy, L. 2006. *Practice Based Research: A Guide, CCS Report: 2006-V1.0 November*. Sydney: University of Technology. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257944497_Practice_Based_Research_A_Guide. Accessed 20 July 2021.

Clayton, J. 2019. John Clayton: Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra/Clayton Brothers. In M. J. Papich and R. Adamsons Eds. *Rehearsing the Jazz Band*. Delray Beach: Meredith Music Publications: 10–18.

de Assis, P. 2018. *Logic of Experimentation: Rethinking Music Performance through Artistic Research* (eBook). Leuven: Leuven University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.11116/9789461662507.

Fairhall, A. 2020. The Right Thing to Play? Issues of Riff, Groove and Theme in Freely Improvised Ensemble Music: A Case Study. In M. Blain and H. J. Minors Eds. 2020. *Artistic Research in Performance through Collaboration* (eBook). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan: 95–112. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38599-6.

Haley, L. D. 2018. *Using Jazz Pedagogy to Supplement the Undergraduate Classical Lesson Setting*. PhD. Florida State University. https://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:650276. Accessed 18 March 2021.

Hannula, M., J. Suoranta and T. Vadén. 2005. *Artistic Research: Theories, Methods and Practices*. Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki and University of Gothenburg/ArtMonitor.

Huber, A., D. Ingrisch, T. Kaufmann, J. Kretz, G. Schröder and T. Zembylas Eds. 2021. *Knowing in Performing: Artistic Research in Music and the Performing Arts* (eBook). Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. http://dx.doi.org/10.14361/9783839452875.

Kahr, M. 2017. 50 Years of Academic Jazz in Central Europe: Musicological and Artistic Research Perspectives in a Case Study of Local History in Graz. In H. Medbøe, Z. Moir and C. Atton Eds. *Continental Drift: 50 Years of Jazz from*

Europe. Edinburgh, 16–18 July 2016. Edinburgh: Continental Drift Publishing. https://www.continentaldriftconference.co.uk/. Accessed 19 July 2021.

Kahr, M. Ed. 2022. *Artistic Research in Jazz: Positions, Theories, Methods* (eBook). Abingdon: Routledge. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780429275838.

Kokotsaki, D. and S. Hallam. 2011. The Perceived Benefits of Participative Music Making for Non-music University Students: A Comparison with Music Students. *Music Education Research* 13 (2): 149–172. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2011.577768.

Levine, M. 1989. *The Jazz Piano Book*. Petaluma: Sher Music.

Mantie, R. A. 2013. Structure and Agency in University-level Recreational Music Making. *Music Education Research* 15 (1): 39–58. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2012.722076.

Medbøe, H. 2013. Cultural Identity and Transnational Heritage in Contemporary Jazz: A Practice-based Study of Composition and Collaboration. PhD. Edinburgh Napier University. https://www.napier.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/research-search/outputs/cultural-identity-and-transnational-heritage-in-contemporary-jazz-a-practice-based-study. Accessed 7 July 2022.

Michelkevičius, V. 2018. *Mapping Artistic Research: Towards Diagrammatic Knowing*. Vilnius: Vilnius Academy of Arts Press.

Moreira, G. 2013. "Thinking in Sound" in Jazz Contrapuntal Improvisation: The Methodological Potential of Narrative. In F. Hernández- Hernández and R. Fendler Eds. *1st Conference on Arts-Based and Artistic Research: Critical Reflections on the Intersection of Art and Research*. Barcelona, 31 January-1 February 2013. Barcelona: University of Barcelona. http://hdl.handle.net/2445/45264. Accessed 30 July 2021.

Morris, G. 2014. Scarborough Fair: A Traditional Yorkshire Ballad. *The Yorkshire Journal* 2: 22–25. https://theyorkshirejournal.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/theyorkshirejournal-2014-02.pdf. Accessed 8 July 2022.

Nichols, B., A. R. Halpern and C. Wöllner. 2018. Score One for Jazz: Working Memory in Jazz and Classical Musicians. *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind, and Brain* 28 (2): 101–107. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pmu0000211.

Norgaard, M., L. A. Stambaugh and H. McCranie. 2019. The Effect of Improvisation Instruction on Measures of Executive Function in Middle High School Band Students. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 67 (3): 339–354. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022429419863038.

Pitts, S. E. 2008. Extra-curricular Music in UK Schools: Investigating the Aims, Experiences and Impact of Adolescent Musical Participation. *International Journal of Education & the Arts* 9 (10): 1–19. http://www.ijea.org/v9n10/. Accessed 12 March 2021.

Pitts, S. E., K. Gee and S. Redfern. 2012. PALATINE Final Report: Engaging Music Students in Extra-curricular Performance-related Activities. http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/disciplines/ddm/PALATINEDevAward-Pitts-2011.pdf. Accessed 18 March 2021.

Pitts, S. E. 2013. Would you Credit it? Navigating the Transitions between Curricular and Extra-curricular Learning in University Music Departments. *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education* 12 (2–3): 194–203. http://dx.doi.org/10/1177/1474022212473531.

Sampaio, E. 2021. *Reconstructing Hierarchy Within and Between Jazz and Classical Orchestras*. PhD. University of Music and Performing Arts Graz. https://emilianosampaio.com/research/. Accessed 20 July 2021.

Sher, C. Ed. 1997. *The Latin Real Book*. Petaluma: Sher Music.

Stevenson, R. 2019. Roxanne Stevenson: Chicago State University. In M. J. Papich and R. Adamsons Eds. *Rehearsing the Jazz Band*. Delray Beach: Meredith Music Publications: 98–112.

Sykes, T. 2021. *Documenting Jazz 2021*. Unpublished conference paper. Edinburgh, 23–26 June 2021.

Thompson, D. E. 2011. Speaking their Language: Guitar Tablature in the Middle School Classroom. *General Music Today* 24 (3): 53–57. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1048371310397190.

Vienna Declaration. 2020. *The Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research*. https://aec-music.eu/publication/vienna-declaration-on-artistic-research/. Accessed 29 June 2021.

Wilson, M. and S. van Ruiten Eds. 2013. *SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education*. Amsterdam: ELIA. https://elia-artschools.org/page/SHARE-Handbook-for-Artistic-Research-Education. Accessed 19 July 2021.

Yasinitsky, G. W. 2019. Gregory W. Yasinitsky: Washington State University. In M. J. Papich and R. Adamsons Eds. *Rehearsing the Jazz Band*. Delray Beach: Meredith Music Publications: 138–154.

Web Sources

ABRSM. 2023. Our Exams. https://gb.abrsm.org/en/our-exams/ Accessed 7 May 2023.

Griffith University. 2022. Artistic Research in Music. https://www.griffith.edu.au/queensland-conservatorium-research-centre/our-research/artistic-research-in-music Accessed 8 July 2022.

Humphries, P. 2003. Sold on Song – Song Library – Scarborough Fair. https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/soldonsong/songlibrary/indepth/scarborough.shtml Accessed 13 July 2022.

JAM Music Lab University. 2023. Research Departments. https://www.jammusiclab.com/research/research-departments Accessed 7 May 2023.

Kahr, M. 2013. Upper Styrian Big Band Folk: Exploring Local Identity and Authenticity in Jazz by Michael Kahr. https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/21732/21733/0/0 Accessed 20 July 2021.

Liverpool Hope University. 2021. Music Professor Marks 50 Years on Campus. https://www.hope.ac.uk/news/allnews/music-professor-marks-50-years-on-campus.html Accessed 6 July 2022.

Liverpool Hope University. 2022. Hope Community Engagement. https://www.hope.ac.uk/aboutus/hopecommunityengagement/ Accessed 6 July 2022.

MDW. 2022. About ARC. https://www.mdw.ac.at/ar_center/about-arc/ Accessed 8 July 2022.

milesdavis.com. 2022. Kind of Blue. https://www.milesdavis.com/albums/kind-of-blue/ Accessed 31 July 2022.

Music for Youth. 1994. Schools Prom 1994. https://issuu.com/musicforyouth/docs/programme-1994/16 Accessed 6 July 2022.

Norwegian Academy of Music. 2022. NordART. https://nmh.no/en/research/centres/nordart Accessed 8 July 2022.

Orpheus Institute. 2022. Orpheus Research Centre. https://orpheusinstituut.be/en/orpheus-research-centre Accessed 8 July 2022.

TES. 2022. Flexi-Band Pop Series Special Offer Bundle. https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/flexi-band-pop-series-special-offer-bundle-11843816 Accessed 31 July 2022.

The Capstone Theatre. 2022. Liverpool International Jazz Festival. http://www.thecapstonetheatre.com/jazzfestival/ Accessed 6 July 2022.