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A Concise Panorama of Doctoral Research at the Sibelius Academy

On 18 and 19 March 2019, the fourth edition of the Sibelius Academy Research Days descended on the halls of Helsinki Music Centre in downtown Helsinki. The event was organised by the students of both DocMus and MuTri Doctoral Schools and laid out an array of close to twenty research presentations in a variety of formats, mostly by the doctoral students. Without parallel sessions, the event presented a substantial cross-section of ongoing doctoral projects. The event also provided the nearly one hundred participants with a glimpse into research pursued by the faculty and provided researchers with career support.

At the end of the first day, an all-female panel – as it happened – shared their insights on internationalization and career coaching of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. Saara Harjula from the Helsinki EU Office cracked the nutshell of funding opportunities from the European Union, which expanded to a discussion of the variety of European networks by prof. Tanja Johansson. Postdoc researcher Guadalupe López-Íñiguez and doctoral researcher Sanna Kivijärvi shared their experiences of other funding agencies (such as Fulbright, Kone Foundation and the Academy of Finland), emphasizing the researcher's own activity and diligence: keeping your eyes and ears open, learning from others, using your chances or moving on, being frank with your questions, working hard and planning well ahead, even including up to twenty-year plans. Doctoral researcher Eveliina Sumelius-Lindblom related to the audience her approach to combining artistic and scientific research (and personal life), followed by the panel's concluding advice on researcher mobilization and alternative plans. One of the questions from the audience brought up an important but, until now, little-known fact: starting in fall 2019, there will be a music research minor available to master's students, bridging the gap to research studies at the doctoral level.

However, the main focus was on the presentations of current research. The only keynote of the short conference was presented by Tanja Johansson, professor of arts management and director of the MuTri Doctoral School: an identity perspective

to managing joint ventures in performing arts, based on her accumulated research. This solid and clear lecture served as a welcome display of research in arts management, perhaps too often left to the margins by music practitioners, regardless of the fact that, for instance, joint ventures such as studied here (e.g. Harpa in Reykjavík, Lincoln Center in New York, or Helsinki Music Centre) constitute much of the working environment and context for musicians.

The heart of the conference was the impressive selection of presentations by doctoral students on a variety of topics, delivered in different formats: two traditional 30-minute conference papers, nine shorter 15-minute spotlights, four 30-minute lecture recitals, and one 30-minute extended demonstration lecture, the format of which I discovered was suggested by the presenters. No posters were presented in this edition of the Research Days, but the audience was able to get acquainted with Dominik Schlienger's installation using interactive techniques for acoustic localization and positioning. This blend of formats ably conveyed what seemed best suited for each presentation.

The days began with an efficient spotlighting of five ongoing doctoral projects, varying from the issues of negotiating democracy in popular music education (by Minja Koskela) to the temporal and cultural distances to “desire” in early 17th-century Italian music (by Marianna Henriksson), and from children narrating the meanings they give to singing (by Analia Capponi-Savolainen) to the domestication of Finnish popular music concerts from the 1960s to the 1980s (by Mikael Huhtamäki) and to a thematised cross-section of post-tonal guitar music by professional Finnish composers (by Jyrki Myllärinen).

On the second day, another set of four spotlights was delivered, spanning from Selim Palmgren's exposé on the tradition of Finnish piano music (by Henrik Järvi) to the analysis of the “immoral” in Ann-Elise Hannikainen's piano concerto and her first performance of that piece (by Markus Virtanen), and from learning the Finnish language through choral music (by Johanna Lehtinen-Schnabel) to “awareness-raising” through choral music in the Finnish public radio of the 1930s (by Inari Tilli).

The varied topics are, of course, associated with varied research tasks, methods and channels of reporting – different strands of scientific and artistic research in music. While there were differences in how well the presentations took advantage of or complied with customary, even traditional, procedures of delivery, the tight juxtaposition of the presentations positively highlighted, in my opinion, the parallel aspects of research. It may be worthwhile to underscore here how, regardless of the audience, they are likely to be interested in 1) *what* exactly is being studied, and *why*; 2) *how* current research relates to previous research; 3) *how* this particular topic in this particular context is being studied; 4) *what* the (projected) *outcome* will be; and 5) *what* the *ramifications* of the study might be. (This of course holds for all formats, and not only the spotlights.) No researcher communicating their work can take it for granted that the audience is already aware of these; those who best connect with

the audience in their delivery not only pay due attention to these parameters, but might even do so with good humour, as we were able to do at this conference.

Opening the second day, the solidly-delivered conference papers by Inkeri Jaakkola and Johanna Talasniemi focused on the opera *The Damask Drum* by Paavo Heininen and the history of soprano Aulikki Rautawaara's concert repertoire, respectively, reflecting significant parts of the scientific profile of the academy, particularly in classical music.

Unfortunately, the performer of the first lecture recital had to cancel, and the audience needed to settle for recorded sound. The second-day lecture recitals did however include live performances in addition to verbal presentations and recordings. Regardless, all four attested to the power of communicating research through multiple channels, with verbal reflections complemented by examples of artistic praxis, or rather *vice versa*: is new knowledge striven for and consequently communicated in the artistic doctorates not only secondarily expressed verbally, but primarily embodied in the actual practices of music?

In fact, the role of embodiment was largely the topic of Jarkko Hartikainen's presentation, here in the context of the composer's praxis and its communication with the performer. The other three lecture recitals, with live performances by artist-researchers, likewise dependably delivered on the second day. These included Ilkka Heinonen's project on *joubikko*, the Finnish bowed lyre, as a case of the transition of cultural phenomena across contexts (here across Hispanic Baroque and Finnish folk music); Naiara de la Puente's project on how the bellows are used for breathing in contemporary accordion music; and Sebastian Silén's project (performed with Martin Malmgren) on studying, recording and – due to somewhat unforeseen turns – also extensively editing the works for violin and piano by Fredrik Pacius and Robert Kajanus, violinist-composers (among their other roles) and contemporaries of Jean Sibelius.

Finally, concluding the second-day presentations proper, composer Miika Hyttiäinen and singer Lisa Fornhammar exhibited the dimensions of their collaboration, the former focusing on composition in experimental music theatre and translation between composers and singers, the latter on collaborative practices in higher vocal music education in a contemporary context. By refining their own professionalism in creative ways and working together across traditional paths (and the two doctoral schools), each has manifested in e.g. promising tools for mapping the singers' voice, and means for graphical notation, both working towards better communication and understanding between composer and performer.

The SibA Research Days were a concise panorama (mainly) of the research projects of the doctoral students, both artistic and scientific, at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki. The organization of the event was on a par with standard national and international conferences, including the welcoming atmosphere. In particular, this is thanks to the organisers (Olga Heikkilä, Samuli Korke-

lainen, Sirkku Rintamäki and Pia Siirala, together with Hanna Ojamo and Eveliina Sumelius-Lindblom), session chairs and technical support, all taken care of by student forces. As a doctoral conference, the SibA Research Days have evolved into a balanced set of presentations, in terms of topics, schedules, formats, venues, and stages of projects, which together keep the audience engaged. The conference offers valuable experience for the participants of engaging in presenting and communicating their own research and everything that comes with it – whether artistic or scientific. It also hosts opportunities for others to get acquainted with and follow the course of individual doctoral projects, and for mutual support and insightful comments. Naturally, any series of conferences needs to consider what might be subject to change and improvement from edition to edition. This time, perhaps the panel and the workshop, both with well-set goals, did not quite reach the audience in the best possible way, partly due to the timing. Perhaps faculty and postdoctoral project researchers might also be more accessible, although there are also other channels available to that end, and it may be that with increased focus in that direction – or the inclusion of other academies of UniArts – such a change might unnecessarily alter the identity and function of the conference. All in all then, I trust the Research Days left audience members, including me, with a sense of appreciation and inspiration, and looking forward to the next edition.