

Introduction

Collaborative Research on and through Music: Case Studies from the OICRM



In recent years, as it is probably the case for similar organizations throughout the world, the evolution of music research at OICRM has been characterized not only by a diversification of its objects, but also of approaches and methods for studying these. The academic world seems to be opening up to new perspectives, considering creation as a genuine means for acceding a knowledge, whose foundations combine science and intuition, method and improvisation, theory and experience. It therefore seemed appropriate to assemble a number of studies that illustrate this manifold production, while at the same time fostering reflection on the methodological crossovers between research and research-creation, which may lead to original interdisciplinary approaches.

Many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, such as philosophy, sociology and history¹ are by tradition interdisciplinary². In music, musicology is clearly interdisciplinary in essence, drawing on the theories and methods of history, philosophy and sociology, to name but these three. The same is true of composition, which draws not only on a technical foundation specific to each musical language concerned, but also on acoustics, musicology, ethnomusicology, philosophy, mathematics, computer science and several other disciplines, as we shall see in one of the proposed studies. Beyond strictly technical issues about instruments, interpretation is also linked to other disciplines, whether the health sciences (when it comes to ergonomics, for example), pedagogy (when it comes to transmission of knowledge) or musicology (when it comes to the history of instrumental or vocal practice, for instance).

Nevertheless, this interdisciplinarity does not exclude the fact that, within the study of music itself, composing and performing form disciplinary approaches in their own right, just as much as music pedagogy, musicology, acoustics or sociomusicology, which does not exclude the possibility of their calling upon computer science, management science, philosophy or psychology for assistance. In fact, given the development of research tools, the breadth of knowledge and the ease with which it can be disseminated, a substantial proportion of today's work in music necessarily involves cross-fertilization, or even manifold

1. See Simon LAFLAMME, « Recherche interdisciplinaire et réflexion sur l'interdisciplinarité », *Nouvelles perspectives en sciences sociales* 7/1 (2011), p. 49-64.

2. Contemporary practice in most areas of research, whether in the sciences or humanities, favors an interdisciplinary approach, especially when we take into account the complexity of the objects of study. However, we believe that it could prove interesting to take a different look at some of the human sciences, whose historical foundations built according to such an approach.

cross-fertilizations, of disciplines for its fulfilling its new research agenda. These crossovers are increasingly profound, as witness the study of the role of the performer in the experience of immersive music: thus “Weekly Meditations: redefining musical performance through immersion” puts to the test a compositional model based on a meditative approach. Such studies make it possible to go beyond a “multidisciplinary” or “pluridisciplinary” collage of disciplines, insofar as the overall reflection takes into account intersections of modes of thought in working out a musical material.

Within the scope of this dossier, it proved impossible for OICRM to explore all the dimensions of musical research. Following a call for contributions from members, however, two dominant orientations emerged for testing the stakes of interdisciplinary research in music: research-creation and research in music education. While research in musicology or ethnomusicology is intrinsically interdisciplinary, and therefore perhaps less novel than one might suppose, this does not mean that scientific productions (articles or other forms of production adapted to research-creation, for example) necessarily result from active collaboration involving several researchers. There are still barriers within the human sciences that are difficult to overcome. Yet interdisciplinarity, as applied in the studies presented in this issue, brings into play interaction, first between researchers and then between methods and practices used to explore new research objects.

1. Research and research-creation: what are the challenges of integration?

Research-creation in North American universities, as well as in higher music education institutions such as conservatories, has become a hallmark for these institutions. In fact, they are making it a key issue when it comes to offering a renewed portrait of professional teaching and research. However, such a change in dynamics takes time to materialize. One of the reasons for this is undoubtedly that in the institutions concerned, the notion that artistic practice may be patterned along foundations associated with research is hard to accept for practitioners, most of whom have never thought of their musical activity from this angle. Without going into the details of OICRM’s history, it shall be noted that the evolution of its membership over the past two decades has followed the rise of research-creation within the institutions represented. The arrival of a new generation of researcher-creators has altered the balance of disciplines, with greater openness towards research objects and methods related to musical practice (composition and performance). Under the pioneering impetus of certain universities and early researcher-creators, the Fonds Québécois de la Recherche - Société et Culture (FRQ-SC) very quickly developed a systematic approach to research-creation and, as part of its own activities, OICRM adopted their definition of research-creation. According to the FRQ-SC, research-creation “designates all research approaches that promote creation and aim to produce new aesthetic, theoretical, methodological, epistemological or technical knowledge”.³

Even more importantly, “these approaches must involve, in a variable way (depending on the practices and temporalities specific to each project): 1) creative or artistic activities (design, experimentation, technology, prototyping, etc.) AND 2) problematization of these

3. https://frq.gouv.qc.ca/programme/appui-a-la-recherche-creation-rc-frqsc-2024-2025/?_rt=MXwxHJLY2hlcm-NoZS1jcsOpYXRpb258MTcyMzY0NzAxMQ&_rt_nonce=3a1f22b6ea.

same activities (critical and theoretical grasp of the research-creation, creative or artistic process, conceptualization, etc.)”.⁴

The studies we propose in this issue test this definition through achievements in this field within OICRM, with a view to reinforcing the principle of creation and interpretation as ways of doing research in the humanities.

The relationship between music and the virtual environment is at the heart of the article “Partitions virtuelles ludomusicales (PVL): recherche-cr  ation vers une fusion entre musique et jeu” by Jesse Aidyn, Myriam Boucher and Dominic Arsenault. The aim of this study is to articulate the notion of play, shared between the gamer and the musician, and the conception of a musical work whose development is closely linked to the progress of a video game “in the manner of rhythm video games such as Guitar Hero or Rock Band, and endless runners (games that make us progress endlessly along an obstacle course)”. The research-creation project explores the relationship between music and games, where the rhythm of images and sounds seems to be the main expressive parameter that ensures the closest link between such two sensitive worlds.

J  r  mie Martineau, Jimmie Leblanc and Myriam Boucher’s study “Weekly Meditations: redefining musical performance through immersion”, which aims to rethink the role of the performer in the experience of immersive music, calls upon a different sound environment. This research-creation project uses Martineau’s creation of Meditations on a Thursday as a basis for investigating the impact of the composer’s intentions – in this case, creating a work inspired by the practice of meditation – on the interpretation by the musicians entrusted with performing the music. This study testifies to the interest that creators can develop about the way their music is perceived and received in an environment dominated by technology, in which the place of living beings remains nevertheless at the heart of their preoccupations. Although this study is based on a work whose features perhaps favor the technological primacy, it demonstrates above all that the musical experience in situ cannot be reduced to a strict dimension of sound.

The final study in this first part is entitled “Dialogue between research and creation: the composition of a musical work as a research tool”. Louis-  douard Thouin-Poppe, Isabelle H  roux and Jimmie Leblanc examine the creative process as a means for experimenting, and how the resulting musical work can measure the effect of extra-musical elements on the expressiveness of instrumental playing (on the guitar). If the project enables the composer to question his own practice, it also demonstrates that it is possible to “communicate” research and creation within a framework that is certainly restrictive, but has the advantage of carrying out the research part according to adapted scientific criteria.

2. Music education research

Almost everywhere in the world, music in schools raises a host of questions. The work carried out by OICRM members on this subject is numerous and varied. Two major research themes in OICRM’s scientific program bear witness to this diversity in terms of the populations concerned: “Teaching and learning with children and teenagers” and “Teaching and learning with adults”. The two texts we present in this issue are devoted to music in schools. While the first looks at the presence of popular music, the second proposes a different

4. https://frq.gouv.qc.ca/programme/appui-a-la-recherche-creation-rc-frqsc-2024-2025/?_rt=MXwxhJlY2hlcm-NoZS1jcsOpYXRpb258MTcyMzY0NzAxMQ&_rt_nonce=3a1f22b6ea.

perspective, taking as its subject the singular practice of musical games, which testifies to the fundamental aspect of music in children's daily lives.

In "Musiques populaires à l'école: confusion entre genre et pratique", Danick Trottier, Isabelle Héroux and Sébastien Boucher examine the diversity of musical genres used to teach music, and the resulting "uncertainties" for teachers in Quebec schools. Beyond difficulties of nomenclature, the article proposes a comparative reading, notably with the cases of Finland and the United Kingdom, in order to better determine the interest of this mix of genres as well as the true contribution of popular music. For a long time restricted to teaching the classical musical canon, teachers today have the leeway to reach out to younger generations in a way that is more faithful to their true sonic environment. However, this new configuration of the musical material that serves as a basis for musical learning requires careful monitoring, as it in no way guarantees young people's adherence. Furthermore, the freedom conferred by this decompartmentation of repertoires cannot compensate for students' low level, or even absence, of musical ability. Collaborative research is called upon to play an important role on such issues.

To carry out the study "Jeux musicaux de cours d'école, d'hier à aujourd'hui au Québec : comparaison, évolution et applications pédagogiques", Catherine Tardif, Hélène Boucher and Ons Barnat combined fieldwork and history, thanks to Manon Barbeau's short film *Comptines* (1975): they were able to carry out a comparative analysis of the repertoire collected in three Quebec regions in 2022. Over and above the analysis of a highly original repertoire that had, until now, attracted little attention from Quebec researchers, Tardif, Boucher and Barnat offer the community a reflection on the importance of paying attention to the full spectrum of musical manifestations, even the simplest ones, insofar as they can be useful even in the teaching of music at an elementary level. This work suggests that the study of "ordinary" phenomena opens up unsuspected scientific horizons, particularly in terms of disciplinary extension.

In this case, the importance of informal musical practice shows up through the notion of transmission thus highlighted. This importance is all the greater in that it questions the place that musical practice, whatever it may be, occupies in everyday life. The opening to a broader reflection, encompassing the history of the repertoire as well as the sociology of musical phenomena, cannot be achieved without an essential involvement of musical knowledge itself, which enables us to precisely define the object of study and its transformations.

I would like to thank my colleagues and their students who took part in this collective project for a thematic dossier devoted to OICRM in the journal *Musique en acte*. Their scientific proposals reflect their commitment to the development of research in a spirit of collaboration and sharing of knowledge and knowhow. I would also like to thank the journal's committee for accepting this project.