

# Editorial

## Special Issue on Arts-Based Research

Arts-Based Research in European Arts  
Education: Philosophical, ontological and  
epistemological introductions

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# Arts-Based Research in European Arts Education: Philosophical, ontological and epistemological introductions

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## Introduction

**E**ducational settings where arts subjects or aesthetic forms of expression (such as visual arts, music, dance, film, drama, fiction or poetry) play an important role are considered rather complex. Consequently, communicative and artistic aspects that constitute the arts educational phenomena can be difficult to understand, analyse, document and share, without the risk of losing important nuances. A growing research movement that aims to address these challenges is *arts based research* (ABR). We claim that ABR – with its variety of methodologies and onto-epistemologies – offers substantial support in grasping even more of the mentioned complexities. The question is, does it also lead us closer to a multi-modal turn?

Over the last few decades, ABR has become a common concept and research approach – one that also encompasses various phenomena related to arts education. When this special issue was first initiated (in 2018), Ferm Almqvist emphasised that the field of arts educational research has experienced several scientific turns, which have influenced what has been considered valid research, the methods that has been

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<sup>1</sup> This guest editorial has gone through blind peer review

used, and the results that can be delivered. These turns have also influenced the researcher's role and the relations between the perspectives and people that have been studied. She underlined that the interpretative turn, the language turn, the bodily turn, the ontological turn, the action turn, etc. have changed what can be achieved and in what ways within the field of arts education research. Nonetheless, these turns do not fully capture the complexities of arts educational phenomena.

## Arts-based research – an umbrella term

In line with Bresler (2006), Finley (2008) and Leavy (2009), we use ABR as an umbrella term “that encompasses all artistic approaches to research” (Leavy 2018b, 4). Given the focus on arts education, we could have chosen the term arts-based *educational research* (ABER), but it appears that the acronym ABER is less in use today and that the dominant voices in ABER and ABR (in arts education) are often the same, alternating effortlessly between the two terms. ABER is ABR within the domain of educational discourse (Barone 2006, Barone and Eisner 1997, Eisner and Powell 2002). Even in his chapter ‘Arts-based Research in Education’ in Patricia Leavy’s *Handbook of Arts-Based Research* (2018a), Rolling does not use ABER and instead explains, ‘ABR becomes arts-based educational research when the aim (...) is to address problems rooted in educational discourse’ (Rolling 2018, 494). Similarly, researchers like Sinner et al. (2006, 1223), while reviewing the practices of ‘arts-based educational research as documented in dissertations’ point towards the now common term of *a/r/tography*, another methodology within ABR that explores the artist-researcher-teacher roles as living inquiry.

It is quite common, when new research terms and paradigms are established, for terms to become confusing. Elliott Eisner introduced the term ABR in 1993; however, the first European Conference on ABR was not held until 2005 in Belfast (Eisner 2006). For many years, ‘artistic research’ seemed to be the most common term

connecting arts and research in Europe. While it is difficult to say if ABR and artistic research are used in the same way in all the relevant discourses today, to our knowledge, some differences now seem to be more or less agreed upon. Artistic research more often refers to professional artists investigating artistic processes and disseminating the results artistically (Hannula, Suoranta, and Vadén 2005, Jullander 2013, Hultberg 2013, Borgdorff 2012, Vist 2015). In Europe, one may find artistic research defined outside of, and in opposition to, ABR. In their discussion on ABR traditions in Europe, Suominen, Kallio-Tavin and Hernández-Hernández (2018) also distinguish between ABR and artistic research. They claim that while ‘the idea of *research about self and using self as a tool, or as an instrument in the research process/project*’ and ‘a wider interest in phenomena within the sociocultural context’ are significant in ABR, artistic research ‘is mainly interested *in researching artistic processes and artistic phenomena (...)* exploring particular artistic perceptions, awareness, orientations, or practices’ (Suominen, Kallio-Tavin, and Hernández-Hernández 2018, 104, italics in original). Used as an umbrella term, ABR may include artistic research, but, more importantly, it includes research where the topic and results may go beyond the arts, but where arts-based research processes constitute a major contribution to the project.

Although Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén claim that ‘music and music pedagogy are the most developed fields’ (2005, 16) of artistic research in the Nordic countries, ‘musicians and music educators have seemed to be the least interested among arts educators in exploring art-based enquiry’ (Smith 2013, 90). We agree with this view. Music education, at least in the Nordic countries, has been more occupied with traditional, scientific research. Also Bresler claims that ‘in the conversation about the arts in research, literature, visual art and drama have taken a leading role’ (2008, 225), and we cannot claim that this trend has changed. What has changed, though, is the increasing number of ABR projects, multi-modal research approaches, and the explicit use of the term and its methodologies in all arts educational fields.

Barone and Eisner (2012, 24) explain ABR to imply ‘a continuum that extends from qualitative research projects that, while being officially tagged as science, effectively deploy a few aesthetic design elements to those who exhibit maximum artistry’. As such, it could be defined as qualitative research that draws inspiration, concepts, processes and representational forms from the arts, exploring the ‘alternative researching possibilities that fuse the creative and imaginative possibilities of the arts with social science research’ (Knowles and Cole 2008, xi). Today, however, it is increasingly common to consider ABR to be its own paradigm (Leavy 2018b, 4) or to be within a performative paradigm (Haseman 2006, 2007, Ellingsgaard and Gjørnum 2016).

According to Barone and Eisner (2012), arts-based researchers combine the traditional use of written and spoken language with alternative forms of expressions such as pictures, film, sculpture, sloyd, textile art, dance, music, poetry, theatre or digital technology. Similarly, Leavy (2018b) places ABR at the intersection between art and science. Referring to recent research in neuroscience, she writes the following:

. . . art may have unmatched potential to promote deep engagement, make lasting impressions, and therefore possesses unlimited potential to educate. (...). Researchers tapping into the power of the arts are doing so in order to create new ways to see, think and communicate (Leavy 2018b, 3)

## Onto-epistemological diversity in ABR

Borrowing the term ‘onto-epistemology’ from Barad (2007), we have already traced our inspiration to certain post-modern and post-human philosophies. However, we, the editors of this issue, are both primarily qualitative researchers within a hermeneutic-phenomenological paradigm. According to Suominen, Kallio-Tavin and Hernández-Hernández (2018), early artistic research in Finland too was founded in phenomenology and hermeneutics. Even today, Finnish ABR is said to ‘have a theoretical emphasis on embodied phenomenology and sensorial knowledge’

(Suominen, Kallio-Tavin, and Hernández-Hernández 2018, 106). However, in our experience, at least in Scandinavian countries, there are clear differences in the scientific philosophies underlying different arts education discourses. While music (education) still sometimes seems rooted in late modernity, dance, drama and certain visual arts have been exploring post-modernism and post-humanism to a wider extent, not to mention Barad's agential realism. This tendency is partly confirmed by the contributions of this issue.

The newly published *Handbook of Arts-Based Research* (Leavy 2018a) also acknowledges ontological and epistemological diversity, including Eisner's stance when he introduced the term ABR. Quoting Barone and Eisner, Gerber and Myers-Coffman (2018) write that ABR is 'an effort to extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that otherwise would be ineffable' (Barone and Eisner 2012, 1). Using the concept of *translation*, Gerber and Myers-Coffman discuss the construction of new knowledge in ABR or 'the transformation of one form of knowledge into another' (Gerber and Myers-Coffman 2018, 587). We also believe that ABR can be used to understand philosophies, and philosophies can in turn motivate ABR, which can also be seen as processes of translation (Heidegger 1993, Schwieler and Ferm Thorgersen 2015). ABR methodologies are used to shape and *translate* preverbal, sense-based forms of knowledge into art forms and text. Hence, their 'aesthetic epistemology' (Gerber and Myers-Coffman 2018, 591) is about sense-based, embodied, emotional and relational ways of knowing:

It is from this epistemology that our perceptions, memories, symbols, relationships, narratives and values emerge, take form, and inform the existential, ethical, and phenomenological nature of our human condition most often investigated using ABR. (Gerber and Myers-Coffman 2018, 592)

Whether or not one agrees with the claim that such sensory and emotional forms of knowledge ‘are not expressible in words’ (2018, 592), the symbolic languages of the arts, with their ‘evocative and emotionally drenched expression’ (Barone and Eisner 2012, 9), facilitate formative phases of translation and provide better opportunities for insight and engagement. This affords another rationality that departs from traditional science, but it is still within an onto-epistemology according to which research mirrors reality. It is useful to remind ourselves that thinking with art(s) (Heidegger 1993) is not a new phenomenon, and neither is trying to understand or cope with the world through dwelling in arts.

Rosiek describes this view of transformation as ‘a form of empiricism, subject primarily to the ethics of accurate representation’ (2018, 634). Rosiek himself endorses a post-human perspective of ABR. Referring to Barad’s (2007) agential realism, he turns his attention to ‘the ontologically creative aspects of science and the ethical responsibility that comes with such creation’ (Rosiek 2018, 637). He argues that agency is not only a feature of human consciousness, but of all things. Inquiry, then, becomes ‘the establishment of provisional onto-ethical relations that constitute human and nonhuman agents’ (2018, 638). These relations are referred to as intra-actions; hence, agential reality can be the result of the intra-actions of inquiry.

The articles in this issue derive their inspiration from these views and other stances. Rosiek also calls for a critical approach to social inquiry where subjects are not only overlooked but also suppressed by ideological processes. Onto-epistemologically, this view is rather similar to the first ‘empirical-referential’ one, which claims that ABR can provide affectively compelling portraits of ideologically suppressed aspects of reality. The ethical focus, on the other hand, is different. Yet another perspective is the post-modern or post-structural one, which questions taken-for-granted norms and arrangements. It does not offer one single solution or vision but instead problematises any authority, claiming that ‘meaning is socially

constructed within the activity of human discourses' (Rosiek 2018, 637). Related to this is another question of ethics: whose voices are allowed to be heard in and through research? Arts-based approaches can allow a multitude of voices, and forms of expression, to be heard. They offer possibilities to acquire a deep understanding – from the inside of 'the other'. For example, Kallio (2019) shows how she stepped outside her comfort zone, both personally and professionally, in co-operation with the Sámi people, when, for example, *jojk* was used as a way of communicating research results.

In the context of different ontological, epistemological and ethical issues, we also want to touch upon performativity. Gergen and Gergen, illuminating the performative movement in social science, claim that it 'falls within the family of arts-based research' (2018, 54). They use the term performative for three reasons: in relation to the way research is presented or performed for others, in relation to the research(er)'s consequential actions in and changes in the social world, and in the way the researchers carry out their inquiry. This understanding is considerably wider than the one within artistic research, describing a third, performative research paradigm (e.g. Haseman 2007, 2006, Ellingsgaard and Gjørnum 2016).

We find Gergen and Gergen's wide use of the term performative enriching. Within research discourses that no longer rely on theories of truth as correspondence, the line between arts and science blurs, and performativity becomes an inevitable part of both. Hence, researchers as well as artists can include 'the entire range of communicative possibilities – music, dance, sculpting, painting and more' to expand 'the social scientists' potential for *enriching cultural sensitivity*' (Gergen and Gergen 2018, 56, our italics). Ferm Almqvist's multi-modal contribution in this issue can be seen as inspired by this perspective. Maximising our 'ways of looking' becomes imperative when science is more about 'increased potentials of action' than 'a march towards truth' (Gergen and Gergen 2018, 57).



To claim that performative expressions provide a better representation of a given phenomenon, however, may run counter to the very logic of this approach as performativity is liberation from claims to privileged representation. Rosiek unfortunately claims agential realism to be ‘a better fit for the practices of arts-based inquiry’. We find such a claim irrelevant, especially in the context of Barad’s ideas that favour sensitising oneself over seeking final clarity. Barad’s notions are also well in line with Bresler’s approach to ABR, or aesthetically based research, as she names it. Bresler (2006) states that:

[...] aesthetics is at the heart of both artistic experience and qualitative research, and that artistic processes, in particular, the space surrounding art experiences, can illuminate significant aspects of qualitative research, including data collection, data analysis, and writing (Bresler 2006, 52).

The four articles we present below confirm this plurality in onto-epistemological possibilities within ABR – they stretch from hermeneutic-phenomenological views of knowledge to post-structural and post-human traditions. As Camargo-Borges summarises, we have ‘moved away from the logic of either-or... towards the spectrum of opportunities’ (2018, 90).

What the following four articles here have in common is the importance of the arts media and arts practices in content as well as methodology. Hopefully, this leads us closer to a multi-modal turn and decreases the tendency to be less explicit of arts’ role in research compared to the role of verbal tools (Vist 2015).

When artistic forms of expression are used in the development of research questions, in the production of material, in the analytical and representational phases, or in the documentation, communication and publication of research, possibilities for communication and meaning making are broadened. This includes the possibility to reach a broader audience (Cole and Knowles 2008, Leavy 2009, Hultberg 2013) and to enable wider interpretation. According to Denzin (2004),

artistic ways of getting to know something allow for varied interpretations to a great extent, but these interpretations lead researchers to lose control of what is actually mediated at several levels. This also relates to Holgersen's contribution in this issue about ambiguity around quality and validity. ABR can also be about creating settings where specific forms of expression and research methods inform each other. Holmgren (2018) noted and showed, in an earlier issue of this journal, that arts-based researchers (or a/r/tographers in his case) ensured that research informed the art form and that the art form informed research.

Such an approach demands close collaboration between participants, researchers as well as teachers and learners of art, who quite often are the same persons. Several senses are used by the participants through the various stages of research, in addition to perception, communication, artistic expression, teaching, learning and exploration. For example, the use of a movie – or podcast, as Ferm Almquist does in this issue – to present the results can influence what is possible to understand.

To us, the editors, certain elements have been important to consider and encourage in this issue. When the aim is to broaden the tools and media where (research-based) knowledge can be developed and expressed, knowledge can be tacit and non-verbal as well as propositional. Hence, the body becomes important and heavily involved in knowledge development as do feelings, emotions – or affects, whether as in Stern's (1985/2000) vitality affects or as described by post-modernists (Hovik 2014, Deleuze 1990) – and relations, seen as aesthetics as well as epistemology (Rasmussen 2010, 2014, Bourriaud 1998/2002, Vist and Holdhus 2018). Further, the researchers' imagination (Camargo-Borges 2018) becomes important in several ways – it encourages playfulness as well as theorising, it places value on contradictions and plurality, and it explores questions and answers. In summary, what Bresler (2006) describes as aesthetic habits of the mind – increased sensibility and empathic understanding (as well as imagination as embodiment) – have also inspired us in this work.

## ABR and philosophy of arts education

While there are many connections between ABR and the philosophy of arts education, and they can be categorised in several different ways, in this issue, we describe and explore the following four categories of philosophy of arts education (PAE), primarily developed within the field of music education philosophy (Ferm Almquist, 2019b): *my philosophy*, *teachers' analysed philosophies*, *philosophers' philosophies*, and *scientific philosophies as a base for methodological choices*.

*My philosophy* of arts education is defined as personal statements that make the best of how teaching is performed. A Google search on 'my philosophy' of music or art education yields a multitude of personal reflections on the motives behind choices of content and form in music and art education. The relations between PAE and ABR, in this case, concern *how artistic expressions could be used to translate or communicate 'my philosophies'* based on experiences and embodied theories. It is possible to assume that teachers' reflections should become more explicit if they were translated into, for example, a picture, a sculpture or song. As living inquiry (Irwin and de Cosson 2002, Springgay, Irwin, and Kind 2008, Vist 2016), ABR affords an opportunity to live and inquire into our personal philosophies on an everyday basis.

The second category of relations between ABR and philosophy of arts education – *teachers' analysed philosophies* – can be described as insights into and implications for arts educational practices. One example of a research project where teachers' philosophies are analysed through artistic expressions is Anna Houmann's (2010) dissertation in music education on the possibilities and limitations of music teachers' discretionary power. In Houmann's study, student teachers were encouraged to construct three-dimensional models of what it meant to be a music teacher. In other words, they were asked to translate their philosophies about music teaching, and these were then used as a basis for meaning-making interviews about the same. It can

be stated that the creation, interpretation, treatment and translation of PAE led towards an awareness and openness for further interpretation.



Image 1, *Three-dimensional models of what it meant to be a music teacher* (Houmann, 2010, p. 248-249).

*Philosophers' philosophies*, the third category, focuses on understanding other philosophers' works and ideas for creating ways of understanding (existing) and imagining (future) the prerequisites of music educational practices. In such investigations, conceptualisations of the world, society, being, music, experience, communication, learning and teaching are explored, defined and implemented, including ABR methodologies. Here, the relation between PAE and ABR concerns how artistic expressions can be used to make meaning of the philosophies for understanding and imagining the prerequisites of music educational policies, practices and research. One example of how the art form of cartoons can be used in such a case is Cathy Benedict's conference presentation where the concept of Bildung

is explored and made easy to understand in a wider sense.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IO1QqQSRgjE>



*Image 2, One example of how the art form of cartoons can be used (Benedict, 2011).*

Another example is how the philosophies of de Beauvoir are used in the radio show in this issue. The study is based on de Beauvoir's existential–philosophical way of thinking, including her view of human beings independent of their sex, which contains implications for music educational practices, and her ideas on how to communicate scientific results in a sensitive situated way. The aim was to create a situation in which the reader-listener comes close to the experiences of the female guitarists and understands these experiences from an existential philosophical perspective.

The fourth category, *scientific philosophies as a base for methodological choices*, concerns arts educational researchers' philosophical–scientific starting points, which influence their methodology and approaches to empirical material. The relation under focus in this category is how artistic forms of expression can offer processes of

meaning making, where one's understanding of methodological choices in relation to scientific–philosophical bases is deepened. This in turn deepens one's understanding of the research phenomenon. Ferm Almqvist (2019a) employed her understanding of Heidegger's philosophy, and specifically the concepts of dwelling and unconcealment, to investigate dance activities among elderly people. In the study, the processual nature of Heidegger's philosophy was a starting point to understand the processes of (musical) thinking, acting and learning that occurred when 20 amateur dancers developed an artistic performance based on their life stories, led by a professional choreographer. Of particular interest was the development process of a common artistic life story among the elderly dancers and how musical learning took place during that process. The philosophy, the artistic as well as verbal expressions of the dancers, and the movies created by a professional photographer were related to each other continually. Heidegger's views on how to come close to the processual situations under study and how to understand the activities guided the process. Movies shot by a professional photographer were used to provide insight and a multi-modal experience of the philosophical investigation and its results. Eventually, in this issue, it becomes evident that within all four categories, the relations between ABR and PAE concern reflective, present, translational processes, as earlier explained by Gerber and Myers-Coffman (2018).



*Image 3: An example of philosophy and art in interplay (Ferm Almqvist, 2019a).*

## The four articles

Below we present the four articles of this issue:

In the first article, ‘Arts-based research of participation in music education’, Sven-Erik Holgersen aims to discuss the criteria for, and the relations between, ‘meaning’ and ‘validity’ in ‘arts-based research’. Meaning, he explains, revealing his hermeneutic-phenomenological starting point, can refer to ABR considered as a matter of lived experiences. At first glance, he continues, meaning and validity may seem incompatible because lived experiences are hard to validate. What is to be found, what kind of meaning, implies aspects of validity. From a methodological point of view, the article proposes that the aesthetic experience – ABR in particular and qualitative research in general – concerns some defining aspects connected to the discussion of ‘meaning’ and ‘validity’. Sven-Erik’s studies, which form the basis of his discussion on validity, can be considered as belonging to category three of relations between PAE and ABR. He discusses how, to what extent and on what grounds, video recordings of children’s musical participation can be valued as valid and meaningful contributions. In his discussion, he addresses the following questions on meaning and validity:

- What makes participation in music education meaningful?
- What or who constitutes meaning?
- In which context(s) and to which extent can the meaning in question be considered true or valid?
- How can aesthetic meaning support validity in the reported study?

By pondering these questions, Holgersen naturally arrives at the concept of ambiguity, which he defines as an identifying aspect of meaning in, for example, aesthetic practices, artefacts and experience. Sven-Erik finds that phenomenological analysis of artistic experiences and ABR can provide further philosophical grounds for the validation of research based on the experience of aesthetic meaning. In research areas dominated by written and verbal language, it is important, he

underlines, that the result categories refer to relevant concept areas, to ensure validity. He also emphasises the value of validating arts-based music educational research, which crosses borders with different arts educational areas such as visual arts, dance, or other physical forms of creative education. He concludes that validity in arts-based research can be difficult, and even irrelevant, to measure. Instead, he suggests that it may be fruitful to talk about validity in ABR in terms of *confirmability*, *dependability* and *transferability*.

When it comes to confirmability, the author discusses triangulation and adds that sharing experiences and knowledge, through video recordings, for example, could be one way to develop understanding of aesthetic meaning making among children. On dependability, Holgersen sheds light on the importance of a dialogic relationship between theoretical and empirical knowledge within ABR. Regarding transferability, he underlines the usefulness and the recognition as important aspects of validity. Further, Holgersen presents an important discussion of the implications of meaning and validity related to ABR, based on the following themes:

- how theoretical basis and consistency can support validity in the study of participation strategies
- how ambiguity and recognisability of aesthetic meaning relate to the problem of validity
- the role of aesthetics in ABR and connections between artistic meaning and validity
- the aesthetic attitude

The whole discussion leads to an interesting and important conclusion about meaning and validity in ABR.

The second article authored by Samira Jamouchi, ‘Exploring a performative approach to felting wool. An autoethnography for two?’, can be labelled as belonging to category four, as she, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, uses the actual artistic process of hand felting to understand the learning process, with her colleagues



serving as dialogic outsiders. She wants to offer a creative approach to learning and teaching the arts. She wants to encourage imagination and self-understanding among the students and wants the students to experience the unknown. Jamochi returns to the ancestral technique of hand felting, a form of handicraft she learned several years ago. Fabric is often the outcome of woven threads, she states, but felted fabric is the result of non-woven, entangled material such as wool fibre. In the study, she gains insight into the sensoring, tactile, felting process, guided by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'smooth space'. She describes the process and her emotions in the following words: 'The becoming of the fibres, under the manipulation of the material, are for me moments of promises: an unknown becoming of the material in my hands. Those moments nourish my imagination and bring moments of wellbeing' (Jamochi, 2019, p. 54).

She underlines that exploring a performative approach to felting wool may lead to articulating moments of making, during a felting process, rather than focusing on a final product made of felted wool. In the article, she presents a performative approach to research that is based on creative sharing between colleagues. To explore a performative approach to felting, she uses contrasting examples from previously conducted creative learning workshops, where the process, including the aesthetic experiences, focused on the end product.

She also motivates the arts-based approach by underlining the possibilities concerning closeness between action and reflection, which implicates a discussion regarding the dual roles of a practitioner and researcher and to the connections between validity and quality of research material. From this point of view, she introduces her arts-based imagined research methodology, which is based on post-modern ideas of materialism: auto-ethnography for two. Jamochi discusses both possibilities and limitations of the approach and connects them to pedagogical issues. The author expects the readers to use the text as inspiration for developing research

approaches that are aligned with post-modern, post-humanistic ways of thinking about the arts, teaching and learning.

In the third article, ‘An embodied approach to academic writing? Reflections from an artist on her journey towards becoming an a/r/tographer’, Signe Alexandra Domogalla shows how she – a dancer, choreographer and novice arts-based researcher – struggled with making meaning of the processes of academic writing. Exploring how she can make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice and how she can better understand her artistic practice through academic writing, she learns that the very process of writing the article becomes an answer or result – embodied and ecological as well as verbal and theoretical. Epistemologically, she draws from several areas within modernism as well as postmodernism, which also place this article under the third category of relations between ABR and PAE. Although this stance is typically postmodern, she admits to being inconsistent and unconsciously falling into modernists thought, which, however, are made conscious in the writing process.

Drawing on different theoretical views of embodiment, embodied- and neuro-cognition, dance, ABR and more, she presents and ‘translates’ theoretical concepts into an embodied dance or artistic practice. Three log excerpts, originally performed and produced for a PhD course in ABR, are presented and analysed. She explains that the practice then served as a catalyst for new ideas and perspectives, which finally assumed the written form of the article. Domogalla reveals how embodiment of thought through movement and dance can be important for linking an artistic practice to a theoretical field. The three excerpts reveal several perspectives and a stepwise bridging of theory and practice – or fieldwork and analysis. It is not an easy task to exceed the traditional separation of the body and mind. She also reaffirms Bresler’s (2006) claim about the importance of time in such processes, adding that prolonged engagement and immersion allow the researcher to move closer to her/his

topic. Encountering other researchers' attempts with her own process of bridging an arts practice with academic writing, she proposes a 6-point technique or algorithm:

1. *Encountering theory* through literature or a mentor or a peer.
2. *Physical exercise*—any preferred exercise, such as, running, yoga, hiking or skiing.
3. *Arts-based encounter of theory* through different artistic expressions or media, and translation of theories into an artistic expression, close to, or in opposition to, the artists' own expression.
4. *Inspiration* and meaning making through the environment and the site or consulting an alternative site.
5. *Connection* of theory to earlier experience in artistic practice.
6. *Reconnection to theory through artistic practice*: a back-translation and embodiment of theory through the artistic practice

Finally, Cecilia Ferm Almqvist in 'How to become a guitar playing human being in the situation of ensemble courses – independent of sex: An episode of the radio show *Music and Equality*', shares a study presented as a radio show. The study is presented as text, drawings, and aural/sounding drama, which afford a multi-modal experience of the project. The article could belong to both categories three and four of the aforementioned relations between ABR and PAE. The format of the written article is very close to a transcript of the imagined radio show episode. The radio show includes a programme leader, two young female guitarists, and a prominent philosopher: Simone de Beauvoir. We claim this format may engage a wider circle of readers than a traditional scientific article. The article is intended as a thought-provoking speech directed at ensemble teachers aiming for equal music education and as a philosophical exploration of female experiences of ensemble education, primarily based on the existential–philosophical thinking of Simone de Beauvoir.

The dialogue is a result of a phenomenological-hermeneutical analysis of interviews with two former students in a specialist upper secondary music programme. The inquiry examines the challenges and possibilities for equal

opportunities in becoming an ensemble guitarist within popular upper secondary music ensemble courses in Sweden. Issues from the inquiry, chosen for the current article/radio show, are all crucial from an equality perspective: *transcending boys and immersing girls*, *the male gaze*, *relations to patriarchal repertoire*, *possible projects* and *the role of the teacher*. Within all these issues, the body – the musical body, the female body, the teacher’s body and more – becomes important, in transcendence as well as immanence. Simone De Beauvoir, in the radio show, says that each human existence is at the same time transcendence and immanence, and that it is of great importance that music teachers see all students as musical bodies, and not as female and male bodies.

It is interesting but also disquieting to hear young female voices of the 21st century describing educational settings as lacking a conscious focus on gender and equality issues to the extent that Simone De Beauvoir’s (1949) theories, seventy years after *The Second Sex*, seem relevant even today. This situation probably appears differently, or may not appear at all, in different arts education discourses. However, Ferm Almqvist’s conclusion probably has relevance beyond popular music ensemble courses: ‘[U]sing popular and jazz genres and connected forms and values, in an un-reflected way, and step back as a teacher, is not possible, if we are heading towards a more equal music education and society’.

In summary, it can be stated that ABR, in this issue of EJPAE, contributes to the holistic experience of complex theoretical and practical phenomena within arts education. Holistic arts education experiences, thinking and research are communicated in sensitive situated ways: they mediate the complexity created and explored in human relational situations. The articles offer possibilities to take the ‘other’ perspective, while providing alternative perspectives on the world, at the same time as they widen possibilities for communication and meaning making in broader target groups where several senses come into play.

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## About the Guest Editors

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**Torill Vist** is professor in music education at OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, Department of Early Childhood Education. She holds her bachelor and master degrees as well as her PhD in Music Education from the Academy of Music in Oslo, and has another master degree in piano performance from SMU, Dallas. Torill Vist has developed and taught at several PhD courses in arts-based research and has special research interests in early childhood (music/arts) education, in music and emotion knowledge, and in arts-based methodologies.