

Presidential Reflection

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I had the honour of serving as president of the SMI from 2012 to 2015. The Society was in very good shape after the careful stewardship of Professors Harry White and Jan Smaczny and the councils under their presidencies. Like them, I had an excellent, dedicated, hardworking and imaginative council. It was a very busy three years as council and general members of the society came forward with some very interesting new initiatives.

The completion of the *Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* was the red-letter event of that period.¹ This enormous achievement was ten years in the making but had been suggested by Harry White many years earlier.² Funding from Atlantic Philanthropies secured by Professor Gerard Gillen was the essential catalyst for the process. The General Editors were Professors Harry White and Barra Boydell, and the Executive Editors were Dr Maria McHale and Dr Mark Fitzgerald. As well as being a huge contribution to musicology in Ireland, it brought together many scholars thereby generating a fresh dynamism for the practice of musicology in Ireland. A very successful high-profile launch in Dublin attended by President Michael D. Higgins was followed by a launch in New York. I am sure I am not alone in using this publication at least once a week, and indeed I have copies in my office *and* at home as I refer to it so much. The publication was accompanied by a series of lectures at the National Concert Hall and many press and radio interviews. Roy Stanley, music librarian of Trinity College Dublin, also organized *In Tune: A Millenium of Music in Trinity College Library*, an exhibition and lecture series at the Long Room of the Old Library at Trinity College.

The bringing together of scholars in this collaborative way gave me the idea of establishing the Research Foundation for Music in Ireland as a platform to host and promote the research of music in Ireland and music of Ireland.³ RFMI includes detail of

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

² Harry White, 'Musicology in Ireland', *Acta Musicologica* Vol. 60 (1988), 290–305.

³ www.musicresearch.ie

musicological research from scholars in all parts of Ireland and from abroad, including links to several searchable databases.

It is not possible to mention all the events that took place while I was President, so I mention a just few. I attended the IAML (International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres, UK & Ireland) branch study day in April 2013 in Leeds along with Catherine Ferris and Roy Stanley. Richard Chesser of the British Library commented on our contributions, noting how musicology in Ireland was punching above its weight. Another event in this period was the third Women and Music conference in May 2014. It is timely to recall this in light of the recent publication of the collection of essays *Women and Music in Ireland*, edited by Dr Laura Watson, Dr Ita Beausang and Dr Jennifer O'Connor.⁴

Another event in the period was a symposium on the Symphony in Ireland hosted by the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama in April 2013. Central to this was the performance of one of the earliest symphonies to be composed in Ireland, by Paul Alday (c.1763–1835). This event triggered international attention, and was followed quickly by a performance in Frankfurt organized by RISM central. I enjoyed being able to be present at that and to give a pre-concert talk.

A new edition of Beethoven's Irish songs was published in 2018 with texts chosen by Tomás Ó Súilleabháin and edited by Margaret O'Sullivan Farrell.⁵ A recording of the songs was issued in April 2014 featuring a wealth of Irish performers.⁶ I also joined the Ina Boyle steering group which has since become the Ina Boyle Society and has recently published the *Ina Boyle Songbook* edited by Dr Orla Shannon and David Scott.

On a sad note, I recall the very untimely death of Dr Alison Dunlop (1985–2013). We were able to remember Alison through the publication of her book, *The Life and Works of Gottlieb Muffat (1690–1770)*⁷ which was launched at Queen's University Belfast. Alison is remembered by the SMI through a generous benefaction from her parents which provides a prize for the best dissertation on a taught masters course in Ireland. On another sad note, the launch of *Exploring Bach's B Minor Mass* edited by Professors Yo

⁴ Jennifer O'Connor-Madsen, Laura Watson, Ita Beausang (eds), *Women and Music in Ireland* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2023).

⁵ Margaret O'Sullivan Farrell, *Beethoven's Irish Songs Revisited: Texts Chosen by Tomás Ó Súilleabháin* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018).

⁶ <http://beethovensirishsongs.ie/performers/>

⁷ Alison J. Dunlop, *The Life and Works of Gottlieb Muffat* (Wien: Hollitzer Wissenschaftsverlag, 2013).

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Tomita, Robin Leaver, and Jan Smaczny, gave cause to remember its dedicatee, the late Dr Anne Leahy, who also died at far too young an age.⁸

Musicology is a deeply enriching activity, but it can also be a lonely one. I find that the annual postgraduate and plenary conferences of the SMI are a wonderful opportunity to gather musicologists from all around the country and abroad to share their research. There are so many people who I do not see in the periods between these conferences, so these events are a great opportunity to share musicological thoughts as well as to renew our friendships. I am deeply grateful to the institutions who host these SMI conferences, as I am under no illusion about the huge amount of work and commitment that it requires.

It is very satisfying that the SMI is in such impressive shape and upbeat as it celebrates its 20th anniversary. Here is to the next 20 years and the next 120 years.

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⁸ Yo Tomita, Robin A. Leaver, Jan Smaczny (eds), *Exploring Bach's B Minor Mass* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).