

## Practice-Based Methodological Design for Performance-Composition and Interdisciplinary Music Research

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### Abstract

Practice-based research has gained increasing prominence in the field of creative arts enquiry. Its engagement has fueled disruptive discourse on its nature, methodology and application in music research. Textbooks and journal publications on practice in arts-based research and a host of eminent practitioner-scholars have contributed to this nascent field of study. Several of these publications focus on the creative arts industry with fewer discourse on practice-based research approaches in the subdomains of music. This article deliberates on the multi-facets of practice-based approaches in performance, composition, and interdisciplinary music research. It shares the process of crafting methodological designs that encapsulate research in and of practice. Keywords that frame practice-based techniques include terms such as praxis, divergent and multi-methodological processes, design thinking, and research about/through/for practice as represented by performative-compositional artefacts and their accompanying discourse. Two exemplars are discussed. It argues that practice-oriented research transcends discipline borders encompassing interdisciplinary domains within multidisciplinary co-creational practice. In the author's music-health studies, she views the interdisciplinarity of science-arts research as interpolated dimensions of collaborative scientific knowledge within an embodied cultural space that yields transformative creativities of translational research to reach its targeted community of users. Practice-centred research in music therefore embraces spheres of investigations with research-informed practice as its focus and its artefacts and discourse as inputs of and outputs from that research, incorporating the overarching paradigms of practice-led research, practice-based research, and creative research in the performing arts.

*Keywords:* Bespoke Music-Narration, composition, interdisciplinary, methodological design, performance, practice-based research

## **Introduction and Overview**

Creative arts researchers and practitioners thrive on displacing conventional practice in their search for novelty and authenticity, often leaving distinctive hallmarks of their innovation and ingenuity. The quest for originality necessitates a deconstructive mind, a critical reflection of one's own expertise and reflexive action of research-informed practice. It embodies a skillful articulation of the theoretical, conceptual, empirical, and methodological processes which frames, informs and shapes that practice. In addition to providing evidence of artistic practice, a critique of extant and new knowledge on the exploratory processes in crafting the creative artefact is expected in the form of an accompanying exegesis or thesis for research endeavours that have been declared as practice-based in nature (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Draper & Harrison, 2011; Smith & Dean, 2011).

Definitions and features of practice-led and practice-based research have evolved since its initial proposition as the academic-practitioner divide narrows (Barrett & Bolt, 2019; Nelson, 2013). Generally, practice-led research focuses on the nature and operational significance of practice, whereas practice-based research is primarily represented by creative outputs in the form of original artefacts and artistic endeavours such as performances, compositions, dance, and theatre, which are accompanied by textual analyses, critical reflection, discourse, exegeses, or theses. Nevertheless, the proliferation of terms relating to practice "as" and "in" research may lead to multiple interpretations in higher education awards. For instance, the programme standards for the performing arts published by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency stipulates that the PhD by Research (Practice-led/Lab-based and Creative/Production Work) necessitates the submission of two assessment requirements, namely, a portfolio of original creative works and a thesis as evidence of a high level of practical and critical skills. The ratio of the thesis to the creative work/production is within the range of 40:60 or 30:70 (Programme Standards: Performing Arts, 2014, pp. 21-22). However, the Doctor of Musical Arts award is described as a "practice-based programme" where students are required to undertake research. Presentations/performance of musical/creative works, depending on the area of specialisation, must be accompanied by an exegesis (ibid, p. 23).

In view of the different assessment requirements for practice-led and practice-based awards in higher education, questions may be raised as to the scope and depth of practice orientated research. Issues may arise regarding the relationship between the thesis or exegesis and the portfolio of creative works. Queries as to what frames the methodology when adopting practice-led/based research and how is it different to more conventional processes are pertinent. The way in which the outcomes of practice-based research are translated into journal publications is a challenge. Serendipitously, these are anomalies that shape the process and products of practice-based research in music and the creative arts. This article extrapolates the multi-facets of practice-based research which encompasses research-informed practice as its focus and its creative artefacts and discourse as outputs of that research. It posits "practice-centred" research as a collective term which

incorporates the overarching paradigms of practice-based research, practice-led research, and practice-oriented research in the performing arts. It further delineates the process of crafting a methodological design that encapsulates research in and of practice. It argues how performance and composition research are inherently interrelated as one critically informs the other through the engagement of disruptive discourse, praxis in theory building, design thinking and constructive alignment strategies. The result is an overarching methodological model that encompasses the interconnected dimensions of practice-led and practice-based research in the integrated fields of performance, composition, and interdisciplinary music research.

### **Disruptive Streaks of Practice-Based Research**

Practice-based and practice-led research has gained increasing prominence in the field of creative arts enquiry. Its engagement has fueled disruptive discourse regarding its scope, methodology, outcomes, and significance in music research. In more conventional paradigms of academic investigation, research strategies are purposefully designed to position the researcher as an “outsider looking in”, premised on the belief that researcher-subjectivity may cloud the objective “truth”, thereby compromising reliability and universal replicability of research findings in the traditional sense. As practice-led/ based studies place the researcher at the centre of the investigation, questions as to the reliability of outcomes have been deliberated (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Leavy, 2017; Litts et al., 2020). Conversely, it may be argued that such discourse has inadvertently strengthened the engagement of practice-centred research among academics who are also creative arts practitioners. Taking cue from Clayton Christensen’s theory of disruptive innovation (Christensen et al., 2019), the notion of disrupting extant knowledge to drive new knowledge has led researchers and innovators to relook and reposition conventional practice. Petzold et al. (2019) posit that disruptive innovation is fluid and evolving, created as a result of unfolding emergent dynamics that are shaped by the synchronization of events, actions and strategic planning.

Hence, disruptive research encourages novel ways of thinking and doing to bring about alternative research pathways and outcomes. This concept is congruent with notions of recognising creative expressions such as music, dance, theatre, and digital media as outcomes of artistic research among the international creative arts fraternity as well as promoting intercultural and community-based research between the arts and sciences (Burnard et al., 2018; Ross, 2016). Therefore, practice-based research incorporates both the process and product of original investigation that leads to new understandings regarding professional practice, thereby advancing knowledge about and within the research-practice itself as evidenced by its creative output. It necessitates a robust conceptual framework that enables researchers to incorporate their creative practice through methods and processes in a custom-designed research framework that illuminates a cogent constructive alignment of processes that shape the research-in-practice creativity. The development of an authentic methodological model that is adaptable to the medium in which the

practice takes place is critical to assure credibility, validity and reliability when engaging in practice-based research.

### **Applying Praxis: Embedding Theory into Practice**

Artistic knowledge is intuitive, demonstrative, embedded and personal, often engaging a process of contextualisation and reflection. It lends itself to praxis, a blending of theory with practice in fostering critical dialogue that stems from a desire for artistic expressivity, mastery and cogency (Armstrong, 2010; Freeman, 2010; Griffith, 2021). In practice-based enquiry, the deliberate interplay between imagination and expression necessitates an enactment of praxis strategies where the logical processes of ideation, planning, sequencing, reviewing, executing, and evaluating are summoned. For example, a performer or composer desiring to write an exegesis of his or her own performance or composition would benefit from “stepping in and out” of the creative realm, understanding both the theory and context of one’s own practice to develop self-reflexivity in embodying one’s emotion and intellect during an artistic sojourn.

This analogy alludes to Herbert Mead’s theory of symbolic interactionism on how human beings interpret and act, based on meanings, events, and behaviour (Blumer, 1986). In Mead’s distinctive contribution to understanding the social psychology of an individual, he postulated on the duality of the “self” which is made up of the “I” and the “me” in human behaviour. “I”, indicates the active aspect of my consciousness and “me”, indicates the socialised aspect of “I”. As an example, *I* have just performed in a concert. The audience has heard *me* play. What did the audience think of my performance and how significant is it for me? The theory of symbolic interactionism also alludes to the importance social beings place on “others” regarding how humans relate and react to members of society as being “significant” or “non-significant”. For example, when a doctoral candidate performs in a recital and s/he is aware that in the audience includes the examiner, then that person represents a “significant other” to the performer. The examiner’s judgement would have been based on his/her evaluation of “me” playing while “I” engineered my cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills in interpreting, performing, and theorising my practice. Therefore, applying praxis and the blending of theory into practice are important considerations when preparing an exegesis, thesis, or critical reflection in practice-based research. Grounded in theory, disruptive in methodology and reflective in practice, the writing of and about the process and product of creativities are key components of research that is deemed practice centred.

### **(Re)shaping the Research Problem**

Research methodologies are designed to frame the key components of an investigation, explain how data is to be collected, analysed, and interpreted, thereby answering the research questions which in turn meet the objectives of the study. Outcomes of the research are then discussed (Beins, 2018; Hultman & Taguchi, 2010). Practice-based research adheres to such principles. However, the way in

which arguments unfold may differ. In practice-based research, formulating the problem statement may not be a straightforward task as compared to conventional research where the gap in knowledge is identified through the process of literature review, upon which the research questions are formulated. In practice-based enquiry, the research questions may evolve over time along with the development and needs of the accompanying practice. They may change throughout the investigatory path due to a reflection of practice, even at the final phase of the study as the creative products take form, unlike more conventional investigations whereby the research problems are determined at the onset of the study. Tracing the creative journey over the passage of investigatory time and repurposing the practice as informed by developments are also embedded in the methodological process. For instance, in composition studies, even though the new work may have a compositional sketch / plan, it may not be until the piece is near completion that the research problems are affirmed through “looking back” at the artistic journey undertaken. It could also be an autoethnographic experience translated into a musical production over a period. The process of composition may challenge the existing research questions thereby necessitating alterations. In adopting a practice-based approach, the research aims may be redefined as the research process develops. Musical elements and instrumentation of the emerging composition may change. Similarly, the design of a performance programme and its artistic curation may alter as it takes into consideration research that informs its preparation, realisation, and documentation.

Therefore, practice-based research has a distinctive approach. It is primarily initiated by and through practice. Problems and issues are identified by challenges of the creative task. The research strategy embodies the process of practice, using established and often multi- methodological approaches that are congruent with the nature of the practice and theoretical standpoints adopted. It involves examining embodied experience, praxis, and epistemologies of practice. It aims to strengthen one’s professional practice and theoretical understandings associated with that practice, in the context of the socio-cultural framework in which the dynamics of action, meanings and perceived boundaries operate. Practice-based approach is particularly suited to interdisciplinary and translational studies due to its adaptability and openness to mixed-methods of data acquisition, analysis and reporting (Amir, 2019; Johnson et al., 2007; Koegeler-Abdi & Parncutt, 2013).

### **Deciphering Interdisciplinary Research-Practice**

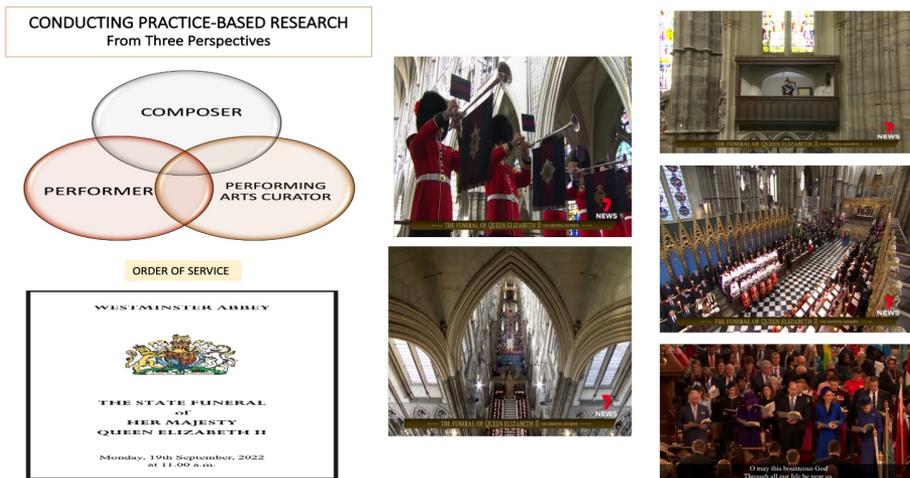
Interdisciplinarity in practice-based research is natural due to the multi-dimensional qualities of skill-based expertise involving scholars and practitioners from two or more distinct scientific disciplines. It may comprise of experts from within the arts and humanities and/or from the science-arts fraternity. Its research is premised on a conceptual model that links or integrates theoretical frameworks from those disciplines, using study designs that are not limited to any one field. Perspectives and skills of the involved disciplines are engaged in the multiple phases of the research process. The mere addition of researchers from different academic and professional credentials is not sufficient to make a research effort interdisciplinary.

An analysis of the conceptual framework, study design and data analysis undertaken can be used to establish the degree of interdisciplinarity. Teams work collaboratively, drawing together discipline-specific theories, concepts, and approaches to address a common problem. As music research is inherently practice oriented, it is entirely logical to posit a musical output as a product of research following scientific and ethical processes of data assimilation, accompanied by a critical discourse that clearly elucidates research undertaken.

The following are two exemplars of how practice-centred enquiry from different perspectives may be considered. The first case is a historical event of global interest in which music played a significant role in the proceedings, thereby lending itself to avenues of research in and through practice. The second case demonstrates the realization of translational practice-based research in science-arts enquiry and the dissemination of research output to intended communities through web-based resources.

### **Exemplar 1: Ceremonial Significance**

The performance of original music on occasion of the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II could be the subject of a practice-based or practice-centred investigation. The event offers insights into avenues of research from different perspectives. A hymn, 'Like as the hart' was set to music by a leading British composer, Judith Weir. The service was sung by the Choir of Westminster Abbey and the Choir of the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace under the direction of James O'Donnell, Organist and Master of the Choristers, Westminster Abbey. Of musicological interest, the choir also sang a hymn (Psalm 34:8) which Ralph Vaughan Williams set to music for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. The State Trumpeters of the Household Cavalry were led by Trumpet Major, Julian Sanford. The Fanfare Team of the Household Division Bands was conducted by Lieutenant Colonel David Barringer. The organ was played by Peter Holder, Sub-Organist, Westminster Abbey. The artistic management and curation of this live-streamed audio-visual event was innately interdisciplinary. CNN Business (Cooban, 2022) reported that an average of 26.2 million people in the UK watched the service in Westminster Abbey on TV screens while Reuters reported that 11.4 million people in the U.S. also tuned in (Richwine, 2022). Worldwide viewership and commentary via YouTube channels and social media were staggering. Figure 1 illustrates of how music and the performing arts played a significant role in an event of global impact and interest. The collage of images personifies historical, cultural, and ceremonial meaning that were realised through music as the world watched with grief and admiration, an inspiration for interdisciplinary research at its best.



(Image Source: 7 News, AU, 2022 September 19)

Figure 1. Conducting practice-based research from three perspectives

This event provides an example in recent memory of the multifarious angles by which performance-composition and interdisciplinary research may be undertaken by assuming the role of a performer, composer or performing arts curator. For instance, a member of the choir would have insider knowledge of the rehearsal process and performative experience. Writing an exegesis that analysed the score and performance would necessitate an in-depth study on the historical, theological, musicological, compositional, and performative features of the event. The cultural, symbolic, and musical significance of the programme as well as the artistic curation of the event command critical reflection. Hence, if the study is performance centred, the micro-domain of the study would concentrate on the performative elements of the compositions, or indeed a selection of compositions and its associated constructs while the macro-domain of the study would be an extrapolation of the significance of the entire programme as a contributory whole. Elements of interdisciplinarity are embedded in the production in view of the scope of coverage ranging from the selection of works to be sung, choice of performers, artistic and programme management, staging and production, technical and media, health and safety regulations, and a host of performing arts curation issues, all of which require elements of research towards its realisation and documentation thereafter. Hence, the application of practice-based approach in music research is not as seemingly simplistic as it sounds. It encompasses both the creative output that has preferably been publicly presented and the documentation of investigatory processes that engaged the same high standards of methodological thoroughness associated with “conventional” research.

## **Exemplar 2: Bespoke Music-Narration for Health and Wellness**

The second exemplar offers insights into the design and realisation of practice-based music-health research conducted by the author. It encapsulates the principles and procedures of conducting practice-centred research discussed earlier. The investigations focus on the goals of translational research in producing more meaningful and applicable results that directly benefit human health and wellbeing (Rubio, 2010; Ross & Amir, 2021a). Crafting innovative artefacts of research that are congruent with the aims of its use in supporting community health form the *raison d'être* of each investigation. In ensuring sustainability and accessibility, the outcomes of practice-based research have been collated into a collection of creative artefacts and discourse known as *Bespoke Music-Narration*. This expanding set of audio-visual aids is hosted in a dedicated website for community access and research ([www.bespokemusicnarration.com](http://www.bespokemusicnarration.com)). Its rationale and aims are stated as follows:

*“Bespoke Music and Narration” is the outcome of translational practice-based research co-created by composer-researcher, Dr Valerie Ross and cardiothoracic surgeon, Dr Abid Amir. The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated health concerns among a wide spectrum of affected communities necessitating innovative ways to improve physical and mental wellbeing. This site was created to share research output and resources from the Bespoke Music-Narration Soundbank Collection which comprises a collation of original music, narration, multi-language scripts, poetry and photography crafted to complement established therapeutic techniques and practices aimed at supporting a return to health and wellness in clinical and home-based settings*

*Source: [www.bespokemusicnarration.com](http://www.bespokemusicnarration.com)*

There are four main types of audio-visual artefacts which are available from the *Bespoke Music-Narration* (BMN) website. They are (a) music and instruction for deep breathing and relaxation, (b) music and instruction for progressive muscle relaxation, (c) music, poetry, and visuals for positive visualisation and (d) music for movement/exercise series. Figure 2 represents a snapshot of the interactive content all of which are custom designed to support specific types of integrated and complementary healthcare practices.

## A. Music & Instruction - Deep Breathing & Relaxation

### 'Road to Recovery'

In Bahasa Malaysia



In English Language



## B. Music & Instruction - Progressive Muscle Relaxation

### 'Homecoming'

In Bahasa Malaysia

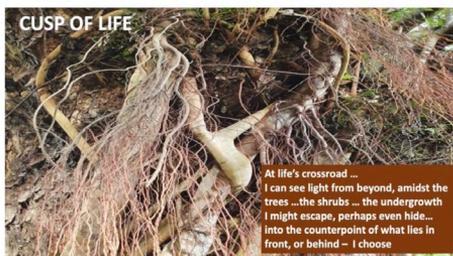


In English Language



## C. POSITIVE VISUALISATION

### 'Cusp of Life' & 'Secret Places'



## D. Music for Movement: 'Ethereal Series'

No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Healthy Heart - Healthy Mind



Figure 2. Bespoke Music-Narration Resources

User-centred design strategies were implemented. *Logic-Pro* and *Final-Cut Pro* DAW systems were used by the author-composer for the audio-visual production of creativities. SoundCloud Pro enabled high quality online and offline audio access of resources. The creation of each artefact had its own conceptual framework and methodological process that guided and informed the research in and through practice. For instance, the crafting of “Road to Recovery” and its use in a randomised clinical trial comprising of thirty-four (n=34) postoperative cardiac surgery patients, stemmed from two interrelated studies with distinct methodological processes. The digital tool that was created utilised authentic nature sounds sourced from fieldwork at the Royal Belum Rainforest, Malaysia, and original electroacoustic compositions, together with a scripted narrations of instructions that were informed by clinical practice of physiotherapy sessions for Phase 1 post-operative cardiac surgery patients (Ross & Amir, 2019). A unique feature of the research instrument created was its availability in both the English Language and the Bahasa Malaysia Language. There is a distinct lack of bespoke

digital resources for complementary therapy in the Malay Language. Requests by research participants of the clinical trial for a copy of the intervention tool and the creation of further artefacts of research prompted the setting-up of the BMN web-based resource centre. At the time of writing, the website hosts four types of original creative resources, each with a distinctive name, that is, *Road to Recovery*, *Homecoming*, *Cusp of Life & Secret Places*, and *Ethereal Series*. The first two types of resources focus on deep breathing techniques, the third on positive visualisation using music, poetry, and images, and the fourth, on music for different forms of movement.

User-centred and human centric considerations were considered when crafting content to enable open access of original materials. The instructional design incorporated musical, artistic, and informative content. Discourse and explanations regarding the research and the use of the different resources have been presented at workshops for healthcare workers, community engagement webinars and international conferences. Further information regarding publications and audio-visual presentations on the construct and use of the creative tools to support complementary therapies are also made available via the BMN website (Centre for Intercultural Musicology at Churchill College, 2022; Ross & Amir, 2021b, 2022).

To summarise, the two cases illustrated the wide scope of practice-centred research in the creative arts and science-arts disciplines. Regardless of the topic of study, the principles and procedures of good practice and ethical adherence to research processes prevail. Therefore, the methodological framework of practice-based and interdisciplinary studies should encompass the (i) scope and depth of the study, (ii) theoretical, epistemological and artistic considerations, (iii) review of literature in relation to the objectives and research questions of the field studied, (iv) research methods and processes involved, (v) sampling frame and sources of primary and secondary data, (vi) methods of data and textual analysis, discussion and documentation, (vii) intended portfolio of creative works and its public presentation, and (viii) exegesis, thesis, critical discourse or journal publication. A well-constructed methodological design will aid the research journey, demonstrate clarity and authority of subject-matter, improve validity and reliability of practice thereby leading to a fruitful realisation of research plans.

### **Crafting the Methodological Design**

The term “design” connotes an element of creative thinking. Congruent with the non-linear and innovative approach to problem-solving in performance and composition efforts, an integration of design thinking and constructive alignment strategies is posited. Design thinking advocates cognitive, strategic, and practical processes to promote ideation and action towards an innovative solution to performative and compositional challenges. It engages an analytical and human-centric approach in problem-solving and is therefore well-suited to music research. Constructive alignment embraces constructivist learning theories where the centrality of a learner’s activities is to create meaning for the learner using instructional design concepts which focus on aligning course objectives and

intended learning outcomes with teaching delivery and assessments (Biggs, 1996; Spady, 1994). Constructivism centres on the belief that human learning is constructed, and learners build new knowledge upon foundations of previous learning as propagated by early cognitive development theorists such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. It advocates a systematic framework to guide decision making, aligning objectives to specific cognitive levels and action to elicit intended outcomes. Therefore, integrating design thinking and constructive alignment strategies into practice-based research by systematically and constructively aligning the research processes, data sources and analysis with evolving research outcomes will enhance cogency between and within academic deliberations as the artistic enquiry takes shape.

Figure 3 illustrates avenues of data resources from qualitative and quantitative data collection methods within an integrative practice-based research paradigm, leading to the creative output, such as a portfolio of compositions or series of performances, and a critical discourse which is informed by design thinking and constructive alignment principles. The peripheral circle shows a myriad of primary and secondary data collection techniques such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation, action research, case study, questionnaires, experiments and intervention, art-based creativities, audio-visual resources, scores, recordings, live performances, and related content sourced from the public domain. At the centre of the enquiry is its practice, the core of which is symbolized by the creative output and its partnering discourse. This visualization of input and output from an array of data collection methods sets the stage for the development of the methodological model elucidated thereafter.

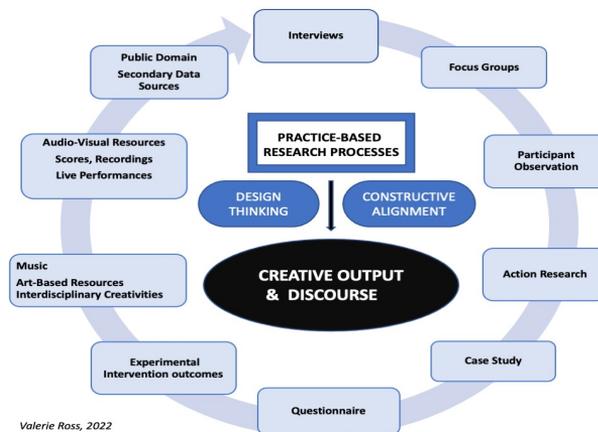


Figure 3. Integrating design thinking and constructive alignment strategies in practice-based research

### Methodological Model for Practice-Based Music Research

The methodological design of practice-based research takes into consideration the multi-faceted and evolving dimensions of research procedural input and intended

creative output. Planning dynamic conceptual frameworks and methodological trajectories serve to contextualise the protocols of research in and of practice. The framing of practice-based methodological designs adopts epistemologies of practice which cultivate and sustain the nature of the practice itself while honing theoretical understandings of that practice. Informed by design thinking strategies and constructive alignment concepts, Figure 4 represents a practice-based methodological model crafted for performance-composition research.

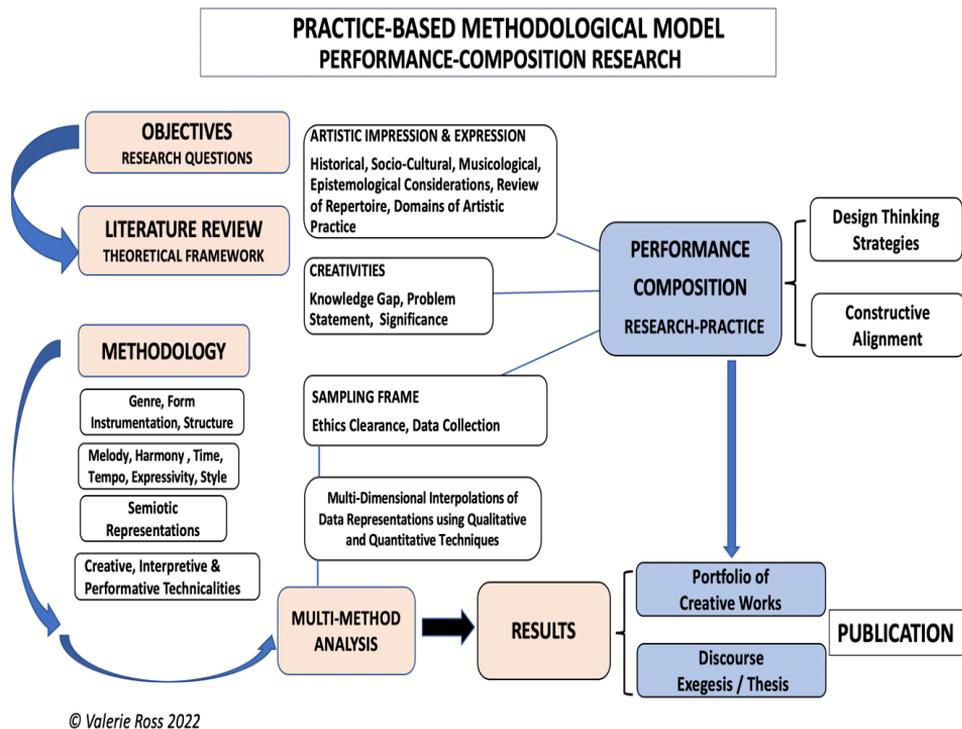


Figure 4. Methodological model for performance-composition practice-based research

The methodological model posited illuminates a conceptual mapping of the multi-dimensional trajectories that embody the complexities of performance and composition research-practice. The fundamental research procedures are adhered to but the processes are not necessarily linear in execution due to the concurrent development of the creative practice and its planned output.

The model acts as a guide in configuring convergent and divergent perspectives of practice-based music research. It regards performance and composition research as interrelated facets of an investigation as one intrinsically complements the other. Compositions are realised through performance and performers interpret compositions. The socio-historical and musicological context of practice, guides and influences its creative and interpretive stance.

As with any form of academic research, a robust analysis of data is critical to determining the authenticity of research outcomes. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of musical elements using established techniques and technology-assisted tools is vital in deconstructing the complexities of practice-based research. The incorporation of multi-methods in music analysis is an aspect of research that is often overlooked and neglected. For example, the analysis of musical scores requires experience and expertise in identifying and applying appropriate conventional and contemporary analytical methods, such as harmonic and melodic analysis, thematic analysis, functional analysis, set analysis, Schenkerian analysis, graphic analysis, and spectral analysis, based on the genre, style, form, musical elements, performance directions and interpretations of practice. The analysis of electronic music and electroacoustic music necessitate the mastery of technology driven skill sets (Collins & D'Esquivan, 2017). New ways of analyzing traditional, folk, and intercultural music are needed as conventional approaches may be inadequate in deciphering the soundscape and elements of music and musical instruments communicated through the oral and aural traditions. Delineating the transformative role of music in interdisciplinary and translational music-science research offer new challenges in the analysis of practice-based studies where its resultant creativities, discourse and publication form the destination of the research journey. To round-up, the key processes along the research path illustrated in the methodological model are summarized as follows.

- The application of design thinking strategies and principles associated with constructive alignment applied to research inform the performance-composition research-practice.
- A hallmark of practice-based research, the portfolio of artistic outputs is concurrently planned with its development being influenced by the ensuing research processes.
- The objectives and research questions are initially developed and revisited as the research-practice takes form. On completion of the study, the research questions are answered, thereby achieving the objectives of the study.
- The review of literature is conducted and documented. Artistic decisions are informed through a survey of historical, socio-cultural, musicological, and epistemological developments in relation to past and contemporary practice associated with the intended portfolio of creative works.
- The creativities are informed by the gaps of knowledge identified by the literature review, enabling the construct of the problem statement and significance of the research product.
- The methodology incorporates primary and secondary sources related to the compositional or performative features of the creative works and its discourse.
- The musical elements should include a study of the genre, form, instrumentation, structure, melody, harmony, time, tempo, expressivity, and style associated with the creative output. The nature of its analysis and analytical framework would depend on the sampling frame and its documentation in addition to whether compositional or performative elements are to be primarily evaluated.

- Semiotic representations are explored as with creative, interpretative, and performative technicalities, engaging with the abundance of secondary data as points of reference that serve to inform and inspire practice.
- The interpolation of primary data may be acquired from both qualitative and quantitative means identified through the sampling frame to enable multi-dimensional interpretations of and about the practice using ethical procedures and protocol.
- Multi-methods of data analysis will provide resources for rich documentation of the exegesis or thesis, thereby enabling valuable insights into the creation, realisation, and critical reflection of the creative works towards its intended journal publication.

The processes elucidated are by no means static but shaped and reshaped as the practice evolves. The model may also be adapted for use in other fields of creative arts practice including the curation of artistic programmes such as the example provided in the first case study. The interpolation of design thinking strategies and the constructive alignment of objectives, research questions, literature review, methodology and outcome-based creativities apply. Such research-focused approaches in organizing, realising, and writing about arts-based activities empower arts-based practitioners through the engagement of practice-centred research. A dynamic and culturally rich mindset will germinate novel and insightful artistry in the development of a creative arts practitioner-researcher

### **Conclusion**

At the heart of practice-based research is its innovation. It represents both the beginning (purpose) and endpoint (product) of the investigation. A discourse concerning the crafting of a work of art would both complement the creative process and enhance understanding of its praxis. The development of a distinctive methodological model that is specific to the medium in which the practice takes place is critical in practice-based research. Essentially, the model presented in this article advocates a non-linear, trajectory approach to the mapping of ideas, a holistic engagement of musical literature and practice, and a dynamic approach to data collection that enables multi-dimensional interpolations of data representations followed by mixed methods in data analysis, interpretation, and reporting.

Key points that frame the methodological design include the engagement of rich data resources that feed into the research-informed practice which is co-represented by the creative output and its accompanying reflection. Public accessibility to the artefacts of practice-based research adds value to the enquiry. As institutions of higher learning continue to compete feverishly to raise their profile in World University Rankings, academics from the performing arts fraternity are not spared and find themselves seeking innovative ways to publish their practice. Researching practice in the performing arts is fraught with controversies and complexities. There are those who continue to resist the call to publish academic papers with the argument that the composition *per se* or the act of performance itself

is research. Therefore, practice-based research offers a complementary solution to this dilemma. In conclusion, as musicians seek new ways of expression, innovation and technology-influenced creativities become hallmarks of research in artistic practice. The honing of skills is matched by criticality in writing about and within one's own practice and that of others. Mastery, imagination, collaborative practice, synergy and artistry, unconditionally spur inspiration, originality, and fame.

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### Biography

**Valerie Ross**, *PhD, MEd, BMus (Hons), DRSAMD*, is a distinguished composer and researcher whose works have been featured in major cities in Europe and the Asia-Pacific. She has received fellowships and awards from the Rockefeller Foundation, Japan Foundation, Commonwealth Foundation, Darmstadt International Institute for New Music, Germany and Institute of Musical Research, University of London. Valerie was presented to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in London House, UK on occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of HM as Head of the Commonwealth when her composition, ‘Tathagata’ was premiered. She has also served on the Board of Accreditation, Malaysian Qualifications Agency. Valerie specializes in interdisciplinary practice-based research in the fields of composition, creative arts, and translational music-medicine/health research. Professor Ross is the Director of the Centre for Intercultural Musicology at Churchill College, University of Cambridge and a faculty member of the College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA.