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ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS THE DOMAIN OF APPLIED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCHING

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

my speech of today will be divided into two parts:

- first, a short presentation of a specific technologically advanced case study, the research project *Italian Lexicon of Singing (ILS)* originally developed in an university context
- then, a reflection, based on the previous practical experience of research, on the opportunity to cross scientific competence with artistic aims to front the question of defining the artistic research in a socio-economic perspective.

ILS is a historical-lexicographic dictionary developed as a digital database. It is hosted on the server of the Padua University and it will be edited on-line by Liguori Editore, an accredited science and humanities publisher. It is dedicated to professors, scholars, pupils and amateurs, both of music and musicology: a vast cultural range of users. Being an editorial resource and a tool to support the didactics, *ILS* is meant to be released on the international market through web subscription.

ILS is a relational database providing access to verbal and musical texts relevant to the music historian and, specifically, devoted to the researchers of performance practices interested in the period between the late 16th and the end of 19th century. At the present stage, *ILS* presents an index of *circa* 9000 terms, including more than 80 Italian sources. Founded on the analysis of historical Italian texts on both theory and didactics of singing, it consists of 4 virtual archives of data:

1. an extensive collection of original historical sources, almost fully digitalized;
2. an index of significant words of the technical language of music;
3. a dictionary structured as a thesaurus of terms;
4. the critical notes to terms and bibliography.

ILS synthesizes musicological and linguistic research, belongs to the general category of "Corpora" (database of historical and specialistic dictionary) and has been recognized as one of the most advanced tool developed in the specific area of expertise in several international scholars meetings (London, Venice, Bologna, Genève, Louvain, Tours, Paris, Tallinn, Ferrara). The research project has been developed in Padua University during more than the last decade and has been financed during its different stages by the Athenaeum, the Ministry of University and Scientific Research and finally it has been selected as one of the Excellence Project by Padua University itself.

The db is build up with critical contents, using technology not only for indexing and statistics, but to increase a new method of conceiving the musical lexicography.

Now the research is completed and ready to enter a second phase through its dissemination.

The step overcomes from basic research to applied research and this development will involve a transfer of institutional structure from University to Conservatory and Academy of Music.

Further aims of the authors are:

- to introduce *ILS* in didactic and productive environments
- to experiment it as an innovative tool to improve the research on music teaching and performance
- to stimulate the creation of an active community of users that would be wiki-like engaged in using, developing and monitoring the scientific quality of the materials included in *ILS*

The authors of *ILS* have a double training, musical and musicological, thus they have been able to:

1. identify and understand technically the problem of the relation between praxis and theoretical sources
2. appreciate the entity of the question both from the historical and practical point of view
3. coordinate an interdisciplinary scientific team in a qualified context such as the high national research level
4. produce a new methodology, philologically based, for indepth analysis of the data. This method is modellized according to the texts in examination, but it is applicable to the entire linguistic repertoire of theoretical sources.

In other words, the dual training has enabled the authors to manage all the tasks of a research, both scientific, cultural and organizational, being able to share work with an heterogeneous team by adopting a behaviour coherent with the traditional process of scientific research: problem ◀ hypotesis ◀ inference ◀ proof.

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I start from these last observations, occurred to me all long my experience as author of *ILS*, to address the second part of my contribute of today with the intent of share with you some reflections on the general themes of artistic research and long-term research in Conservatoires. Particularly, these considerations are related to the definition, in an artistic context, of the nominal categories of creativity, research and research fields.

On creativity

In philosophical studies nowadays, after the rich period of the '70s and '80s, the notion of creativity knows a new season of interest, even from the standpoint of the theory. The debate on creativity involves general questions on how we act and how we understand and finds, in the arts, its elective field of manifestation.

In 2009 European Community celebrated the European Year of Innovation and Creativity: one of the main statement of EYIC was the “awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation as key competence for personal, social and economic development: Europe needs to boost its capacity for creativity and innovation for both social and economic reasons”. <http://create2009.europa.eu>

This approach has a secular tradition. Artistic creativity is based on a code of signs (linguistic, semantic, figurative, sound) and, despite its strongly innovative aspect, it has the capacity to be a powerful tool of communication. Starting from a profound knowledge of existing rules, creativity is based on the ability to overcome them and to create new ones.

Categories of ‘new’ and ‘useful’ (new in a historical sense, useful in a social sense) began to enter into the idea of creativity since the Renaissance. In the West we assist to a progressive shift of the concept of creativity passing, from divine attributes, to be peculiarity of the arts, and eventually extending, in the post-Enlightenment era, to all human activity that meets the requirements of social, economic or aesthetic utility.

On research

Social and economic usefulness are also the core questions of the discourse about research and education. In line with the EYIC initiative, AEC-ELIA state:

“To create new opportunities for research within the arts, and further promote cross disciplinary research initiatives through the EU research programmes so that arts based research on creativity can be expanded, supported and enhanced where there are shared concerns for the value of innovation and creativity.” (from AEC-ELIA Position paper on Creativity and Innovation (2009))

A polysemantic definition of the term ‘research’, large enough to include all training addresses, is formally adopted in European documents on cycles since 2004: “The word ‘**research**’ is used to cover a wide variety of activities, with the context often related to a field of study; the term is used here to represent a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge. The word is used in an inclusive way to accommodate the range of activities that support original and innovative work in the whole range of academic, professional and technological fields, including the humanities, and traditional, performing, and other creative arts. It is not used in any limited or restricted sense, or relating solely to a traditional ‘scientific method’. (JQI, Dublin 2004, ratified 2005)

AEC working group on research consider positively this official definition:

“It enabled us to be inclusive and rigorous in mapping research activity and to embrace, for example, performance science, music philosophy and music criticism as well as musicology and music education. Artistic research was also prominent, as described in the *Guide to Third Cycle Studies in Higher Music Education*: “an umbrella concept by (i) covering research activities with an artistic knowledge base and artistic outlook and (ii) by being embedded in the conservatoire.” (Polifonia Third Cycle Working Group, 2007: 16)”. (AEC Pocketbook Researching Conservatoires)

I apologize, I do not entirely agree with this position that seems to me misaligned to the necessity, claimed by the AEC in many occasions, of taking care of the subject-specific dimension of musical training, in reshaping the system of art education according to the principles of Bologna process. Let me point out some disadvantages that I see in a very wide use, in documents devoted to define new parametres in such a complex matter, of a term so vibrant. A broad meaning unifies the sense, deeply human, of ‘research’ in general with the reference to the

more specific, and dominant, 'scientific research'. As a matter of fact, the risk of a such extreme generalization is just to obtain exactly the reverse of what was desired, to let the door open to the admission of scientific, featured, evaluation criteria in the artistic domain.

A large semantic field does not help, in my opinion, to be rigorous. On the contrary, 'research' is going to improperly replace other existing, historical, refined terms that nominate the research activity in the artistic domain, such as 'experiment' or 'create', but also 'make', 'transmitte', 'revise', 'communicate' or 'perform'. The artistic production stems from a continuous attitude to research and musicians, both authors and performers, take part to this permanent tension in the characteristic manner of their profession. Learning, teaching, creating, training and performing music are all undeniably actions of doing research in an artistic musical sense. The objective results of this researching are nevertheless the expression of typical non-rational forms of thought and they constitute -primarily- a wealth of intangible assets. As such, it is difficult to estimate them according to the traditional criteria of scientific epistemology.

This difficulty to define artistic research according to the philosophical and scientific principles coming from the theories of knowledge, and the difficulty of evaluating artistic results according to international research standards are, as you know, the basis of the actual controversial debate about how to design and model such activities in art institutions. The actual formulation of the question, conducted at the levels of constant confrontation with the established scientific system of universities, has clearly a political and economic motivation, but it is strongly criticisable both philosophically and historically, and it would seem, however, flawed in its assumptions. The effort to assimilate in one definition two attitudes of thought so specifically distant, leads obviously to a debasement of both, rather than to their synergistic enhancement.

Nevertheless, I realise that in the actual checking out of third cycle, while highlighting the differences between 'artistic research' and 'research' on art, AEC general approach is to adopt patterns imposed by the scientific method.

"The concept of Artistic Research is intended as an umbrella concept. Thus, Artistic research is not proposed as another research discipline among the existing ones such as music history, music theory, music psychology, music philosophy, music medicine, neuromusicology or music sociology."

...

"To construe Artistic Research as an umbrella concept does not mean loosening research standards. Artistic Research must adhere to the same international standards of intellectual rigour, conceptual clarity and methodological adequacy as any other type of research."

...

"All research follows this sequential pattern of Question-Investigation-Documentation. What distinguishes Artistic Research is the way in which artistic experience, artistic knowledge and skills as well as artistic goals are involved in research."

[AEC Handbook - Guide to Third Cycle Studies in Higher Music Education –](#)

The discourse on the relation between art and science is a highly topical theme. In the last decades, the Analytic philosophy of art has developed rapidly, at least on the front of the visual arts. The artistic practice can be analyzed in its production process, marked and organized in precise formal sequences linked together

through the selection and use of materials, theories and techniques (Warburton, 2003). The debate on the formation of the idea of art and the artist's role (and scientist's) in society, is more and more in opposition to the previous aprioristic and universalistic concept emerged from the past Enlightenment and romantic experience, but still culturally rooted in contemporary society (Shiner, 2010).

On relation between creativity and research

One of the distinctive features of activities in an artistic environment is that creativity and research are coincident, and they cannot be separated.

The productive activity of the artists is characterized by an extremely long creative arc, as well as they show a flexible ability to develop their researches in different context, both institutional and professional. Moreover, according to several parameters describing creativity (Guilford, Torrance), the artist seems to represent the ideal innovator, showing to have: 1. receptivity, 2. fluency, 3. flexibility, 4. originality, 5. processing capacities.

Unfortunately, these undisputed qualities do not make the artist a scientist's peer, nor do facilitate a social recognition of the importance of his role for the collective good. In this regard, it is useful to recall the fact that funds are allocated to scientific research because it is considered useful to society and economics, whereas to artistic research such recognition is not due and, consequently, funds are denied.

Demarcation of research fields

In the reflection of Philosophy of science, the question of the 'demarcation' stands as a cardinal principle of epistemology: as a matter of fact, it is necessary to draw the boundaries between what is science and what is not, because the recognition of the scientific status is the basis of a whole series of mechanisms of civil society and it is of enormous relevance from the economic point of view.

From this perspective, the emerging problem is both philosophical, and political: it's urgent nowadays to define, place and characterize the 'demarcation' of the 'scientific research' in an artistic context, and the demarcation of the 'artistic research' in the framework of its social sustainability.

The first step is to properly define 'artistic research fields':

- domain,
- contents,
- competences,
- technique,
- capacity of basic research,
- capacity of applied research,
- vocation to interdisciplinarity (science-oriented or not)

“1. Musical Production, i.e. composing and improvising music;
2. Musical Performance, i.e. preparing and giving concert performances;
3. Music Teaching, i.e. guiding others in preparation of music performances and in understanding musical ideas and concepts;
4. Music in Society, i.e. communicating artistic understanding and appreciation, transferring musical competences and developing concert audiences.”

[AEC Handbook - Guide to Third Cycle Studies in Higher Music Education -](#)

Conclusion

My impression is that the current, stimulating debate on the 'artistic research' actually leads to a completely different question, of crucial relevance for Conservatories. The question we must answer first is social and political: why do we do it? Who needs it? Why is it useful?

It is, undoubtedly, our duty to respond persuasively to this kind of questions, possibly through the results of our 'artistic research' activities. But, what language is it convenient to choose to communicate our artistic core values to the outside? That of science? Are we confident that society needs to replace 'expert artists' with 'scientific artists'?

The development of a research, including the models of top-down and bottom-up, can not reasonably be generated by the sole artistic forces throughout their complete process (from experience to formulation of theories). Indeed, to pretend from an artist a systematic verbalization of his production, both creation and performance, offends his 'veritas' which is to communicate through non-verbal artistic languages. We have never to forget that the 'diversity' of the artist has always represented a richness for society. Training an artist to logic analysis and verbal critic is intended to augment the actual creative awareness, but on the other side might lead to the disadvantage, for the community, that the artwork could be changed in 'comment'.

It's really not a new question. When Wilde wrote *The Critic as artist* (1889), he was just wondering about the same crucial subject of 'demarcation' between a 'critical creation and an 'artwork'.

Not to yield to the dictatorship of the scientific-oriented consensus, I see at least two possible ways:

1. to close one self, in defense of the technical, semantic and semiological specificity of artistic language
2. to open, to synergistic collaboration between artistic creativity and scientific research in relation to some fields of intervention clearly 'demarcated'

For this purpose, it is time that agencies such as the Conservatories begin to implement a full awareness that their own activities, educational and productive, constitute a privileged field for applied scientific research. More specifically, to mention for example only some of the guidelines of research 'artistic-oriented' emerging in the world of humanities and sciences: researching projects related to creativity, transmission of knowledge, analysis of organizational systems, new technologies and theories of perception, models of communication, synaesthesia of languages, cognitive and cultural studies.

The artistic space is an open yard and a laboratory of active experience, and it would be conveniently developed in an integrated area with the interdisciplinary exchange of scientific experts. It is appropriate to learn to open up in a systematic way to the scientific comparative observation, asserting the structural conditions for sharing of operational research projects and an inter-networking with universities, in order to stimulate the creation of infrastructures, financial and

organizational, that would allow scientists and artists to stimulate each other and join forces in cross-research projects, in accordance with their specific identity.

In other words: progress is requested, but it is also important to defend the “biodiversity” of art and science, and keep distances for a productive collaboration. What matters, for social and economic purposes, is the exchange between art and science, not the fact that the science-oriented thought must actualize art in the sense of rationality, but rather the contrary, the art must esthetize the science (and politics, and economics).

“Approaches where musicians, scientists, philosophers, engineers, psychologists, sociologists and so on collaborate on a single project or question have begun to yield extraordinary insights for both theory and practice (see for example, Colwell and Richardson, 2002; Davidson, 2004; Hallam, Cross and Thaut, 2009; Williamon, 2004). Interdisciplinary collaboration is clearly going to be a growing theme in the next years”. [AEC Pocketbook Researching Conservatoires EN.pdf](#)

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