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J S M I
S P E C I A L I S S U E
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*A Special Issue for the Twentieth Anniversary of the
Society for Musicology in Ireland, 2003–2023*

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Foreword

NICOLE GRIMES & PATRICK DEVINE

When John O’Flynn, President of the Society for Musicology in Ireland (SMI), approached us with an invitation to edit this issue of its journal (*JSMI*), we felt honoured to be considered for the task and accepted immediately. The early deadline for completion of the work by the end of the current year served as a positive stimulus for us as we moved into action.

The issue commemorates the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the SMI in 2003. At an online meeting in February of this year between John O’Flynn, Maria McHale (both members of the editorial board of *JSMI*) and us both, a discussion of the potential contents identified a thematic approach as the best way forward, and a strategy and timetable for the entire process were agreed. In the following weeks we drew up a list of scholars, each of whom had been either a keynote speaker at the annual SMI plenary conference, at the annual SMI postgraduate conference, or a recipient of the IRC/Harrison Medal, and invited them to submit an article which might relate in some way to their involvement with the society. We also contacted Ita Beausang whose acceptance address for the award of the Harrison Medal offered such a rich overview of musicology in Ireland over the past two decades. We were delighted and honoured when she accepted our invitation to include this address as the introduction to this special anniversary issue of the journal. We feel that the contributions which occupy the following pages represent a varied range of topics and disciplines.

In addition, we contacted former presidents of the SMI with an invitation to offer personal reflections on their tenures. The response, here again, was characteristically positive and generous, and it has been a joy for us to witness the development of the society over the past 20 years through these deeply enriching reflections. Their pieces frame the longer articles to form a broadly symmetrical structure overall.

Michael Beckerman’s ‘April Sunrise in Greenland’ is a thought-provoking and whimsical poem that contemplates the nature of academic pursuits, and the changing nature of the field of musicology on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the SMI. It playfully poses a number of provocative questions: whether an article could embody the essence of a poem; whether specialist knowledge in a field of enquiry is a

prerequisite to advanced study in that field; and the role that artificial intelligence can play in our pursuit of that knowledge. The poem gracefully dismisses the necessity for rhyme, reassuring readers that – regardless of their background – they are free to engage with the subject matter. The whimsy in this poem belies its serious and philosophical depth, as the poet urges those who seek to change the (musicological?) world through new ideas to be mindful of the containers they choose—here perhaps conjuring up the Hanslickian imagery for placing new concepts in old structures and vice versa, that is, the metaphor of wine and barrels. In a further tonal shift, the poem toys with the idea of a more wild and ludic academic field, ultimately acknowledging, however, the inherent Talmudic nature of musicology. Circling back to the seemingly whimsical questions posed at the outset, the poem emphasizes the challenges of starting with the unknown, and warns of the tendency to lose sight of fundamental questions amid a sea of facts and jargon. The humorous Call for Papers that is issued toward the end of the poem offers a satirical invitation to challenge traditional ways of presenting knowledge – musicological or otherwise. Offered with a keen incisiveness, a depth of wisdom, and a warm spirit of generosity on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the SMI, this wonderful poem combines wit, reflection, and a touch of absurdity to explore the intricacies of academic inquiry, the pursuit of knowledge, and the nature of the musicological journey through time in our rapidly changing world.

Áine Mangaoang’s article ‘Embodied Music: Interpretating Songs and Sounds through Irish Sign Language’ has its basis in a fantastic, fascinating, wonderfully informative, very moving, artistically complex, and enriching interview with Amanda Coogan. Coogan is both a critically acclaimed artist working in live art, photography, video and sound and a professional Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreter. The interview, curated with skill and great care, journeys through a discussion of the relationship between ISL and music, incorporating thoughts on music and politics, social justice and deaf culture, texted music and social issues, and music without text and sign language. Mangaoang explores a number of compelling case studies from Coogan’s repertoire of ISL interpretations for television and theatre, focusing on Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, Seán Ó Riada’s *Mise Éire* (*I Am Ireland*: the legendary setting of the traditional Irish melody, ‘Róisín Dubh’), and the politics of sign language for place names in Ireland. The interview is compellingly powerful, taking an approach that simultaneously plumbs the depths of political matters while also observing their absurd and uproarious comic tinge. The latter inflects the seriousness of the former, captivating the reader by showing the degree to which the ISL interpretations of these musical works bring into sharp focus the depth of their humanity.

The online, open access format of *JSMI* allows us to bring an updated version of John Rink’s chapter ‘Making the Music Work: Towards a “Dynamic Edition” of Chopin’ to a much wider readership than it may have reached at the time of its first publication

in the book *Genèses musicales* in 2015.¹ The Online Chopin Variorum Edition (OCVE) is a dynamic, digital media resource that presents the engaged reader with a range of possibilities with regard to the question of authorial intentions. It allows for consultation of sketches, autograph manuscripts, authorized copies, proofsheets, first editions, and subsequent impressions in myriad forms including, for instance, the scores of Chopin's students and associates. Such consultation illustrates the degree to which a musical work is constantly in a state of flux. The digital tool shows these varying results in a number of formats that allow users to compose bar-by-bar comparison, the aggregate of a standard critical commentary, and the possibility to make their own annotations. Rink provides an engrossing exploration of the philosophical questions raised by the efficacy of this tool, turning the mantra of 'the death of the author' on its head in favour of a more nuanced, complex, and compelling alternative. In problematizing the supposed binary opposition between performance on the one hand, and the platonically idealized work on the other, Rink shows with lucid clarity how the task of editing Chopin requires both inclusivity of these various sources, and fidelity to the composer's—possible plurality of—intentions.

Peter Franklin's article 'The Moving Image of Music (Before and After Film)' expands on the Keynote Lecture that he delivered at the symposium 'Music for Stage and Screen: Celebrating the SMI at 20,' at the National Opera House in Wexford in March 2023. Franklin provocatively challenges the supposed binary oppositions that exist between twentieth-century cinematic narrative and nineteenth-century concert and operatic music; between implicitly tolerated-but-boring 'classical' music and the lively mass-media dominated 'mainstream' of early 21st-century cultural life in the West; between high status social manners and supposedly lower-brow popular responses; and between the private space of the bourgeois home and the consumerist and escapist arena of entertainment. This fascinating journey takes us from Wagner's *The Valkyrie* through Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. Its third and final case study, the Hollywood movie *Now Voyager*, with Max Steiner's original score, also exploits Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. Through a fascinating analysis of the use of music in this film, one that takes us from the sonic realm of the diegetic 'real world' of the concert hall to the realm of cinematic underscore, Franklin opens up a productive space for considering the private, subjective world of the listener, and music's capacity to be internalized as private truth. This, in turn, allows him to reveal the presence of what we now call 'film composer techniques' in the orchestral output of Wagner and Mahler.

¹ N. Donin, A. Grésillon, and J.-L. Lebrave (eds), *Genèses musicales* (Paris: PUPS, 2015).

We sincerely thank all the contributors who collaborated with us in the venture, and we hope that readers will find this special issue of *JSMI* both informative and interesting.

Nicole Grimes and Patrick Devine