

Music-in-Becoming

[Part 3. *Researching Processes of Disclosure*]

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Introduction

In this article, I aim at exploring and extracting some essences of the composition process. Exploring, writing, reflecting: these three practices are merged in the composing process – in this article I will take them apart. The methods I employ are based on both artistic and phenomenological research. My thesis is that composing music takes place in a phenomenological in-between of composer and work, and that the act of composing is driven by the complementary skills of activeness and receptiveness. In this in-between, the skill of attentive listening plays a crucial role as it is both participatory and receptive. Further, I intend to examine and discuss the methods I use during this exploration. What are characteristic differences between artistic and phenomenological research, and what are their potential kinships? My presumption is that the active-receptive act of composing at its core is a phenomenological-hermeneutic practice. However, it only makes sense to discuss the significance of both artistic and phenomenological practices and theories with an explicit grounding in lived experience. It makes sense to explore phenomenological research phenomenologically, always in contact with real, experienced phenomena. It makes sense to explore artistic research whilst practicing its methodologically relevant methods.

With a great interest in both phenomenological and artistic research, I have never really reflected on the kinship between the two methodologies. Such a lack of comparison is somewhat surprising as I have taken their kinship for granted for at least the last 15 years of my professional life. In several research papers, I have discussed musical projects with a specific focus on art-science relation (Østergaard, 2010) and the composition process (Østergaard, 2004/2010), without explicitly drawing on phenomenology. On the other hand, I have explored phenomenology in the field of phenomenon-based science education with an emphasis on historical and philosophical questions (Østergaard, 2011), aesthetic and audial experiences (Østergaard, 2019b), as well as pedagogical issues connected to science education (Østergaard et al., 2008) and music education (Østergaard, 2015). It is thus with excitement that I now more explicitly examine how my music-making practice is influenced by phenomenological and artistic research approaches.

The compositions on which I ground my discussion are four pieces for three overtone-skilled singers and one double bass player, all of which were performed in

Berlin in October 2019.¹ The music is part of the interdisciplinary research project *The Phenomenology of Audial Experience*, which connects science (especially acoustics), music (including composition) and philosophy of science.² The research intends to develop experience-based knowledge about music as heard and musical composition as a way of knowing. The very first entry about the first piece (which I later called *Ørenslyd. Ritus V*) was: “*The unison sound – linger in it (...) The text – should not disturb the listener’s attention of the (pure) sound and subtle timbral variations*” (Notebook, 3.4.2019). With an initial conception of an indivisible sound-listening relation as the idea for the piece, I stumbled upon the rarely used word *Ørenslyd*, Norwegian ‘øre’, ear, and ‘lyd’, sound. The expression “å få ørenslyd” means “to make one’s voice heard”. As a next step, I captured the overarching idea of the piece:

The piece *Ørenslyd* is built on a study, an in-depth exploration of the character of the tone [...] through an improved, an attentive listening. If sound and listening are inseparably linked to each other, and the explication of them first happens through ‘a mathematization’, it is in the meeting point between (them) that my study takes place. To insist on our capability of listening as a tool to enter the character of the tone/timbre! (Notebook, 14.5.2019)

In this notebook extract, I recognize at least three sources of inspiration for the piece. First, I take as a point of departure Hermann von Helmholtz’s (1913) theory of acoustics and research on sound and listening.³ He is the first scientist to describe the physical structure of the tone (basic tone, overtone, harmonics). Whereas he decomposes the tone into its various sonic parts, in *Ørenslyd* I aim at exploring the formation of overtones *from within*, in other words, how the tone is acoustically fragmented into single components. This is why I chose singers capable of the overtone vocal technique and a multiphonics-skilled double bass player for the concert.

Second, I am profoundly inspired by the music and philosophy of the Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi. In contrast to his fellow contemporary composers of the 1950s and 1960s, who embraced serialism and its techniques of composing with series of pitches, rhythms, dynamics, timbres, or other musical elements, Scelsi turned to in-depth studies of a single one tone. His *Quattro pezzi su una nota sola* (1959) is a minimalistic study for chamber orchestra where each movement is based on a single tone. The concept of musical harmony that he used, in terms of timbre, adds depth to the dimensions of tone pitch and duration (Turdu, 1992). My search for “an in-depth exploration of the character of the tone” is an echo of Scelsi’s idea of creating an impression of the real, spherical dimension of sound.

Third, the expression ‘a mathematization’ is a resounding of my reading of Husserl’s later philosophy. In his posthumous work *The Crisis of European Sciences*,

¹ The four pieces are *Ørenslyd. Ritus V* (for soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, and double bass); *A Steffens Fragment* (for soprano and double bass); *Into A. Overtone music* (for double bass); and *Aus der ersten Duineser Elegie* (for three voices).

² See: <https://www.nmbu.no/en/projects/node/38017>

³ His work is called *Lehre von den Tonempfindungen*, where ‘Tonempfindung’ best can be translated as ‘tone sensation’ or ‘tone sentiment’.

Husserl claims that modern science can be traced back to Galileo (Husserl, 1970b). So-called Galilean science is the starting point for a process of the *mathematization of nature*, the process by which “nature itself becomes ... a mathematical manifold” (p. 32). Also, the deconstruction of the tone into its physical parts is a sort of mathematization process. For me, the pure mathematical relation between overtones has never been particularly useful. Physics’ description of the structure of the tone is not where I start my exploration of the acoustic tone.

This text is structured as follows: First, based on an exploration of composing and performing the music of *Ørenslyd*, accounted for in *Close Attention!*, I disclose the intimate relationship between the listener and the listened and the rational and intuitive forces at work in the *music-in-becoming*. I then move on to discuss some main characteristics of phenomenological and artistic research practices, relating the discussion to the findings emerging from my explorative composing process. I then discuss the diversities of these two sets of research practices, narrowed down to possible differences and potential commonalities. Following this, I debate musical composition as processes of disclosure. I conclude by summing up my main findings as well as discussing some questions for further work.

Listening to *Ørenslyd*’s Becoming of Form

In the Research Catalogue exposition *Close Attention!*, I write and reflect both as a phenomenologist and as an artistic researcher. The driving force is all about answering Giorgi’s (2005) fundamental question in qualitative research: “[W]hat is it like to experience a particular phenomenon?” (p. 80; italics in original). My lived experience as a composer forms the basis for a precise description of the composing process and an analysis of its essence. In this section, I first discuss some themes that emerged from my composing of *Ørenslyd*, second, I discuss phenomenology and its research practice and third, I examine the diverse practices of artistic research.

During the months in 2019 it took me to compose the four pieces for the concert *Ørenslyd*, I was also researching composition as a phenomenon of becoming. Attentive listening is probably the one skill I employed the most in the composing-researching process: listening to the sounds of the imaginative positioning of the three singers and the instrumentalist in the room I had chosen for the first performance, listening to possible continuations of the musical flow while writing the score, paying attention to the unarticulated and vague feeling of ‘it does not sound correct!’ or ‘this is not what I intend to express!’. What is this skill of attentive listening, more precisely?

My notebook is full of attempts to verbally capture the role of my participatory attention. Repeatedly, I return to the skill of listening using various words and notations. The act of composing, I note, is “a listening and articulation ability which demands, first receptivity and second, a capacity of form-giving” (Notebook, 18.4.19). Listening is constantly evaluating the outcome, the actual or imaginative sounds: “My ear has to approve the result!” (28.7.2019). And when it does, there is a sensation of *attunement*, an experience of coherence between what I hear, the overall idea of the piece, and the anticipation of what is yet to come (Østergaard 2021). These experiences of coherence and attunement are in some respect related to Collins’ (2005) descriptions of moments in

which the composer can “better grasp the overall structural view of the evolving composition” (p. 212). The sensation of attunement creates, in the blink of a moment, a conception of the piece as a whole.

Listening to the composition as it took its form made me aware of two reciprocating positions:

The [compositional] work itself took place in a field of tension between giving the piece a structure ‘from above’ and developing the score ‘from below’ – note by note, bar by bar. It is essentially about trying to achieve a good balance between working the piece out from both above and below. Listening to the becoming of the piece is in a sense more from an above – or perhaps rather from an outside position. (Notebook, 28.7.2019)

This last remark indicates that attentive listening needs at least some distance to the music as it is appearing. In a temporal perspective, composing takes place in the moment between the already written and the *still-to-be formulated*. It is in this anticipation that my attentive listening is at work, where the manifested and the not-yet-manifested meet. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey (2005) describes the process of creation as the relation between what is done and what is to come:

This anticipation is the connecting link between the next doing and its outcome for sense. What is done and what is undergone are thus reciprocally, cumulatively, and continuously instrumental to each other. (p. 52)

In the act of composing, I distinguish between the complementary skills of activeness and receptiveness. The first is characterized by the intention of structuring ideas into musical, sounding form, the latter by allowing for the *music-in-becoming* to speak with its own voice. The skill of continuously bringing forth is related to composing as a craft, patiently structuring the score, bar after bar. Activeness further implies an organizing intention, led by the overall idea of the piece and by aesthetic preferences, i.e., desired form and preferred musical expression. The skill of receptiveness, on the other hand, implies that the composer is open to whatever appears during the creative process: surprising and unexpected novel musical expressions and even fundamentally new insights. To be receptive during composing is akin to “a phenomenological attitude” (van der Schyff, 2016) and its openness to the not-yet manifested. The complementarity of these two skills can best be understood “as actively monitoring the transformation of ideas to musical expression, and receptively listening to the work speak with its own voice” (Østergaard, 2021, p. 208). The composition process, with its converging-structuring and diverging-opening tendencies, is “a cognitive act-in-progress” (Donin, 2012, p. 2) where cognition comprises the rational and the intuitive, the deliberate and the unconscious. Akin to phenomenology, composition “affirms the essential reciprocity of contingent experience and rational certainty” (Clifton, 1983, p. 50). The composition of *Ørensyld* is music-making as “an exploratory activity engaging with intimate states of mind” (Schiavio et al., 2020, p. 5).

Listening is an experience of participation. In previous publications, I have elaborated on listening as an *aesthetic experience*, in the original meaning of aesthetics as

perception via the senses (Østergaard, 2019b). Perception is not merely an act of passively receiving, it is also a fine-tuned instrument for participating and being involved in creative activities. For the composer, listening occurs in various forms. “The ear is an intelligent organ, which accompanies the compositional making, but also the compositional exploring, understanding and valuing” (Zembylas & Niederauer, 2018, p. 65). When listening to music, the ability of listening is, Martyn Evans (1990) claims, the ability to engage in music by participating in what the listener hears. “The music will not of itself speak to him – he must read it” (p. 13). Listening ability is, of course, also affected by what we listen to, whether music, bird song or the nearby highway. Our ears are attuned to the lifeworld differently, depending on our ability of attentive listening and the sounds themselves. As Ihde (2007) points out, listening is always listening *to* something. When it comes to the composition process, I should add, listening does not operate alone. In various manners, it merges with vision in a synaesthetic experience. During composing, I often use visualizations of ideas to structure parts of the pieces.⁴ If my hearing is a mode of participatory engagement in the creative process, “it is not because it is opposed in this regard to vision, but because we ‘hear’ with the eyes as well as the ears” (Ingold, 2000, p. 277).

In the composition process, listening takes on a variety of different forms. When listening as a composer, I am receptive towards the emerging sounds and structures; I am attentive towards the manifestation of ideas as sounding music, and when listening attentively, to quote Ihde (2007), “I ‘hear’ myself or from myself” (p. 117). Composing the music for *Ørenslyd* and disclosing essences of its appearance honed my hearing to the complexity of harmonic and timbral structures, to the singers’ and the musician’s performative skills, and to my mostly vague ideas of what the music I compose should sound like.

Phenomenology and its Practices of Research

I have never really been drawn to phenomenology as a mere thought. My first encounters with phenomenology were about the experience of its practices, not its philosophy or theory. I remember very well how I for the first time took part in exercises in Goethe’s theory of colours. Goethe insisted on the exact observation of phenomena as the vital first step towards understanding the world’s true nature. “My theory of colour should not primarily be understood, it should be done!”, Goethe is supposed to have said. I have frequently practiced phenomenology in educational situations when teaching science teachers (Østergaard et al., 2008). My attempts to define and activate the attentive ear (Østergaard, 2019b) resonates with my first encounter with Goethe’s phenomenology. As I will expand upon later in this text, an emphasis on *doing* phenomenology (i.e., Clifton, 1983; Ihde, 2007) constitutes a potentially fruitful link between phenomenological and artistic research. The practice and intentions of phenomenology was a topic I recurrently returned to during the composing process:

Phenomenology as a method is to a larger extent connected to *doing* phenomenology, (...) to identifying and training competencies in the

⁴ I here refer to *Music-in-Becoming: Close Attention!*, in the section “... the hearing ear” where I show a drawing of the textual basis for *Ørenslyd. Ritus V*.

phenomenology of audial experience, [where] the skill of listening is at its core. The attention shifts from [asking] “What do I hear?” and “How can I describe the things I hear?” to “What does this mean, to *listen*?” And “How can I improve my listening skills?” (Notebook, 3.10.2018)

In some way or another, phenomenology refers to what has become its central demand; “to go back to the ‘things themselves’” (Husserl, 1970, p. 168). This going-back-to indicates that we have become disconnected, distanced, and removed from something. Exactly what is it we are supposed to come back *to* – and *from where* do we return? And how should we understand these ‘things’ to which we must return? For Husserl, ‘the things themselves’ are embedded in the lifeworld, “the given practical world of perceptual experience from which all scientific activity takes its point of departure” (Hardy, 2013, p. 44). The human lifeworld is how we experience the world before conceptualization. The primordial character of the lifeworld is emphasized in Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) phenomenology: “To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract derivative sign-language” (p. ix-x; italics in original). Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty emphasize (natural) science as the driving force in the separation of human experience and lifeworld. Does this imply that returning to the lifeworld, to “the real” (p. xi), is the return from positions promoted by (natural) scientific thought? In any case, Husserl’s request to return implies a strong critique of scientific thought’s tendency towards abstractions and representations. “The world is precisely that thing of which we form a representation”, Merleau-Ponty claims (p. xiii). Concepts and representations are all derived from the lifeworld. To return to the human lifeworld implies being open to the lifeworld in its pre-conceptuality.

The notion of phenomenological research is both complex and wide-ranging. Drawing on the rich traditions of phenomenology and hermeneutics, reflective lifeworld research requires methods and practices that are compatible with the characteristics of human existence, “which in turn can meet the full ambiguity of lifeworld” (Dahlberg, Dahlberg & Nyström, 2008, p. 171). It would be unprecise to characterize this research as a set of fixed methods; rather, reflective lifeworld research comprises a manifold of methods for data collection and analysis. What is common is a lifeworld perspective (p. 171), an open phenomenological attitude of describing “the things in their appearing” (Finley, 2009, p. 9). In such a wide, open landscape, the phenomenological methodology needs rigorousness. Giorgi (1994) defines the methodology consisting of essentially three interrelated steps: First, a precise *description* of the phenomena to be studied, second a phenomenological *reduction*, that is a description that “disengages from all past theories”, “withholding existential assent of the phenomenon”, and third, a search for *essences*, that is the search until the phenomenon’s “essential or invariant characteristics show themselves” (pp. 206-207). The intention is to disclose “the *essences*, or structures, of meaning immanent in human experiences through the use of imaginative variation” (Finley, 2009, p. 7; italics in original). This intention is in line with Clifton’s (1983) notion of the phenomenological description; that it “concentrates not on facts, but upon essences” (p. 9).

Even though Giorgi emphasizes the flexibility of the method for concrete situations, these three steps might seem somewhat rigid. Other researchers put their main

emphasis on rich descriptions and an active openness, without explicitly using rigorous methodological steps. With reference to Gadamer's warning against conceiving methods as "following a marked route", openness might be at stake in favour of methodological faithfulness (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 112). I find Finlay's (2009) explication clarifying; that phenomenological research is phenomenological "when it involves both rich descriptions of the lifeworld or lived experience, and where the researcher has adopted a special, open phenomenological attitude which, at least initially, refrains from importing external frameworks and sets aside judgements about the realness of the phenomenon" (p. 8). An attitude of attentive openness seems to be a common characteristic of the phenomenological method. Further, the competency of performing an initial description of the phenomenon seems to apply to all phenomenological research approaches. "The real has to be described, not constructed or formed", Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. xi) claims.

Sensing of the phenomenon in its appearance is at the core of phenomenological research. It is, however, not a matter of course that a phenomenological attitude yields precise sense observations. Being open is not necessarily the same as being a good observer or an attentive listener. I have in several articles discussed the potential of training listening skills as part of phenomenological learning (Østergaard, 2015; 2019b; 2020). It is important to stress this topic when debating phenomenological and artistic research as related research practices. An intention of 'bracketing' one's preunderstandings and preferences, striving for the *innocence of ear*⁵, must be held against the notion of the *personal ear*, emerging through carefully exploring the diversity of modes of listening. Such diversity is, of course, most relevant for musicians and composers:

The professional status of practitioners (...) is intimately intertwined with their recognition as expert diagnostic listeners. Yet as we argue in this section, it is often the ability to *shift* between different modes of listening (...) that expresses the virtuosity of their sonic skills, and helps them to underpin their knowledge claims. (Supper & Bijsterveld, 2015, p. 135; italic in original)

I will elaborate on different modes of listening in a later section. Listening to the music-in-becoming, shifting between listening from within and from the outside, are significant elements of my phenomenological-hermeneutic research practice.

Artistic Research as Practices of Research

Why should artists research their art-in-becoming? The most important argument, I would say, is that developing an inquisitive-explorative attitude to one's own artistic process enhances both process and product. Art has its unique knowledge and developing a reflective attitude towards one's artistic practice brings this knowledge to an intersubjective level. To me, being an artistic researcher means to explore, closely and attentively, the music-in-becoming, all the way from the hazy beginning to its concrete finalization. What finally appears is both an art product and experiential knowledge. The knowledge that emerges does not replace the art; it deepens it. The two results are

⁵ The "innocence of ear" is a paraphrase on Goodman's (1976) discussion of our coloured sensing and how an artist may do well "to strive for innocence of eye" (p. 8).

essentially different regarding form, but equal regarding significance. At its best, the benefit of my artistic research is twofold: First, it provides embodied, intersubjective knowledge, extracted from my lived artistic experience. Second, it supports my work as a composer; it contributes to refining the musical expression. My descriptive-analytical discussion of the sound of words versus the meaning of words will most certainly refine my future choral and vocal compositions. The personal knowledge of this discussion is brought into an inter-personal field when explicated here; explications that can be debated, supported, or criticized.

The notion of artistic research is widely debated, concerning both its intentions and the specificity of it as a set of research methods. Already the concept of *research* here signals certain expectations (Balkema & Slagen, 2004). The concept of research comprises an organized manner of approach, a systematic analysis, and a contribution to the body of knowledge. Related to such general features, how do artistic researcher approach the field of research? Neither art nor artistic research strives for repeatability, and the artist is in the first place not someone who produces knowledge that can be generalized. Rather, artistic research strives to unite the uniqueness in art with the systematic procedures of research. Artistic research “is directed towards unique, particular local knowledge” (p. 13). Its methods presuppose an active involvement of the artist in an undertaking “whose purpose is to articulate the connectedness of art to who we are and where we stand” (Borgdorff, 2011, p. 57). Artistic knowledge is unique because it is inevitably connected to the person who produces that knowledge. Subjectivity is conventionally regarded as a weakness of research; in artistic research, it is a requirement. Varto (2009) refers to the specific knower-knowledge unity as *inspective* knowledge. The artist is not outside, but inside the process, “and this position clouds the clarity of every piece of knowledge” (p. 36). The knowledge that arises through the inspective form of knowing is different from that produced from a distance; “its object cannot be clearly separated from the knower” (p. 37). Even though this inseparability is alien to research, it concurs with a deep experience of our lifeworld knowledge as part of us, not separated from us:

[A]lthough we all realize that we experience within and through the self, we have been led to believe that there is an alchemy turning this creation of the self into something external, something else. (p. 38)

I quote Varto’s critique of externalized knowledge to emphasize the potential radicality of artistic research. This not to say that artists try to do “proper” research, but rather that artistic research produces unique knowledge from within. Its knowledge is experiential and emerges from systematic research “in and through art practice” (Borgdorff, 2011, p. 45). As Duby and Barker (2017) discuss, there is a potential danger that embodied knowledge is overrun by scientific knowledge in higher education. To avoid a devaluation of forms of knowledge associated with artistic practices, they propose a “recalibration of research practices and methodologies” in relation to the sciences and the arts “which more accurately reflect both their practice and synergistic relationship” (p. 6).

Kinships between Artistic and Phenomenological Research

By elaborating on practices of artistic and phenomenological research, my intention is to disclose the motivations and competencies at play when composing, descriptively and reflectively. The whole point is to return to my lived experience as an artistic-phenomenological researcher. Only then I have a firm foundation for discussing kinships and differences between the two research practices.

In my exploration of the music-in-becoming, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between the artistic and the phenomenological facets of the research. Let me now elaborate on three aspects that clearly show this one-ness of the two practices. First, *letting the phenomenon speak*. Both artistic researchers and phenomenologists circle around concrete, lived practices, exploring concrete phenomena as opposed to theorizing them. Both practices accept and explore the primordial reality of lifeworld phenomena. Both practices recognize the pre-conceptual character of the lifeworld. And both research approaches aim at encountering the lifeworld as it appears to our senses, something we intuitively take for granted, “that the world is as we perceive it” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 33). Such an attitude requires special attention regarding the activation of the senses. In both artistic and phenomenological research, there is a strong incitement to use the senses actively. While composing the music, I often asked, “exactly what do I hear?” This question I pose both as a phenomenologist and as an artistic researcher.

Second, *questions of methodology*. In my reflections I frequently touch upon methodological considerations. I describe the method of composing as a dynamic, continual shift between diving-into and stepping-out-of, moving between close-up attention and distant listening. Such a method seems to be a common feature in the literature of the two research traditions. The process is essentially a phenomenological-hermeneutical one. The dynamic going-into and stepping-out-of is related to the skills of description and interpretation. The former, with an intention of giving exact and “pure” descriptions, the latter, to disclose essences and qualities of the explored phenomenon. Description and interpretation can be regarded as a continuum “where specific work may be more or less interpretive” (Finlay, 2009, p. 11). These questions of process and skills seem to be a shared interest of both artistic and phenomenological researchers.

Third, *researchers as subjects*. My notebook is full of I-notations. The problem of the subject is frequently addressed and debated in both artistic and phenomenological research. The subject as such is not regarded as separated from the world as a subject-object position indicates. Rather, the subject is “that which makes phenomena possible” (Varto, 2009, p. 39); the subject is the very anchor of the exploration. Against science’s “fear of subjectivity” (p. 38) and its attitude “that the subject must disappear” (p. 93), phenomenology- and art-oriented researchers accept that subjectivity is implicated in research (Finlay, 2009). The act of pulling myself into the inquiry, and thus placing myself in front of the narrative, has, however, problematic connotations. On the one hand, my I-perspective invites you as a reader to share my experiences; at its best, my text opens an *intersubjective* dimension, “a part of the total horizon that makes our world meaningful” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 58), that we can share. This presupposes, on the other hand, that my I-point of view is clearly depicted by me and then accepted and recognized by the reader. It is not enough simply to claim, “This is true because I have

experienced it”. I would guess that the experience of attractive, mesmerizing music is shared by most of us. However, the experience of creating music – thinking in terms of sound creation, writing a score, listening to music’s becoming – is probably alien to most readers of this article. Such a lack of shared experience might hamper the creation of a mutual, intersubjective space – and thus the credibility of my arguments.

Kinships such as these between the two practices are not hard to find. The fact that I find it difficult to distinguish clearly between the two might be a sign of their mutual relatedness. Researching my involvement in music-in-becoming and the disclosure of patterns of meaning is my main intention. I am not sure whether it is particularly phenomenological to identify whether the one research practice has been of greater use to me than the other. But it is definitely artistically valuable.

Differences between Artistic and Phenomenological Research

Even though a distinction between the two research practices does not prove to be of great relevance for my exploration, it would be naïve to claim that there are no such differences. Let me briefly elaborate on four aspects. First, *the different outcomes* of artistic and phenomenological research practices. A significant character of artistic research is its double result; the artwork itself and the knowledge of its coming-into-being. Artistic research means systematically examining the becoming of a work of art. For the artist, I would claim, the work of art is of primary importance compared to the result of one’s research. The quartet *Ørenslyd* is not a means for me to conduct artistic research. Rather, composing the piece allows for a closer exploration of its becoming. Composing the piece is not dependent on me being a scientist, it depends on my skills as a composer. However, as an artistic researcher, I am both artist and researcher. Phenomenological research does not have this duality, at least not as explicitly as in art-based research. A thorough, well-performed phenomenological inquiry may very well lead to new insights and meaning creation without any other result, i.e., improving the practice that has been investigated (as is the case in action research).

Second, *the role of “pure” description*. In my struggle to find a tonal expression that concurs with my audial idea of the music, I rely on simple aesthetic judgements like ‘this is good’ or ‘this I don’t like’. If the music does not sound well in my ears, well, then I seek another expression. Plain and simple. Such judgements are purely subjective and unexplainable, driven by intuition and taste more than careful considerations. In phenomenology, bracketing “previous understandings, past knowledge, and assumptions about the phenomenon” (Finlay, 2009, p. 12) is part of the methodology. Bracketing is not what I use in *composing* the music, even though it is most useful in *researching* the becoming of the pieces. During the composition process, I sense the challenge of *un*-bracketing; listening to the murmuring sounds of audial images, trusting my judgement, unfounded as it may appear. If phenomenology is “a project of sober reflection”, “free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional intoxications” (van Manen, 2007, p. 11), then the composition process is not particularly phenomenological, even though the investigation of the process might be.

Third, *the competency of being subjective*. In art education, there is a tradition of refining the student's own personal and creative skills. Compared to, say biology education (which I know very well from my own experience), art students are socialized into a tradition that does not denigrate subjectivity. The whole fabric of artistic activity relies on the refinement of subjective judgement. In that sense, artistic researchers are more likely to accept the self as a vital part of their research practice. If phenomenology relies on the transcendence of subject-object dichotomy (Varto, 2009), but at the same time seeks to purify the disclosure of "meaning immanent in human experiences through the use of imaginative variation" (Finlay, 2009, p. 7), the artistic researcher (trained as an artist) seems to have a unique point of departure.

Fourth, *art as a challenge*. Artists' and musicians' ways of knowing represent genuine accesses to the world. Creating and experiencing art are specific forms of human experiences. At its best, art provides new interpretations of phenomena as they appear in everyday experience. The artist's approach to the lifeworld is a rescue "from the tired patterns of everyday seeing" (Goodman, 1976, pp. 8, 9) and might result in new and fresh insights. At its most radical, art exposes science's underlying assumptions, both ontological and epistemological, with the intention "to restore ways of knowing the world to ways of being in it" (Ingold, 2020, p. 437). As such, art represents a challenge to science's monopoly of knowledge of the world and its claim to represent a higher validity compared to other forms of knowing. Comparing the two research practices concerning the status of art, phenomenologists also seek artistic methods – i.e., literary prose and poetry – "that retain their concrete, mooded, sensed, imaginative, and embodied nature" (Finlay, 2009, p. 14). Still, it seems crucial, in the context of my discussion, to emphasize the genuine character of art. The distinct nature of art and artistic endeavors should not get lost when comparing artistic research to phenomenological research approaches.

Regarding this comparison of the two practices, it seems that artistic research is profoundly influenced by phenomenology, in one way or the other, whereas not all phenomenological research is influenced by art as practices or as a research approach. This assumption makes room for accepting both the similarities and the differences between the two.

Beyond Categorizations: Processes of Disclosure

Composing is a reciprocal activity between *going-into* and *stepping-out-of*, between actively posing-on to and receptively letting-in. Participatory attention in the composition process is, thus, an ongoing oscillation between me and the piece as it appears. During this process, the musical work disclosed itself. It becomes audible, it gradually takes on its form; first as a kind of ambiguous shape, second as visualizations on the score, and finally as performed and audibly experienced music. These are three stages of showing-itself, of disclosure. In a Heideggerian wording, composing is making the hidden *unhidden* (*Unverborgen*)⁶. During the composition act, I experience how my ears are wide open for the moments of disclosure. These moments are marked by a sensation of *Stimmigkeit*, of inner coherence between the "voices" that I hear and the not-

⁶ Heidegger (1962) points out that the question of truth and "Being-true" is about "taking entities out of their hiddenness and letting them be seen in their unhiddenness (their uncoveredness)" (p. 262).

yet-manifested (Østergaard, 2021). Precisely this dynamic ability of stepping-in and stepping-out-of the work-in-progress is the methodological requisite for doing artistic-phenomenological research.

Why are these moments of disclosure so difficult to grasp? When I try to describe these moments, why do the words seem to shoo away? In my article on composing music to Einstein's physics, I elaborated on the word 'suddenly' that seemed to pop up frequently in my notebook (Østergaard, 2006). The Norwegian word for 'suddenly', '*plutselig*', is related to the German word '*plötzlich*', which etymologically is derived from '*der Plotz*', the sound of a crack or bang (p. 268). The word even has its own typical sound. In researching the becoming of the pieces for *Ørenslyd*, such sudden appearances were also evident. The process from hidden to un-hidden patterns was itself hard to observe and even harder to account for.

My exploration of the becoming of the pieces of *Ørenslyd* circles around the phenomenological in-between of composer and work. Music is "the outcome of a collaboration between a person, and real or imagined sounds", Clifton (1983 p. 74) claims. I will add that music seems to *invite* me to listen to it. Such invitations I experience not only when listening to music, but also when listening to the becoming of music. The work gradually emerges as a subject "a 'thou' who addresses me" (p. 80); the work's character becomes exceedingly clear.⁷ During composition, the piece seems to request my attention insistently, and it challenges my ears to listen carefully. "But if they speak they will be heard only by ears attuned to full listening" (Ihde, 2007, p. 15). Being a reflective composer demands of me expertise in attentive listening.

What makes lifeworld research reflective is the researcher's ability to reflect. As a visual metaphor, a reflection presupposes a certain distance between the observer and the reflecting surface. Looking into a mirror, it would be difficult to see anything clearly without at least some distance, without taking a step back. The mirror as a visual metaphor indicates that reflection is always self-reflection. Similarly, to use an audial metaphor, to hear the echo of my voice, I need to place myself at a minimum distance from which the surface from which the sound bounces back.⁸ Researching music-in-becoming (in particular) and human experiences (in general) presupposes the skilled ability to take a step back and to rise to a meta-level. A prerequisite for doing artistic-phenomenological research, however, is that the researcher does not lose contact with the experience of the phenomenon in its preconceptual state.

Varto (2009) describes the effects of the scientific approach and methods leading to a separation of knowledge and being. The idea of separation in research favors the objective observer, which again is promoted by the development of "the idealisation of observation, the mathematisation of science and the systematisation of methods" (p. 18). The deconstruction of this distance is echoed in the phenomenological dictum of going

⁷ I have elsewhere more thoroughly discussed the *Werkbegegnung* during composition and the invitational character of the work-in-becoming (Østergaard, 2021).

⁸ To hear a true echo, the distance from the listener located at the sound source to the reflecting surface should be about 17-18 meters, giving a total distance of ca 35 meters from the sound source to the ear (Østergaard, 2019a).

back to the ‘things themselves’. After having explored artistic-phenomenological research as the reciprocity of going back-to and stepping-out-of, I question whether the distance between me and the phenomenon is at all avoidable. The problem is not the distance itself, but rather if the researcher remains in that fixed outside-position or not. The core skill of the artistic-phenomenological researcher is the ability to balance between closeness and distance, in my case, between composition-in-action and researching this process from the outside. The deconstruction of the observer-observed relation is a sort of “half the job done”, as if we were to return to ‘the things themselves’ – and remain there. When researching composing as lived experience, this balance is *the* methodological challenge.

Closing Remarks

As a point of departure, I presumed that composing music takes place in a phenomenological in-between of composer and work, and that composition is driven the complementary skills of activeness and receptiveness. The elaboration shows that listening during composition takes on a multitude of forms, spanning from close-up listening to musical forms and structures to open listening to the emerging work. The balance between the skills of activeness and receptiveness – the active-receptive act of composing – seems to be at the core of creative work. There are some profound differences between artistic and phenomenological research; however, there are also similarities, and these are highly fruitful and worth exploring further. The results of investigating *Ørenslyd* in its becoming are threefold; first, the musical works themselves, second, the knowledge that emerges from of the close-up reflections, and third, the refined competencies of fine-tuned listening and more subtle musical articulation. My micro-phenomenological investigation of subtle changes of vocal sound articulation and of the tiny, but significant differences in both timbre and pronunciation of individual words,⁹ results in “an increased sensitivity and awareness of musical materials” (Brown and Dillon, 2012, p. 79). My idea for the *Ørenslyd* compositions was an in-depth exploration of the character of tone. Both an increased awareness of tonal material and a refined audial sensitivity are skills that I will bring into play in my next compositions.

Close Attention! and *Researching Processes of Disclosure* are two complementary texts; the former with an emphasis on the experience of composing the music, the latter a more explicit exploration and discussion of the essences that emerged during the process. As mentioned above, *doing* artistic-phenomenological research presupposes grounding in the experience of the phenomenon in its preconceptual state. In this artistic researching activity, processes of disclosure take on two forms, first, the piece showing-itself, disclosed itself, the gradually materializing piece of music, and second, the disclosure of the dis-covered, un-covered essences of the composition as a cognitive process.

During the reflective composing of *Ørenslyd* and the following writing of this article, several new questions have emerged, pointing towards further phenomenological-

⁹ I here refer to *Music-in-Becoming: Close Attention!*, in the sections “The sound of seeking unity” (on the unfolding of sound while three voices coming together in a unison) and “The sound vs. the meaning of words” (on the sound of excerpts from Rainer M. Rilke’s poem).

artistic explorations. Let me here briefly outline three such questions. First, the question of whether subjectivity is a constraint to or, on the contrary, a prerequisite for phenomenological-artistic research. How can the artistic researcher combine mere personal characteristics of taste, likes and dislikes with an analytic-reflective level of intersubjectivity? The research process starts with the composer's personal commitment and ideas, similar to phenomenology that "begins with the first person, *I*" (Ihde, 2007, p. 31; italics in original). The personal experiences can be checked against the experiences of others, thus bringing the mere subjective into a state of intersubjectivity. Yet, subjectivity should be avoided, it seems, perhaps due to fear of presenting one's work of art as an outcome of "big Creativity" (with a capital C) (Dean, 2017, p. 252)? Does the category "affective pleasure" (Nelson & Rawlings, 2007) describe the phenomenon of sudden satisfaction during composing more precisely than my pure subjective exclamation "finally it feels right!" (Notebook, 20.9.19)? Both the musical material I work with and the processes which I am part of are subjective fields. Phenomenologically speaking, does not the composition process become diminished by researchers' attempt "to strip their object of any subjectivity" (Donin, 2012, p. 5)? How can the composer as researcher do justice to the phenomenon of music-in-becoming and at the same time communicate the research's findings in an intelligible language? How can the researching artist demonstrate both personal experience and rational certainty in a *polyphony of voices* in work?

A second aspect for deeper exploration concerns the double outcome of the artistic-phenomenological process and the process's compound methodologies. At its best, phenomenological-artistic work results in both a work of art and a research product. In *Ørenslyd*, the musical result is formulated as sounding music and written scores, whereas the research is communicated as written texts. On the one hand, the work of music is an independent form of expression, not merely empirical data in the research process. And on the other hand, the research and reflections yield "out-puts" in themselves, not merely explanations and justifications of the work of art. What are the methodological possibilities and constraints when it comes to balancing two sets of research-creation competencies? There is seemingly a lot of potential for collaboration between phenomenologists and artistic researchers when it comes to studying kinships of artistic and phenomenological methods.

Third, there is the question of artists' creativity and creative thinking during composition. I have barely touched upon this issue, mainly because it never came up as a topic during my compositional reflections. However, this topic has been discussed in numerous research articles (Collins, 2005; Dean, 2017; Donin, 2012; Nelson & Rawlings, 2007; Schiavio et al., 2020), for the most part written by non-composers. Typically, researchers draw on observations of creative processes or interviews with composers (Brown & Dillon, 2012; Zembylas & Niederauer, 2018). How do composers describe composition processes "*in actu*, i.e. as they happen" (Zembylas & Niederauer, 2018, p. 5)? To avoid "the cold and distanced posture musicologists tend to adopt when discussing particular composition processes" (Donin, 2012, p. 4), I sense a great potential for letting the composers themselves describe musical creation of which they are an integral part. For generating knowledge about creative cognition "from with-in", artistic research may benefit from phenomenology-informed research.

In the second movement of *Ørenslyd. Ritus V*, I use an excerpt from Hermann von Helmholtz's 1857 lecture on the physiological roots of musical harmony. I am fascinated by his description of the relationship between sound and the act of listening: "If you like paradoxes, you might say that the shivering of the air becomes sound first when it hits the hearing ear"¹⁰. What kind of paradox is Helmholtz referring to? The grand idea of his scientific work is to develop an understanding of the compound musical tone and its relation to our (physiological) hearing ability. Is it a paradox that he must resort to a poetic description of acoustic waves as "shivering of the air" when seeking the scientific explanation of the sound's structure? Or is it this (seemingly) redundant combination of "hearing" and "ear"? The Norwegian expression "ørenslyd" has the same curious combination of ears and (heard) sound, literally meaning "sound of the ears", but probably more accurately translated as "enough ease or attention to hear or make yourself be heard". Both "ørenslyd" and Helmholtz's "the hearing ear" associate with listening's participatory and receptive nature. To research phenomenologically the practice of composing allows for a discussion of both the competencies of listening and the sounds of the musical work's emergence.

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¹⁰ My translation of: "Wenn Sie Paradoxen lieben, können Sie sagen, die Luftzitterung wird zum Schalle, erst wenn sie das hörende Ohr trifft" (Helmholtz, 1957, p. 64). The last part of the sentence, from 'die Luftzitterung...', I use as text in *Ørenslyd. Ritus V*.

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