

## Editorial

To start with the obvious: journals come into being for specific reasons. And if one regards the most influential titles born during the last thirty years or so, it seems that one of the principal motivating factors has been interventionist – an attempt to kick-start a particular subdiscipline, or to promote a hitherto neglected or insufficiently examined field. Thus *Music Analysis* (Basil Blackwell, 1982) sought to place on a fully professional footing a subdiscipline which, whilst recognized in North America (as Music Theory), was at that time underdeveloped in the UK, while *19th Century Music* (University of California Press, 1977) sought ‘to stimulate and focus work on what has for too long been American musicology’s lost century’.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, little need to stimulate the study of twentieth-century music(s): if one includes (as we believe one must) popular music, jazz, film music, and twentieth-century developments in traditional musics, as well as ‘art’ or ‘classical’ music, activity in the field is burgeoning at an impressive rate. What is needed, rather, is a dedicated forum. Earlier journals specializing in twentieth-century music (such as *Contact* and *Perspectives of New Music*) tended to act as voices for particular constructions of the field. Established generalist journals have frequently found a place for twentieth-century classical music, and more recently (following the trajectory of musicology in general) have begun to widen their scope to include the discussion of popular, film, and traditional music. But as the first three meetings of the Biennial International Conference on Twentieth-Century Music have shown (the third, held in Nottingham, UK, in June 2003, is reviewed in these pages), forums dedicated to the whole range of twentieth-century music promote a synergy and cross-fertilization that will inevitably escape generalist journals or those confined to one corner of the field. *twentieth-century music* aims to provide such a forum; and not the least of our hopes is that, through the contiguity of divergent topics in each issue, the journal will stimulate the creation of new perspectives by encouraging contact with areas and approaches that we might not, as individual scholars, otherwise think to engage with.

Simply supplying a forum is not the only aim, however. The field is now too large and, we believe, too socially interconnected to exclude any style/genre/category/use of twentieth-century music by definition. By the same token, though, nothing is automatically included. And that goes for assumptions about value, too. We do not believe there is any necessary connection between the insightfulness, persuasiveness, criticality, or explanatory power of a particular piece of writing and the aesthetic quality of the object under scrutiny, especially if in the course of that writing the criteria for judgements about quality are themselves made available for debate. Despite the banners of ‘New’ and ‘Critical’ Musicologies, this is still a practice the community remains both poorly equipped for and hesitant to engage in, attributions of value being erected too often on poor foundations. This becomes pertinent in a journal such as this, addressing as it will a whole range of genres: do intergenerically applicable critical tools and standards exist? If so, why have we not made them explicit? If not, is it possible to develop them? And if this is not possible, what are the consequences?

<sup>1</sup> ‘Comment & Chronicle’, *19th Century Music* 1/1 (July 1977), 91.

One of the most interesting recent developments these pages will come to reflect is that of the growth of performance criticism – not because this is a worthwhile reorientation *per se*, but because it makes more likely the possibility that we will learn to engage matters that more directly impact on the experience of music as it was used in twentieth-century societies. If this sounds like a call to pertinence, this might be no bad thing. Contemporary industrial society no longer accords academia a role as of right, and it thus seems to us necessary actually to demonstrate the value of what the academic music community does, and to whom. It is in this way we would expect, a few years from now, to judge the success of this journal. Will we be able to say that the community has shown how, and why, an understanding of twentieth-century music and its contexts is a non-negotiable facet of an understanding of twentieth-century society? The use of the singular here is decisive: will we have demonstrated a greater awareness of the interaction of repertoires and approaches to repertoires? Indeed, will we have a deeper, more rounded, understanding of twentieth-century music? We invite you to join us on the journey.

Founding a journal is a lengthy and time-consuming process, involving the input of many people. We are very grateful to everyone who has offered advice, ideas, and, not least, encouragement. A particularly keen supporter was Anthony Pople, one of the journal's Advisors. Tragically, he died from cancer at the early age of forty-eight just as this first issue moved into production. As one of the field's most energetic, intelligent, and imaginative scholars, he shall be sorely missed. An appreciation will appear in the next issue.

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