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Version: Accepted Version

Book Section:
Burland, K, Spencer, M and Windsor, L (2017) Exploring, enhancing and evaluating musical 'doctorateness': perspectives on performance and composition. In: Nilsson, F, Dunin-Woyseth, H and Janssens, N, (eds.) Perspectives on Research Assessment in Architecture and the Arts: Discussing Doctorateness. Routledge Research in Architecture. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, UK, pp. 114-128. ISBN: 9781138695573.

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Exploring, enhancing and evaluating musical 'doctorateness': perspectives on performance and composition

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Compared to their traditional counterparts, practice-based doctoral programmes are a relatively recent development, emerging in the early 1980s (Candy, 2006). Whilst their value is not disputed, a lack of clarity about how they are described (research-led/research-based), as well as their purpose, structure and assessment across different fields of study means that understanding the characteristics of 'doctorateness' in relation to the creative and performing arts is complicated (Candy, 2006, p.3). Previous research investigating practice-based RDs in music suggests that there needs to be more discussion of the 'practices and issues surrounding them' (Draper & Harrison, 2010, p.1), with reports that students feel 'ill-informed' (Draper and Harrison, 2011, p.97) about the written document which supports the portfolio of practice, and there is general uncertainty about what constitutes 'good practice in supervision and assessment' (Hannan, 2008, p.128). Studies investigating practice-based RDs in the fields of Art and Design also have relevance for understanding musical 'doctorateness'. Work by Collinson (2005) for example, portrays a view of a RD in which the student commences his/her studies with a strong foundation of 'the creative self' (p. 716) with 'considerable expertise in making (p.721). Collinson suggests that there are two aspects of this expertise which characterise research students working in Art and Design:

> 'First, there was a haptic facility (Rose, 1999) that allowed them to manipulate materials and constructed objects, a capacity based on an appreciation of the qualities and limits of the materials with which they worked….Second, and intimately connected to this manual dexterity and sensitivity, was a particular way of seeing (Goodwin, 1994, 1995), developed to a high degree of sophistication, and attuned to features such as the synthesis of colours, the relationship between objects, the configuration of different shapes, the complexities of light etc.' (p.721)

It is clear that there are parallels here with the technical expertise required of musicians embarking upon a practice-based RD in composition or performance and Collinson's work suggests that these qualities underpin success as a doctoral student. The link between music and self-identity is also likely to be of relevance to doctoral students in music. It is well-documented that performers and composers have musical identities which connect closely with their conceptions of self (Burland, 2005; MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2002) and therefore it is likely that practice-based doctoral students will undergo a 'transformation of the self' (Hockey, 2003, p.90) during the process.

Collinson's (2005) work does, however, highlight the unease created by the constraints of a RD 'that in a sense are the antithesis of the creative freedom previously experienced' (2005, p.718) and this concern is based on the perceived threat of 'routines of creativity being laid bare' (p.720). Despite some of the challenges associated with the current implementation of practice-based RDs, there is general agreement that by the end of the process, the successful candidate will 'begin to conceptualise research itself as a creative process…similarities between their making and this new endeavour gradually became evident' (Hockey, 2003, p. 89).

With this broader context in mind, practice-based RD candidates in Performance and Composition provide a useful lens through which to examine the meaning of 'doctorateness' in the creative and performing arts: such students must immerse themselves in their chosen field, acquiring awareness and competency in order to produce performances/works that are novel or contribute to knowledge (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2012); they must satisfy both academic demands as well as those relating to professional practice (ibid.); they must focus on both product and process (ibid.); and at the same time consider professional or personal identity. This chapter considers practice-based composition and performance RDs exploring firstly, the characteristics of successful students and projects and secondly, the process of preparing a practice-based PhD – using the voices of students and supervisors to characterise 'doctorateness' in music.

In order to contextualise the thematic discussion of the data which follows, brief overview of practice-based RDs at the University of Leeds is provided below. The development of practice as research at the university is considered before a more detailed discussion about what practice-based PhDs mean for those who already have a professional background as a performer or composer.

Practice as research: PhD programmes at the University of Leeds

In 2003, the Schools of Music and Performance and Cultural Industries (PCI) at the University of Leeds developed protocols specifically for practice-based RD programmes. While it had been possible to do relatively ad hoc PhDs in music composition and performance before this point, these protocols were more nuanced and brought practice directly in line with other thesis-based PhD programmes at the University. These protocols now allowed for theatrical performance, dance, and installation artworks as well as music composition and performance, including improvisation. The word count stipulated for the accompanying critical commentary was set at 15,000 words. Several years later, changes were made to the protocols to allow for larger commentaries of between 15,000 and 50,000 words (reflecting ranges reported in Hannan, 2008), a flexibility that in part reflected student requests for more space to expand on often complex methodological background discussion and also to accommodate certain types of artistic practice

that involved a significant quantity of audience questionnaires in the form of appendices which at Leeds are counted within the word count.

It is clear at local and institutional levels that the portfolio of practice/document of practice is the central focus of assessment at the University of Leeds and that the critical commentary is supporting evidence. This is not to say the latter is unimportant, but it allows the postgraduate researcher to further justify their creative decisions and, to some extent, potentially set the agenda for the final examination viva. In certain instances, a PhD viva can be preceded by a presentation of some of the practice (for example with a performance of a 20 minute 'conference paper-cum-music composition' for the examiners prior to the viva). All PhD examination vivas at Leeds are conducted by an internal examiner, normally from the same school, and an external examiner from another institution and they are closed examinations. Unlike some other UK institutions, Leeds does not use independent chairs for these examinations except in exceptional circumstances (usually where an internal examiner has little experience or is new to the process). It is possible for the postgraduate researcher to request that one of their supervision team attend the viva: in instances where this is the case, the supervisor is not permitted to speak or take part in the proceedings. Culturally, it is quite common for PhD students in art theory and practical arts areas to make this request, whereas it is unusual to find this practice in Science/Technology/Engineering/Medicine areas.

The types of artistic practice that constitute postgraduate research projects in the Faculty of PVAC are extremely varied and can include significant levels of interdisciplinary working; for example, one PhD student in the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural studies (FAHACS) focused on the intersection of his visual art with music. Similarly, another student recently completed a PhD concerned with ideas of 'the voice and the lens'. There have been other examples of cross-faculty supervisory arrangements, for example a current project looking at music and autonomic control of the heart is supervised across the School of Music and the School of Biomedical Sciences and there have been instances of collaboration between practice postgraduate researchers in different schools, for example the opera 'Green Angel' which was submitted by a composition student as part of her PhD portfolio in the School of Music and which she collaborated on with a postgraduate researcher in the School of PCI.

Postgraduate researchers with a professional background

Since the mid-2000s, the School of Music has received a relatively steady intake of performers with a professional background applying to undertake PhD study, in part due to the expertise on staff in areas of baroque and romantic music performance practice. In the last three years, there has been an increase in interest

from professional composers and contemporary music performers. In part, this interest is due to what John Hockey calls 'forms of adaptation'. That is

> , '...students [who] had been attracted to the prospect of three years funding enabling the further development of their creative practice. This was an attractive proposition, particularly in the context of the financial difficulties that normally face most artists and designers in the UK…To these individuals, pursuing a research degree was to some extent incidental. In a sense they did not take seriously their formal involvement, what one might term their institutional contract. Their objective was to push the boundaries of their creative practice as far as possible in the time in which they received funding and resources.' (Hockey, 2003, p.86-87)

There are other less cynical reasons for professionals to apply for PhD programmes of course. One student currently studying with Spencer had been intending to write a book about his creative practice for some years but his professional career as a composer prevented such an undertaking: the discipline of a three year PhD offered him a practical framework for collating his ideas about the compositional process.

Hockey also finds that there can be issues with the critical commentary component of the PhD:

> 'Developing the craft of academic writing is a difficult enough task for students whose disciplines demand a high facility in writing at undergraduate level, but for art and design students it constitutes a particularly daunting task, which produces a reality 'shock' to their artistic identity.' (Hockey, 2003, p.85)

To some extent this is a valid differentiation and postgraduate researchers who have been undergraduates and Masters students at the same institution do have a better understanding of the expectations of academic writing. On the other hand, professional practitioners are aware of these expectations at the start of the programme through discussion with potential supervisors.

Collinson's (2005) discussion of the tension between 'institutional processes and academic demands' and the 'autonomy and control' (p. 718) emphasised by those working in the creative arts is reflected amongst practice-based research students across the Faculty of PVAC and advice at school level as well as Faculty inductions focuses on developing strategies for managing these types of responses, primarily by outlining the 'academic contract' expectations of becoming a research student. Collinson rightly points out that, as Bourdieu states, the student 'constructs and

inhabits a form of synthesized *habitus*' (p.25), one which her respondents suggest is a constantly changing space, both positively and negatively.

Draper and Harrison's (2010) reflections on practice-based doctorateness in music raise many interesting questions that are more relevant to conservatoire systems than university contexts. However, importantly, they note that the 'temporal nature' of music practitioners requires careful consideration of how these practical elements might be documented. Perhaps of more relevance is Blom, Bennett and Wright's research about how artists in academia view artistic practice (2011) which states at the outset, 'often [...] recognition of their artistic research requires the underpinning process and thinking to be documented in traditional written format.' (p.360). In the UK, this aspect has arguably not been properly outlined or clarified for academics submitting to the national research audit (Research Excellence Framework), nor has it filtered down to postgraduate research student projects. In general, Blom, Bennett and Wright's (2011) findings chime more with experiences of University of Leeds practitioners; one of their conclusions is that:

> '[w]hen combined with an understanding of how artists in academia move fluidly between different roles, this calls for recognition, by universities with visual and performing arts courses, of the multi-faceted identity of the artist in academia and the need to educate students about this likely identity' (p.370).

This should be a key expectation and goal of any higher education institution offering PhD programmes in artistic practice, but it seems that there is still some work to do in this area. It is clear from this context that conceptions of doctorateness are still undergoing some development and that they vary widely between institutions and across Europe. In the next section we describe an interview study with two supervisors and two practice-based RD students in order to gain a richer insight into the experience of studying a RD in music composition or performance and to understand more about the process and experiences of such degrees.

Exploring doctorateness: perspectives from students and supervisors

In order to explore perspectives on musical doctorateness, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with two supervisors (Spencer and Windsor, the two co-authors of this chapter) and two successful practice-based doctoral students – one performer/improviser (Max) and one composer (Alan). Max was supervised by Windsor, and Alan by both Spencer and Windsor. The data discussed here are therefore centred on the specific context of the University of Leeds outlined above which allows a focused consideration of musical 'doctorateness' within one particular institutional environment. This facilitates a rich discussion and provides

a detailed insight into the experiences and processes associated with studying a practice-based RD in composition or performance.

The interviews with the students explored: motivations to study as doctoral students, alongside their choice of supervisor; the development of the practice throughout the RD; their experiences of the process (including key milestones, successes and challenges); and the personal characteristics that helped them to succeed. The interviews with the supervisors explored experiences of supervising practice-based research; their roles in the development of the students' practice and the way in which it develops over time; the views about the personal qualities of successful projects and students; the link between practice and academic requirements; and the nature of the student-supervisor relationship. Each interview lasted between 60-90 minutes and was susequently transcribed verbatim.

The interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which is a technique that explores an individual's perception of his/her experiences whilst acknowledging that it is never entirely possible to gain an 'insider's perspective' as the researcher's own conceptions both complicate and inform the process (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). Analysis develops from simple summaries of the data, to more interpretative activity which results in a series of themes and associated sub-themes which provide the structure for the following section.

The current careers of the two students are also worth noting here as context for the discussion which follows below. Max is now a successful performer-improviser who performs and records regularly. Alan is a freelance composer, conductor and arranger who also works in arts administration at a reputable music college in the UK.

Results

Four main themes arise from our data which characterize the process, experience and success of practice-based RDs in music. These relate to: the personal characteristics of the doctoral students; relationships with supervisors; the ways in which practice is defined and processes are established; and factors relating to assessment. The themes emerge from all interviews, and represent the views of students and supervisors; despite the range of experience represented by the participants, there was remarkable internal consistency in their responses. It is also worth noting that whilst the supervisors' experiences associated with our two student respondents were discussed in the interviews, we did also consider their extensive and broader experience as supervisors of practice-based research degrees. The four emergent themes are now discussed in the sections which follow.

Personal characteristics

It was clear from discussion with the supervisors that successful practice-based RD students studying performance or composition had unusual or special characteristics that made them well-suited to the degree. Max, for example, worked with Windsor, who remembers his interview:

> 'It was very, very clear that we wanted him to do a PhD at Leeds. We listened to him play, we talked to him, I'd heard various things about him and I think there was a sense that 'this guy's an…award winning performer, but he's not typical, he's unusual'. There was something about the fact that he had some credentials in a sense but also [he] didn't fit the mould [which] was very attractive'. (Windsor, 4)

Max was obviously an excellent musician, demonstrating the 'haptic facility' described by Collinson (2005, p. 721) but something about his approach to his playing sparked initial interest in his supervisor – it was the fact that he 'didn't fit the mould' that was appealing, and indeed, as the discussion below highlights, Max's approach to his PhD built on his independent and critical approach to his performances. The ways in which an individual's interests and experiences combine also seems to indicate potential to study a practice-based PhD:

> '[Paul] presented to us as [being] very unusual, he had an interesting background, [he was an] incredibly talented performer but he was clearly a thinker, he had read some interesting literature about music and phenomenology and all this kind of thing and he had a bit of a background in philosophy from his schooling…so he was an interesting character. And I think what we aimed to do was…if people had interesting ideas we tried to get them on board and then kind of shape what they were doing into a PhD'. (Windsor, 2)

Finding a balance between knowledge and practice is perhaps the typical expectation for a practice-based PhD student (cf. Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2012), but there is a suggestion here that, for musicians, there has to be something more than this, that there needs to be 'something unusual about them to offer, there's something of quality that is about them' (Windsor, 10). This also suggests that practice-based RDs in music rely on the connection between the individual and their practice; in the instances described throughout the interviews, the practice was already in development (and of a high quality) before the PhD commenced. The decision to apply for a practice-based PhD also indicates an openmindedness and willingness to engage critically with practice and it is such qualities which enable the research to progress (cf. Collinson, 2005), as Alan explains: 'having a natural inclination toward trying things in practice rather than 'settling' for the theory also made me well-suited [to studying a practice-based PhD]' (Alan, 3). Indeed, as the

discussion below indicates, openness and adaptability are central features of practice-based RDs in music.

One final characteristic of the practice-based PhD students is their passion and drive for their practice. This is perhaps unsurprising, since the relationship between musical practice, identity and motivation has been reported widely in the literature (cf. Burland, 2005; Burland, 2012; MacDonald, Hargreaves, Miell, 2002), but in this particular instance, it seems that passion and drive emerge from a hunger to explore and explain:

> 'I think it is all about how you engage, and about latching onto something that you don't understand but are hungry, yet there's an appetite for, for discovery and of investigation…I think that's key to all PhDs 'cause if you don't have that, you obviously can't, won't be able to sustain the work'…I think that's it, I just think it's down to appetite really' (Max, 4)

Max's comments reflect Draper and Harrison's research which suggests that 'imagination and commitment have been engaged by ideas of personal growth, intellectual pursuit and knowledge transfer' (2011, p. 92) and are reminiscent of theories of intrinsic motivation associated with high levels of musical achievement (cf. McPherson & McCormick, 1999). The passion with which Max describes his thirst for knowledge suggests that the ways in which performance/compositional practice combines with critical self-reflection and impacts on individual identity plays a vital role in the success of practice-based PhDs in music. Indeed, the interaction between *practice---self-reflection---identity* underpins the way in which the RD develops and culminates (cf. Collinson, 2005).

Defining practice, establishing process

Across the board, the participants discussed the ways in which their definitions of practice emerged and transformed during the degree, as part of an organic and adaptable process. Exploration and reflection were central processes but were grounded in inherent high quality and clear research aims.

> 'if there's nothing to come back to, there's no 'big idea' you just end up going all over the place; and I think with all the practice-based PhDs that I've had that I felt comfortable with, I've had a clear idea what that [big idea] is and I've felt I can allow that to develop away or back to that central idea as long as it's there, as long as you can find that [big idea] in maybe the first year'(Windsor, 4).

One of the risks associated with practice-based RDs in music is that without a clear understanding of the scope of the research it can drift and lose its focus. In many ways, the process of developing a practice-based research project should be

'explored as a process akin to experimental forms of research' (Schippers, 2007, p.35) and a clear rationale for the development of the research is therefore vital.

One of the central aims of Max's research related to making the processes surrounding his improvised performance more transparent:

> 'One of the things in my agenda was to make the work understandable and available to other improvisers, for people also wanting to try and unpick what they're doing and why they're doing it and to draw conclusions and to help that inform their future works and to be, I suppose, quite confessional about it' (Max, 6)

As discussed above, Max did not have the same academic background as some of the other practice-based PhD students he studied alongside, but he saw his PhD as an opportunity to develop and enhance his practice, using 'the rigour of it, the self-reflection, the kind of the critical reflection…I was really trying to learn from what I did (Max, 2). Max's desire for processual transparency are in direct opposition to the concerns expressed by Art and Design students (Collinson, 2005), but are not unusual amongst students in music. The two quotes above highlight the importance of his identity as a performer to the emergent RD, but more significantly, perhaps, the refinement of his skills of critical self-reflection became integrated into his identity, such that they still play a vital role in his practice:

> I found that I suppose throughout my course of study I was able to challenge my insecurities and I suppose it's a bit like being in therapy [laughs] in that…within the framework of the PhD…anything goes, you're permitted to go wherever you want, you can, you've got this conceptual space in which to think and to be insecure and to work through problems and to conclude and to lay, to put things to bed or to justify things or to…And I think that's ultimately what to me the point of doing a PhD is, it's the beginning of an approach which hopefully doesn't, I mean you're still writing and being inquisitive and looking at things and, and so I think if you, if one gets it right, they'll find themselves, you know, it's like having a companion for the rest of your life (Max, 21)

Practice-based RDs in music offer the student opportunities to explore and to take risks and in so doing, they are forced to reflect on their practice in ways that will help them to develop their ideas (cf. Hockey, 2003). In discussing his two highly established and reputable composition students, Spencer highlights how such opportunities are as useful for those with established careers, as they are for younger students:

> 'For [already professional composer] it's probably the starting point of a book about his practice; and if they get a scholarship it's time, it's time and money to do something that they haven't had time and money to do before because they've had to earn a living. So I think…it's a reflection, a self-reflection' (Spencer, 9)

Time and space seem vital to allow for practice to develop; more than this, however, it is important that the way in which the PhD develops responds directly to the individual's skills, experiences, identity and needs. As Windsor stated, 'it's very individual; my student has to – with the supervisor – discover something that is useful to them' (9). The individualistic nature of practice-based RDs in music is clearly essential, but, as we discussed above, this can create problems, particularly in terms of the scope and focus of the project. The role of the supervisor, and the nature of the student-supervisor relationship are therefore critical for ensuring that the research has rigour, purpose, and integrity.

Relationships with supervisors

Since practice-based RDs in music seem to be closely connected to the individual's identity, it is unsurprising that the student-supervisor relationship is vital to the success of the research. The students spoke of their supervisors highly, extolling their virtues and positive working relationships. For example, Alan valued the positive impact of Spencer's supervision on the quality of his work as well as his wider opportunities:

> 'I knew him well and trusted him enormously. We worked very well together, which allowed us to get some amazing projects going. As I said, being given the freedom to seek private tutelage with some highly regarded professional composers was a very generous bonus, too. (Alan, 1)

For Max, on the other hand, Windsor's approachable style and their shared interests benefited the working relationship: 'I already found Luke to be very amenable and approachable and we had a lot of common listening and a lot of common…I mean it was almost like we agreed on everything all the time' (Max, 9). These two examples demonstrate that the student-supervisor relationship must be individualized and therefore it is the supervisor's responsibility to ascertain the nature of each student's needs. In likening the student-supervisor relationship to that of 'a kind of traditional kind of Chinese model with a master and an apprentice' (Windsor, 11), Windsor summarises his perceptions of supervisor responsibilities:

> 'You have to kind of get into the student's world, and not be fully in, but you have to be critical, but you also have to believe because as soon as

> you stop believing in them you've lost it, you can't carry on, you can't because it is potentially stoic, you have to have faith' (Windsor, 11).

Trust between supervisor and student is key; since practice-based RDs in music are so closely connected to the individual's identity, shared goals and respect are important in order for the student to have the confidence to take risks and explore or challenge their practice (cf. Draper & Harrison, 2011, p.94). This is not necessarily straightforward or simple; on the one hand being too comfortable with a supervisor can result in a certain amount of complacency (Alan, 3), whilst on the other too much crossover can cause the relationship to breakdown (Spencer, 8). In a system which values a close connection between the research interests of the student and supervisor, Spencer's experience highlights how this may be a risky strategy, perhaps particularly when either party loses trust or confidence in the other.

Whilst the supervisors generally spoke enthusiastically about their supervision experiences, Windsor in particular highlighted that practice-based PhDs in music can feel quite risky:

> 'I did not find him difficult to supervise…I was terrified that everything was going to go wrong, not necessarily because of him, just because of the music that he was doing and it was…challenging…I found him incredibly exhilarating to supervise' (Windsor, 9)

The freedom to explore and to question practice can result in unpredictability; the individualistic nature of practice-based RDs in music also means that the experience of supervising each student is quite different because individual student needs and goals need to be accommodated. As the scope of practice-based RDs in music can vary widely, clear articulation of their limits and requirements is very important; however, experience of the assessment and examination of these research degrees is inconsistent and can cause uncertainty and frustration (Draper & Harrison, 2011).

Assessment, contexts and commonality

As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the role of the commentary in a practice-based RD is that of supplementary evidence. Discussion about the relationship between the portfolio of practice and the commentary revealed the diverse range of approaches that this could take. Alan expressed frustration at the limited word count stating that 'keeping the whole thing together with so few words allowed for my thesis element, I actually thought the result was too dense a read. There was a lot to cram in!' (Alan, 3). However, other students took a more flexible approach to the commentary, choosing to write more extensive commentaries, regardless of the guidelines. Spencer describes how Lola approached hers:

> 'I think [she] was the first one who said 'I'm doing 50,000 words and I'm doing this enormous portfolio which includes an opera'. So, I think that was a bit of a game-changer because I don't think that was the intention at all to have the same size of portfolio' (Spencer, 6).

The content of the commentary also varies widely, from philosophical or psychological theorization to a more self-reflective and personal account of the practice.

> 'I was becoming aware that it could easily slip into a memoir, a diary account, really easily, and I think as I was writing about sort of the pre-concert conditions for one of the performances, I wrote it and looked at it and thought 'hang on a minute, no this is too informal', there was something wrong. And so I stripped it right back and … got rid of this sort of poetic description of the weather…or whatever it was … even early on I felt that whatever written documentation there was, I wanted it to be understood by the average Joe on the street, or somebody who had a vague interest in music and could listen to it, pick it up and go 'oh you know, that's interesting' (Max, 13)

Given the data discussed so far, it is unsurprising that there is such diversity in the nature and scope of the commentary submission (and in the portfolios too, though this was discussed much less by all respondents). Since the practice develops gradually and in direct response to the individual and his/her self-reflections and desired outcomes, the commentary must necessarily be flexible and adaptable too. However, it seems from the data that a lack of clarity on the role of the portfolio and commentary can cause broader institutional confusion and, at times, cause frustration (cf. Draper & Harrison, 2005). Max described a conversation with a fellow practice-based PhD student:

> '…he was relaying a conversation he was having with somebody who argued that us guys who were doing a practice-based PhD weren't…required to submit as much written work and therefore should justify more why…we had to provide further, it was as if what we were doing wasn't valid because there wasn't enough written material…he said 'no well, we're making new work, so if anything, it's you who is sitting writing books [laughs] that actually…why should we, but you're writing about music and yet we're making music, so why should we be made to justify in extra…so why can't we be academic *as* practitioners, why should we have to turn into musicologists?' (Max, 16)

This suggests that even in a music department there is uncertainty about the scope and nature of practice-based RDs, especially in relation to the work which is submitted. The respondents shared tales of being told 'you should be doing an ethnomusicology PhD' (Windsor, 8) and that 'certainly we've had external examiners come in who have not understood the relationship between the commentary and the practice, and getting externals to talk to the practice is very difficult' (Spencer, 7). This clearly highlights that there is a need for wider discussion about the value of practice-based RDs in music – an argument articulated clearly by Hannan (2008). A community of practice-based PhD students can be useful for providing clarity about the nature of the degrees in a musical context and can ensure some internal consistency in the scope and nature of the work submission; perhaps institutions should also consider sharing practice across the organization in order to foster a more open and flexible approach to this kind of postgraduate research degree. The ultimate goal is for the focus of the viva to be on the portfolio of practice, with explanation provided by the commentary, as described so positively by Max:

> 'the good thing about the viva was that we spent, well an hour and a half at least…discussing music, and the stuff about the actual writing and what you've written was almost like an endnote…[the examiners were] talking about the actual music and so it was great because they'd actually listened to it' (Max, 10).

Conclusions

This chapter highlights the diverse ways in which practice-based PhDs have been recently implemented at the University of Leeds. Despite the fact that Leeds made early strides in developing the research degrees, it seems that approaches to their design and examination are not unified. This is partly due to the necessity that practice-based RDs in music are individualized according to the needs, goals and current practice of the students. The interaction of three factors - *practice—self-reflection—identity* - underpin the shape and progress of the project, and this is supplemented by positive working relationships with supervisors. Expectations of supervisors are extremely high, and their skills of empathy and understanding are of paramount importance; mutual trust provides a supportive environment in which the student has the freedom to take risks and to explore their ideas in full. At Leeds there seems to be clear understanding that the PhD is awarded on the basis of the portfolio of practice; however, the extent to which that is understood within the institution and beyond is negligible. Practice-based RDs in music are occasionally viewed with suspicion and misunderstanding; perhaps their conceptualization as different from more traditional experimental research projects exacerbates this problem (Schippers, 2007). Cross-institutional communities of students and supervisors may go someway to developing shared understanding, but clearly a broader debate about practice-as-research is still required. Hannan's (2008) call for

greater dissemination of practice-based music research (and the accompanying commentaries for RDs) is certainly justified by the data reported here. It shouldn't be a surprise when a viva focuses on the practice, but our data suggests that a consistent approach is still some way off. Practice-based RDs should celebrate individualism and originality; practice is usually fully integrated with the individual's identity and to ignore that would mean overlooking what makes the practice special in the first place. Finding a way to ensure consistency with the required flexibility is the challenge which now needs to be considered.

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