

# Editorial

Readers may be wondering what the image on the cover of this year's volume of *STM-SJM* represents. Perhaps it's a work of abstract art, or a newly discovered graphical score from the 1960s? In fact, the cover image shows a digitally distributed and transformed reproduction of a piano roll.

As a storage-medium for music, the piano roll goes back to the close of the nineteenth century. In that respect, it has more potential to bring us closer to the pianism of the distant past than any other recording medium. The cover illustration, however, also expresses an aspect typical of our increasingly digitised relation to the past, and even the present, which is that things tend to appear much more pliant to our desires and fantasies in digital form, much more open to manipulation.

With the exception of the first article – Anne Danielsen's insightful study of micro-rhythm in African-American popular music, which originates in her Tobias Norlind-lecture at the 2017 congress of the Swedish Society for Musicology – all the articles in the present issue relate to the topic of 'Musical materiality and digitisation'. In our thematic call for abstracts, the contemporary situation was described as one where music seems to be both more available and more intangible than ever. An incredible number of musical documents and files are at our digital disposal. Yet, both music and the scholarly study of it still have a profoundly material basis. Two main questions were asked: Digitisation brings immeasurable quantities of information within reach, but how does this affect our relation to the materiality of music? How can the musical dialectic between digitality and materiality be described?

Such questions are acute. They are vital for our music research, since they force us to pay attention to the material basis of any musical practice and praxis, including the virtual and digital ones. But from a wider perspective, they also remind us of an innate tendency in the ongoing digitisation and virtualisation of the world into a multiplicity of worlds where matter sinks down out of sight. Arguably, though, matter still matters.

Since *STM-SJM* is a periodical for music research in all its various guises, we are glad to present answers to the two main questions formulated in very different fields of research. They come from the disciplines of music history, artistic research, music philosophy, music education and music sociology. In a fruitful collaboration between the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, the Royal College of Music and *STM-SJM*, a seminar was arranged in May 2017 at the college of music – as part of a whole day dedicated to the 'Logics of digitisation' – for a discussion on preliminary versions of several of the articles.

Digitisation has changed the working conditions for both research and teaching. One aspect concerns archival issues: how music is written down, how performances are

stored, and how we relate to that which is past. Sketch study has been a prominent field within history of music, but what happens when the sketches that used to be penned down on paper are made in an ever-changing digital milieu? Twila Bakker discusses what obstacles and opportunities we can expect to meet when we start investigating disks and drives used by composers. Problems also occur in artistic research since artistic practice materialises in both data and result. This is the starting point for Henrik Frisk's discussion of the digital archive, something which not only makes the past accessible but also shapes the future. The continual growth in possibilities for accessing the past digitally has also affected the way we teach music history, but as Kia Hedell and Anne Reese Willén remind us, this doesn't mean that actual physical objects now play a less important role in bringing students closer to history.

Other aspects of the subject concern what we are listening to and how we listen, and, closely related, how our understanding of the ontology of the artwork and its concretisations has changed. In her article Inja Stanović holds that digitisations of piano rolls are invaluable sources of evidence of past performance practises, but she also shows that digitisations of the same piano roll differ, sometimes in a remarkable way. The act of listening to music has also changed in the digital era, but perhaps not as much as we may think. As Tobias Pontara and Ulrik Volgsten suggest, the solitary listener of today, secluded in his or her own sound world, doesn't represent a new phenomenon so much as an intensification of the attitude that spread through Western society after 1925 when the living room became a private space for solitary recreation. Yet ontological questions remain, about the relation between work, performance, recording and its digitisation. Adam Stanovic asks them in the issue's final article.

In the last section of the volume, a series of both Swedish and international books are reviewed. Among the matters covered we find the historical sources of ethnomusicology, Swedish folk-music and the music of the spa, composers' biographies and letters, and the phenomenology of music. In Ruth Tatlow's review of a pioneering study of musical life in the time of J.S. Bach, she celebrates the new conditions for music research. Her concluding words relate to our theme in a very illuminating way: 'With electronic resources, scholars today have 24/7 access to rare materials that even a generation ago could have been viewed only by a study trip to an archive with restricted opening hours. It is now in our power to rewrite musicology from the foundational principles of primary sources.'

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