



The Sir John Manduell Research Forum Series

October - December 2019
Open to all, free admission

research@rncm.ac.uk | rncm.ac.uk/research

RNCM
RESEARCH

Wednesday 16 October 2019
4.15pm Forman Lecture Theatre

Professor Roy Howat, RAM, RCS

Editing Chopin's Etudes (yet again)

Chopin's music has appeared in so many editions over a century and a half, including critical editions, that we may well ask what's the point of yet another. One answer comes from the original sources, which have surprised me in several places with good manuscript readings never printed – sometimes because a bold gesture has always been misconstrued, sometimes because of a lurking technical or notational issue. I'll illustrate some of these and explore what probably happened. The other answer lies in how editions are generally prepared. Chopin, creatively restless, could never play, write out or even proof a piece twice the same way; since his lifetime editors have habitually dealt with this by assembling a text from the 'best-seeming' readings in different sources. The New Peters Complete Chopin, launched in the early 2000s by Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, John Rink & Jim Samson, instead bases each piece on a single source deemed best for the purpose, maintaining the integrity of a single version while showing all viable variants as *ossias*; this provides pianists for the first time with an effective navigation system across variant readings and versions.

Wednesday 23 October 2019
4.15pm Forman Lecture Theatre

Dr Scott McLaughlin, University of Leeds

On Material Indeterminacy: letting the instrument be in control

While the dominant paradigm of performance is (understandably) that of specific control of the instrument, this talk will open up the compositional space of 'material indeterminacy' where the performer instead supports the preferences of the instrument to do what it 'wants': with reference to Pickering's concept of 'material agency' (1995) and Ingold's 'wayfaring' (2011). By letting the materiality of the instrument come to the foreground, the performer's

skill-set is resituated as sound-instigator and supporter. The performer's job is to coax the instrument into less-stable configurations and support the resulting sounds.

Wednesday 30 October 2019
4.15pm Forman Lecture Theatre

Professor Andrea Halpern, Bucknell University, USA

How Well Do We Know How Well We Are Imagining Sounds?

Mental imagery abilities vary among individuals, as shown both by objective measures and by self-report. Few imagery studies consider auditory imagery, however. In this talk, I will argue that a. there are individual differences in auditory imagery for music b. these can be captured via self-report and c. this self-report predicts some interesting behavioural and neural aspects of imagining music. The Bucknell Auditory Imagery Scale is a short self-report measure encompassing both Vividness and Control of auditory imagery. High scores on Vividness predict outcomes as varied as source memory errors in distinguishing heard from imagined tunes pitch imitation tasks as well as neural activity and grey matter volume in several brain areas that are known to be involved in auditory imagery. Another way auditory imagery may vary is from trial to trial and I offer some examples of the predictive value of self-reports of that more 'state' aspect of auditory imagery. Even though self-report measures encompass both cognitive and metacognitive aspects, they are useful tools in accounting for individual differences in high-level cognitive skills.

Wednesday 20 November 2019
4.15pm Forman Lecture Theatre

Dr Cheryl Duncan, RNCM

Musical life in an eighteenth-century prison: the genesis of Granom's *Plain and easy instructions for playing on the German flute* (1766)

Lewis Granom's *Plain and easy instructions for playing on the German flute* is significant

in being the earliest work on the pedagogy of the instrument by a named English author. Documents recently discovered among the legal records held by The National Archives reveal that the treatise had an extraordinary genesis, being largely the product of the many lessons Granom gave to its dedicatee, John Bourke Esq., a wealthy Irish landowner who was incarcerated for debt in the King's Bench Prison at the time. The litigation that followed the breakdown of their friendship sheds fascinating light on a range of matters, including the patron/composer relationship, their musical tastes and views regarding Handel's posthumous reputation, the sources used to compile the Instructions, the cultural and social life of one of London's more salubrious gables, and the cost of music lessons, copying and other related expenses.

Wednesday 27 November 2019
4.15pm Forman Lecture Theatre

Dr Geoff Thomason, RNCM

"Far harder than orchestral stuff", or Nicholson lost and found: rediscovering a major chamber work from wartime Manchester

Sydney Nicholson is remembered largely as the founder of the Royal School of Church Music, but is less known as a composer. In 2018 as part of our WW1 commemoration, I revived the Piano Quintet written while Nicholson was organist of Manchester cathedral and premiered with the Brodsky Quartet in 1918. This presentation charts the latter day journey from unpublished MS to performance, drawing on contemporary documentation and including performed extracts from the Quintet.

Wednesday 4 December 2019
4.15pm Forman Lecture Theatre

Dr Tom Armstrong, University of Surrey

(Re-)visits to the past: three musical ruinations.

This paper discusses three recent pieces of mine in which well-known works of Western art music have been selectively erased to

bring forth new material. This approach may be likened to a form of printing or etching, with the original music acting as the base material which is then carved into, creating a new design. The discussion will be framed by the conjoined notions of musical ruination and 'playing with history' (Butt 2002), offering an articulation of my attitude towards the musical past alongside technical discussion of compositional processes in these pieces." A performance of *Tänze* (2018) for two or more keyboards will offer a first-hand experience of this practice.

Wednesday 11 December 2019
4.15pm Forman Lecture Theatre

Professor Deborah Mawer, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Les Six at 100: Neoclassicism, lateness and legacy: Milhaud's case

On the centenary of Les Six, this seminar paper tackles some commonly perceived problems: neoclassicism as retrogressive, behind the times, anti-modernist and so lacking legacy. Focusing on Milhaud's case, particularly his post-World War II American activities, I look to challenge these assumptions. Rather than playing safe, some of Milhaud's late oeuvre resumes a radically experimental, youthful voice – a different kind of 'out of time'. While this neoclassicism still thrives on counterpoint, the linearity also leads to an aleatoric 'phasing' that reveals Milhaud as a potential catalyst for his one-time postmodernist pupil Steve Reich. Moreover, Milhaud's jazz exploration (most famously in *La Création du monde*) serves to catalyse the forays of his student Dave Brubeck into a new classicism. Moving out from Milhaud, the legacy of neoclassicism gains a new cross-genre currency in the work of Wynton Marsalis and others, following Miles Davis's 'controlled freedom', in what is called 'neoclassical jazz'.

RNCM

RESEARCH

research@rncm.ac.uk | rncm.ac.uk/research