

Dr. Mark Irwin – Research Profile

Summary

I have been active as a researcher for some years, my initial research interests being focussed upon music recording technologies and their history and development and in 2007 I was awarded the title of Visiting Research Fellow at the London College of Music (University of West London).

More recently my research interests have turned to learning and teaching in popular music and in 2015-16 I completed a doctorate in the Department of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex. My supervisors were Dr Linda Morris and Professor Valerie Hey, and my thesis was examined by Professor Lucy Green from the Institute of Education and Dr Tamsin Hinton-Smith of the University of Sussex. The empirical work undertaken for my thesis consists of a series of case studies that examine the learning narratives of popular musicians that have become teachers and asks how the way that these individuals acquired their skills and beliefs might impact on the way that they teach their students, and if this impact might be more effective if teachers were encouraged to reflect on their own learning, using that reflection to research, inform, and modify their own teaching practice.

Furthermore, my work takes a structural-constructivist approach using the ideas of Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 1993) as a theoretical lens, and drawing on the constructivist learning theory developed from the principles established by Vygotsky in the 1920's and 1930's. I argue that a hybrid approach to Bourdieu's notion of habitus (1990, p.53) or the dispositions we adopt to the social world is crucial to understanding the way that we become musicians. Moreover, that the situatedness of musical and educational practice and the identity practices of learners and teachers are fundamental to the process of learning as a process of becoming (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Ergo, by recognising this process of learning as situated in social, cultural, historical, and technological contexts we may also facilitate metacognition (Flavell, 1979). By metacognition, I mean the ability to be reflexive as a learner or teacher; understanding the way that learning works, our beliefs about learning, and how those beliefs affect one's own learning and thus agency. Additionally, that notions of authenticity and creativity are vital to the effectiveness of musical learning practices, and the accumulation of social and cultural capital for popular musicians. I intend to publish further on this topic and have just submitted an abstract to the forthcoming International Association for the Study of Popular Music (UK and Ireland) Conference: Popular Music: Creativity, practice and praxis (8-10 September 2016), which will be co-hosted by BIMM and the University of Sussex.

Research Projects, papers and publications

Music Technology Research Projects:

'The Saturator' – stand-alone music software programming designed using object orientated programming in order to explore the digital emulation of the non-linearity produced by analogue tape saturation – June 2003 – University of Westminster

'Titanium' – experimental Laptop based music album – September 2004 – University of Westminster

Presented academic papers at:

- Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM) Study Day – Royal Holloway, University of London 30th September 2004
- Art of Record Production Conference – University of Westminster 18th & 19th September 2005
- Art of Record Production Conference – Edinburgh University 8th---10th September 2006
- CHARM Symposium – Kings College London 5th June 2006
- Institute of Engineering & Technology – London – 16th May 2006
- Presented a paper on my initial doctoral case study: 'Do we teach the way we learnt' examining the learning histories of popular musicians and how theses histories influence their pedagogy.

Presented at the Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research (SEMPRE) Spring conference, 'Developing the Musician', at Reading University, 5th March 2011

- Lectures for the AHRC funded 'Research Skills Training for Music Post Graduates' at the British Library on the analysis of recordings.

ARP Journal: <http://www.artofrecordproduction.com/>

- I contributed to the initial start up and procured funding from WestFocus/Music Tank for the 'Art of Record Production' conference and refereed academic on-line journal – also wrote a paper on Joe Meek In Vol. 1 (ii) of the ARP Journal, which was accepted and published in October 2007. The article on Joe Meek and his recording Studio in the mid 1960's can be found here: <http://arpjournal.com/take-the-last-train-from-meeksville-joe-meeks%E2%80%99s-holloway-road-recording-studio-1963-7/>
- Entered under category B in the 2008 RAE (as I had moved jobs prior to the census date) Out of 11.5 staff submitted the department scored 10% 3*, 25% 2*, 50% 1* and 15% unclassified.
- Member of the Editorial Steering Group for the Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice: <http://jpaap.napier.ac.uk/index.php/JPAAP>
- Member of the Centre for Higher Education Equity Research (CHEER) University of Sussex
- Member of the Centre for Teaching and Learning Research (CTRL) University of Sussex
- Member of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music
- Member of the organizing committee for the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (UK and Ireland) Conference: Popular Music: Creativity, practice and praxis (8-10 September 2016).

Recent academic papers:

- The Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research Conference (SEMPRE) – Developing the Musician – Reading University March 2011 – 'Do we teach the way we learnt?': http://www.sempre.org.uk/resources/mar2011_review.pdf
- University of Sussex Doctoral Conference – July 2011: 'Teaching the way we learnt': <https://doctoralschool.wordpress.com/2011/04/19/school-of-education-social-work-doctoral-conference-2011/>
- Institute for Contemporary Music Performance (ICMP) – Rock and Roles Conference July 2012 'Teaching the way we learnt': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BWQBwwHUMc>
- Brighton Fuse Project, Brighton University - 26th January 2012 – Presented a paper on the BIMM model and my own research. See the Brighton fuse report: <http://www.brightonfuse.com/what-is-brighton-fuse/>
- BIMM Academic Research Network (BARN) - February 2012 – Presented a paper on my doctoral research;
- Presented a paper at the Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research: Researching Uniqueness - The 6th annual Brighton-Sussex postgraduate conference, 6 June 2014 – titled, 'Teaching the way we learnt: narratives of informal musical learning': <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/clhlwr/research/conferences/researchinguniqueness>