

# Introduction

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In his keynote address 'Musicology in Transition', at the inaugural International Musicological Conference in St Patrick's College, Maynooth in 1995, Professor Joseph Kerman confessed that there is a special tiara that he dusts off every five years or so in order to pontificate about musicology. Although I do not claim to possess a special tiara, I have pleasure in recalling the foundation in 2003 of the Society for Musicology in Ireland (SMI), which celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023.

Over the past two decades musicology in Ireland has become a growth industry, with the increase in postgraduate students working in the field and the development of musicological courses in third-level institutions. Distinguished past presidents, tireless honorary secretaries and the ongoing membership have supported the discipline in an all-Ireland context through conferences, symposia, exhibitions, the SMI website, the SMI careers forum, the SMI Theses Register, the *SMI Newsletter*, and links with other scholarly national and international agencies. The day-to-day running of the society is under the aegis of SMI councils, elected every three years, which include student representatives.

The society has also produced regular publications including volumes 7–12 of *Irish Musical Studies*, *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*, edited by Harry White and Barra Boydell<sup>1</sup> and *Women and Music in Ireland*,<sup>2</sup> the inaugural volume of the new series of Irish Musical Studies (Boydell and Brewer, 2022). An online peer-reviewed *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland* (launched in 2005, current issue volume 19) has an Editorial Board and an Advisory Board with contributors from a wide range of nationalities, both established scholars and doctoral students. The present Editorial Board includes Professor Nicole Grimes from the University of California, Irvine, and the Advisory Board includes representatives from the University of Illinois, New York

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<sup>1</sup> Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer O'Connor-Madsen, Laura Watson, Ita Beausang (eds), *Women and Music in Ireland* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2023).

University, the University of Notre Dame, Harvard, Kings College, Oxford, the University of Liverpool, the University of London, and the University of Manchester.

Meanwhile the society continues to look to the future. In January 2023 a joint postgraduate conference was held at UCD by SMI and ICTM (Ireland) (the local branch of the International Council for Traditional Music), the first on-campus event by the two societies since the COVID-19 pandemic. Connections with Irish music in America were celebrated at the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Plenary Conference of the Society for Musicology in Ireland and the Irish American Cultures Symposium on 8–10 June 2023 at TU Dublin Conservatoire, at which there was a total of 52 papers including ‘Irish Traditional Music and the Legacy of Mick Moloney.’ On 28–29 June 2023 an international conference was held in UCD Humanities Institute at which the keynote address ‘Music and Pleasure before the Law’ was given by Suzanne Cusick, President of the American Musicological Society from 2018 to 2020.

After twenty years researchers have gained access to technological resources which were not available when SMI was founded. Manuscripts are digitised, while database encoding and the internet are familiar territory today. Cameras can be used in libraries to photograph documents. Music from all over the world can be accessed by RILM and RISM. Public announcements from the SMI are made via social media accounts or by YouTube.

In Ireland in 2023 musicology is an accepted scholarly discipline, the Society for Musicology in Ireland is poised for the future, and Professor Kerman’s tiara continues to remain dust-free.

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