From the President:

In the April Newsletter I promised the results of an analysis of the nationwide assessment of research that was reported in December 2014, which I suggested might be used as a suitable proxy for the anatomy of ‘subjects connected with the art and science of music’ with which the Royal Musical Association, as the principal learned society in the country, concerns itself. Preliminary results are now in, and I have been talking them through with various constituencies since the early summer. Our plans are to publish a full report with all the data and its analysis by the end of the calendar year. The Association owes a great debt of gratitude to Simon McVeigh (Goldsmiths, University of London), who master-minded the project, funded directly by the RMA Council. This is not the place to outline the results, since they require several tables and a litany of caveats; but the distance between this data and the idea that it may function as a proxy for activity in the United Kingdom can be great. Just to take a single headline: when the data suggests that 40 per cent of all the work produced in the country between 2008 and 2014 was in practice as research, and that most – 32 per cent – was in some form of composition, this excludes what is obviously an enormous tranche of compositional activity outside academia. So while the data will be of value for those who conduct their research within the field of higher education, it is perhaps misleading as we look beyond the academy. On the other hand, looking at the more traditional work in music research, one can trust the data rather more when it says that 43 per cent of text-based work is in some sort of historically based endeavour, whereas 13 per cent falls into what might be called ethnomusicology. One area where we have not quite completed the work is in the various forms of research in music and science, where the final part of the analysis involves going beyond the RAE music sub-panel to look at music-related outputs in all other disciplines across the spectrum (we are grateful to Thomas Schmidt – University of Manchester – for spearheading this final phase).

With observations like the ones I’ve just given about practice as research and text-based musicology, I was more pleased than ever that the Association is returning to its late nineteenth-century roots as it re-engages with composers and practice-led researchers around the country. The Association conducted some preliminary meetings to try to establish how important a forum for the discussion of ideas around the development of all forms of practice as research in the UK would be; it rapidly became clear that this is a key role that the RMA could and should be undertaking. I spent a stimulating day in Manchester last June getting the measure of some of the concerns that are shared by our research-led performers and composers, and these are discussed by Warwick Edwards elsewhere in this Newsletter. It’s clear that there is a lot of work to do here, and the Association’s Council has already taken some action to move forward. We have appointed Nick Fells (University of Glasgow) to coordinate a national network of colleagues (which already numbers nearly 200) in this field as well as a committee to support him and report to Council. We have also appointed a writing group tasked with reviewing existing documentation on practice-led research in music already in the public domain, and subjecting it to critique and emendation; this will then serve as the basis of representations to various bodies – from individuals to government – in seeking...
Overall, the conference was viewed as a success by delegates, many saying that they’d greatly enjoyed it and that was excellently organized – many thanks to the MPSG committee. It was particularly noted that the format of the talks was successful, and the amount of time given for questions – 20 minutes in most cases – gave delegates the opportunity to have a thorough dialogue with the speakers. A suggestion for the future would be to include a plenary session at the end of the proceedings to tie together what had been explored over the two days and provide an opportunity to discuss the study of philosophy and music in general.

During the closing remarks it was announced that the study group will in future be holding biennial conferences rather than annual ones, and delegates were invited to give feedback on this year’s conference to aid with organizational changes the committee hope to make for the next event. While I’m sure I speak for many delegates when I say that the conference will be missed next year, I look forward to the opportunity to attend another excellent event in 2017.

Tamsin Timbrell recently completed a WRoCAH funded MA in Philosophy at the University of York, where she has now begun a Ph.D. researching the ontology of Music.

Digital Musicology Workshop: Digital Humanities at Oxford Summer School

The Digital Musicology Workshop was held at the Oxford e-Research Centre (University of Oxford) from 20 to 24 July 2015, organized by Kevin Page (Oxford e-Research Centre) as part of the Digital Humanities at Oxford Summer School. This five-day workshop consisted of a series of lectures and hands-on sessions to offer an introduction to computational and informatics methods that can be, and have been, successfully applied to musicology. Participants from around the world were mainly Ph.D. students and scholars in musicology, but also in computer science and music librarianship. The workshop was introduced by Tim Crawford (Goldsmiths, University of London) and J. Stephen Downie (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). Crawford described how he became involved in the field of digital musicology: he described his background as a lutenist and how the principal features of lute repertoire (mostly anonymous and borrowed or quoted from other music) led him to apply computational methods to study this repertoire in order to discover more of the music and establish concordances. Talking about Music Information Retrieval (MIR), Downie presented the work of ISMIR (the International Society for Music Information Retrieval) and how this interdisciplinary research community works to create new algorithms to improve the process of retrieving information from music.

One of the major topics of the workshop, ‘big data’, was introduced by Stephen Rose (Royal Holloway, University of London). With reference to Franco Moretti’s ‘distant reading’ (2005) for literature studies (understanding literature not by studying particular texts, but by analysing large literary corpora), he reflected on how working with big data can open a new and larger perspective for music history. Rose described the Big Data History of Music project carried out at Royal Holloway in collaboration with the British Library. Working with large amounts of data from some of the world’s biggest collections of published music, music manuscripts and concert programmes (including RISM and the British Library’s catalogues, among others), this project aims to develop new methods for research in music history through statistical analysis and visualization of this data. Rose talked about the importance of preparing and cleaning data in any project that works with large amounts of data, and he showed us some examples and suggestive findings of the project concerning music publishing in the period 1500–1700.

Continuing with big data, Downie, David De Roure (Oxford e-Research Centre) and Ichiro Fujinaga (McGill University, Montreal) presented the ambitious SALAMI (Structural Analysis of Large Amounts of Music Information) project, hosted by IMIRSEL (International Music Information Retrieval Systems Evaluation Laboratory) in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, McGill University, the University of Oxford and Queen Mary University of London. This project analysed the general structure of large sets of music recordings from the Internet Archive using a range of computer algorithms designed to detect musical structures; the accuracy of these algorithms were tested against human annotators (graduate students). The project’s aim was to produce a large web-accessible corpus of analyses of several hundred thousand recordings including classical music, jazz, folk and world music. This innovative project has opened up new perspectives on music analysis, a discipline traditionally conducted by individuals on a small scale.

Kevin Page introduced another important topic: the Semantic Web and Linked Data (a new way of using the Web to publish highly interlinked and also machine-readable data). He described the principles of these technologies and commented on the potential of using Linked Data to publish, reference and reuse the output of digital music research. Carolin Rindfleisch (University of Oxford) presented excellent work in progress, related to the Semantic Web, from her Ph.D. dissertation. Her objective is to undertake a systematic analysis of the reception and interpretation of Wagner’s leitmotifs in Der Ring des Nibelungen at different times and in various cultural contexts. She is developing a Semantic Web ‘ontology’ (a description of concepts and their relationships expressed using RDF, the Resource Description Framework, which is one of the foundational technologies of the Semantic Web) which allows her to express the complex relationships and influences between different interpretations of the leitmotifs in a structured way.

Richard Lewis, David Lewis (both Goldsmiths) and David M. Weigl (Oxford e-Research Centre) ran two very useful hands-on sessions about digitized notated music formats (MEI and MusicXML) and Music21, a toolkit developed by Michael Scott Cuthbert at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) which can be used to search for patterns and to prepare reproducible music analytic tools. In order to work with Music21 we also learnt some basic aspects of Python, the programming language used by this tool.

Two more hands-on sessions were about audio analy-
Thanks to good organization, practical sessions were easy to follow: each laptop had the appropriate software installed and preconfigured and we were guided step by step in all tasks. This workshop opened to me a new and wide perspective on the potential of using computational methods for musicological research. But, above all, I have realized that the world of digital humanities is a collaborative one. Humanities research should no longer be a lonely activity; we must find ways of working with people with a technical background, because scholars working alone in the non-digital world cannot, in most cases, achieve as much as those working in the digital sphere.

During the entire week and in the final round table, delegates were encouraged to make comments and ask questions about the projects and technologies being presented and also about their own research. In sum, it was an excellent chance to expand our digital knowledge applied to music research and to stimulate our ‘digital imagination’.

**Andrea Puentes-Blanco** is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Barcelona and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) working on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscripts of Hispanic polyphony and interested in applying digital technologies to her research.

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**The Royal Musical Association’s 51st Annual Conference**

The 51st annual conference of the RMA was held at the University of Birmingham between 9 and 11 September. More than 100 delegates, including about 80 speakers, from across the UK, Europe, North America, Asia and Australia, travelled to the Bramall Music Building at the heart of the university’s campus to present their research, attend conference papers, listen to concerts and lecture-recitals, hear and discuss new compositions and perhaps partake in a soundwalk.

After a short welcome by Andrew Kirkman (Birmingham), the conference opened with a panel on ‘The Reception of “Silver Age” Operetta in the UK, Germany, Italy and Poland’, chaired by Derek Scott (University of Leeds). In the last paper of the session, Anastasia Belina-Johnson (Royal College of Music, London) explained that although Warsaw does not usually figure in accounts of the reception of operetta in Europe, there were some 64 theatres in Warsaw between 1860 and 1939, all of which included operetta in their repertoire, and some of which produced productions thought to rival those in Vienna and Hamburg. At the same time as the session on operetta, there was a panel on Russian music which included a paper by James Taylor (University of Bristol), who examined how Soviet musicologists wrote ‘biopsychological appraisals’ to account for the ‘healthy’ or ‘harmful’ influences of Western composers’ compositions.

Following lunch there was a session on post-war British musical modernism, during which Philip Ruprecht (Duke University, Durham, NC) discussed excerpts from 1960s compositions by Malcolm Arnold, Malcolm...