



Performing Music Research: Methods in Music Education, Psychology and Performance Science. By Aaron Williamon, Jane Ginsborg, Rosie Perkins, and George Waddell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 544 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-871454-5.

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Research in music education, music psychology, and the newer area of performance science has grown to consider how individuals or groups of people learn and engage with music across a wide variety of ages, cultures, and contexts. These fields have increasingly harnessed methods from different disciplines to aid the discovery and understanding of what can be considered a complex phenomenon, whether discussing music itself,² or extending this to examine the use of music as an intervention.³ It is for this reason that current research students, and anyone looking to start critiquing and performing music research, often need a crash course in multiple methods that can steer them in choosing the correct approach for their research question.

What *Performing Music Research* offers is an easily digestible and highly practical guide that starts off with considering how to form an answerable research question, and then takes the reader through every step required to design and carry out the research to answer it. Placing this guide to conducting research squarely within music education, music performance, and performance science, the book contains a number of references and accounts of recent music performance studies throughout. These give examples of the types of research question that can be asked as well as giving the reader a focused reference list for further reading. The multimedia sources included on the companion website and the suggestions for further discussion in each chapter give readers an easy way to test their knowledge of the approaches, methods, and statistical analyses covered in



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² Andrea Schiavio, "Constituting the Musical Object: A Neurophenomenological Perspective on Musical Research," *Teorema* 31, no. 3 (2012): 63–80.

³ Psyche Loui, "Neuroscientific Insights for Improved Outcomes in Music-Based Interventions," *Music & Science* 3 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059204320965065>.

the book. The films, in particular, are another useful way to demonstrate the types of research question that can be developed, and importantly, what the results of these research projects actually contribute to the knowledge and practice of music performance.

The book is divided into four parts to reflect the different stages in the research cycle: planning research, conducting research, analyzing research, and communicating research. In Part 1, chapters look at devising research questions, choosing from various methodological approaches, and applying for research ethical approval. As well as considering how to form a research question and the various epistemologies and methodologies that the proposed question might imply, the authors provide various practical guides, such as the steps necessary in conducting a literature review (or systematic review). Strengths and weaknesses of main methodologies (quantitative, qualitative, and multistrategy) are discussed and placed alongside aims that focus on the ability either to generalize across a wide population or to elucidate the in-depth experiences of individuals.

In Part 2, chapters are devoted each to observations, documentation, interviews, surveys, and experiments. Williamon et al. provide different options for data extraction for materials ranging from participant observations and transcriptions of conversations through to diaries and programme notes, depending on whether structured, quantitative data or more open, qualitative data (or both) are required. Similarly, they discuss a variety of types of interview and survey questions (open, semi-structured, and structured). In every chapter here, regardless of the type of data being considered, there are lots of practical tips on how to arrange data collection, whether it be how to set up video recordings or how to organize interview questions (as well as practicing the art of interviewing). Once the book reaches designing surveys and experiments, discussion turns to how to select participants, options for randomization, and how to develop and test new protocols.

Part 3 turns to analysis techniques. In qualitative analysis, readers learn how one might transcribe and code data. For quantitative analysis, readers find examples of how one might describe the incidence of data from any particular question, and how to proceed to analyzing relationships between different variables. Here, there is a lot more space dedicated to explaining the background of various quantitative measures and how these might be used to then compare differences between groups of individuals or conditions. This can be incredibly useful in explaining statistics to students who may be encountering quantitative analysis for the first time.

Part 4 closes with tips on structuring writing for various venues. Readers are also guided in constructing a narrative for their research that conveys both its motivations and the particulars about how a research project was conducted.

Overall, the book and its companion website give readers an immense amount of information at their fingertips, quickly and accessibly introducing them to performing music research. It deftly covers vast ground, only leaving the reader hoping the authors will turn to other areas for expansion in a similar vein. Although it can hardly be expected to give an exhaustive account of all forms of analysis, the book is weighted more toward the quantitative and provides many resources for practicing these types of analysis. I look forward to the authors developing some music-related

resources around the qualitative analysis methods mentioned in the book, as it is often difficult to source examples for students so they can practice the techniques before handling data for their own projects. Of course, it is more difficult to check 'correct' answers here, but seeing how other authors might have approached a sample dataset, in similar ways to the small number of extracts already provided in the book, would be useful with a discussion on how to evaluate the integrity of the student's individual approach. Again, although the authors provide a few methods on automatic extraction of data from various sources, e.g., text analysis and audio analysis, it would be ever more valuable if this discussion could be extended to cover the state of the art on *what* can be extracted from text, audio, and video (which is currently overlooked) regarding music performances. It is here that we start to think philosophically about what is being measured, or gleaned, from these sources and what it means for a musical performance. What is the beginning/end point of a *glissando* between two notes for a singer? Is a performance measured as deviations from an idealized performance of the score (if it exists?) and if so, what does that mean? How do we define the variables underlying a musical intervention so we can assess its impact? Current information on types of variables being extracted and manipulated and how they are defined for a complex phenomenon such as music performance would provide students a starting point for discussion on how they are operationalizing variables to use in answering their research question.

As a book to enter into the world of music performance research, *Performing Music Research* adeptly introduces the aspiring researcher to various approaches, making sure the reader can easily understand the strengths and weaknesses of each, with roadmaps of practical points to consider when designing research using these methodologies and methods. Undoubtedly this book will become a key reference text, staying with readers long after they have trained as an excellent resource.