
EDITORIAL

Preparing *Organised Sound*'s thematic issue on 'gender in music technology' has been exciting and challenging. Exciting, because this field is young with only a few publications around. Such a thematic issue offers an opportunity to bring people together who are active in this field, and thus works towards the creation of a 'critical mass'. Hopefully it will stimulate others to think and write about these gender issues as well. But the area itself also posed a challenge. Would we receive enough submissions? Would we be able to publish a sufficiently interesting issue on gender?

The answer lies before you, filled with articles that deal in some way with gender and music technology. Many different people, some unknown to us, several who have never published about gender before, contacted us in response to our call for papers. The submissions were quite diverse, varying from complete academic articles to a project proposal and several multimedia pieces. Also, we received quite a few reactions from people who could not submit anything at the moment, but who were very interested in a future submission. This is a young and emerging field indeed! But because of that, it turned out that another challenge was in store for the Editors, namely to receive a selection of contributions that conform to the academic format. Several authors do not have a full-time academic position in this field and do their research outside their work elsewhere. Also, family care and other women's issues were a factor to take into account. (One of the authors had a baby during the editing process!). As expected, most contributions are by or about women. However, this thematic issue is not only focused on women – it is about gender, and as such reflects on the roles of both women and men as well as on the subject of sexuality.

Three feminist approaches are often discerned in women's and gender studies (Buikema and Smelik 1993). The first one focuses on equality: equal rights and opportunities for men and women, and tries to get more women composers into music history by looking for forgotten female composers or by stimulating young women to compose. The first part of my article shows that there is a huge gender imbalance in the electroacoustic music world. Georg Essl starts his article in a similar vein by illustrating a parallel situation in the world of new music interface technology. Both Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner and Jo Hutton write about women

composers of the first decades of electroacoustic music, most of whom are not mentioned in the standard histories of electronic music. They offer interesting, largely unknown material, and show that there were more women active in the early years of electronic music than one might assume. Hinkle-Turner's article is a preview of her forthcoming book which undoubtedly will offer us even more information on unknown women in music technology. But why are most of these women not mentioned in the general surveys concerning this musical genre? Hinkle-Turner and Hutton offer some suggestions about why and how these women seem to have disappeared into oblivion. Still, these are questions that deserve more exploration. Mary Simoni focuses on the other end of the historical spectrum: the future. She describes an educational project that is just starting which intends to achieve a much better gender balance in the electronic musicians of the future by offering a programme that is designed to encourage equal and equitable participation by young male and female students.

'Difference' is the keyword for the second kind of feminist approach. Do women composers have a different style or a different way of working? How does music relate to femininity? Both Theda Weber-Lucks' and my articles show that, in general, women have different roles in and approaches to making electroacoustic music. In Essl's discussion of four live electronic performances, the two women both deal with gender, but the two male performers do not. Anne Sivuoja-Gunaratnam argues that Kaija Saariaho's composition *Lohn* has a feminine subjectivity and relates this composition to Luce Irigaray's ideas about femininity and love. Cindy Cox shows how her own composition has femininity and the female body as its theme. Andra McCartney has commenced a research project that studies the experiences, working practices, ideas and approaches of women sound producers in Canada. However, no one argues that there is only one 'woman's way of making music'.

McCartney aims at an exploration of the working processes of a wide variety of female cultural producers of sound and an understanding of these processes in relation to contemporary thinking on gender and technology. This focus on differences between women is part of the third postmodern feminist approach, one in which the dualistic gender system is deconstructed and challenged.

Both the roles of women and men are under scrutiny; cultural differences of gender are discussed, and the idea that there are two fixed, universal and stable genders is contested. Terre Thaemlitz deals with gender in a different cultural context than the usual Western academic electroacoustic music perspective. His article is about Japanese non-academic electronic music, in between pop and art, in between Western/English-language and Japanese cultures, and deals with hybrid, open theoretical concepts. His own transgenderism falls between categories as well. Essl has a quite different postmodern approach when he cites the work of Judith Butler and Donna Haraway as a basis to discuss gender issues in new music interface technology. A deconstructive feminist approach relates gender with other concepts, and destabilises all such dichotomies. Male/female, masculine/feminine, mind/body, composer/performer, producer/consumer: these kinds of dualities are challenged in most of the papers. Body and technology are intertwined in the live electronics described by Taina Riikonen, Sivuaja-Gunaratnam and Essl. Riikonen listens as a flautist-performer to several performances of Saariaho's *NoaNoa*, focusing on the embodied cyborg flautist who appears in the sounds. She also pays attention to the actual experiences of different flautists. This exciting, novel approach is an extension of the ideas by feminist musicologists such as Suzanne Cusick (1994) concerning an embodied analysis of music. Weber-Lucks and Essl discuss performer-composers, a phenomenon that is an important transgression of categories in the Western art music world. I argue that the use of pre-recorded voices is often coupled with some crossing of gendered roles. However, both Weber-Lucks and I show that gendered dichotomies are still pervasive in the world of electrovocal music, and probably in most other fields involving music technology as well.

A division of feminist research into three approaches offers some insight into the differences and similarities in this diverse field. But in reality, no study fits perfectly into one category. Each article has a specific motivation: Hinkle-Turner points out that she started her quest for women composers, not with an abstract aim of equality, but from a personal desire to find female role models. McCartney developed her research not only from a strong theoretical background, but also because she noticed that female students felt a need for examples of the working practices of women sound producers. Most authors are in one way or another personally and practically involved with their research topics.

There are many different connections between the articles. The body is a recurrent theme in this issue, which is perhaps a bit unusual for *Organised Sound*. Performers produce music with their bodies, and listeners through their own body can identify with the bodies they hear in the music, as Riikonen demonstrates. Abstract (or reduced) listening, which is so

pervasive in the ideologies of electroacoustic music and which forms the basis of *musique concrète*, is not the choice of the authors here, as Sivuaja-Gunaratnam explicitly states in her culturally well-informed intertextual analysis of *Lohn*. Neither is the composition of abstract sounds. Cox describes how she composed several sounding references to the female body in her composition, *Hysteria*. Another link between music and the sexual body is the musicalisation of desire. Barry Truax demonstrates the startling absence of homoerotic themes in electroacoustic music. This is probably partly related to the doctrines of abstract listening, the neutrality of musical style and the disembodiment of electroacoustic music. Truax suggests that it is perhaps also due to the homosocial environment of music technology that often involves the avoidance or denial of homosexuality. After a well-informed overview about gender and sexuality in music, Truax discusses several of his pieces that portray homoerotic sexuality and desire by way of electroacoustic sounds, voice, text, video and music theatre.

The focus of this issue of *Organised Sound* is not only on music technology, but also on other musical and extramusical aspects. The ideologies of abstract music and neutral technology are contrary to a focus on gender. Research on gender and technology often finds that women are not interested in technology for technology's sake, but prefer to connect technology with other purposes and goals. This is very well reflected in this issue. It is probably different from what the reader normally expects from journals like this one. We hope this will stimulate new ways of thinking about music and technology and increase the awareness of issues of gender and sexuality in this field and that this theme becomes an ongoing one in future issues of *Organised Sound*.

Hannah Bosma

This first issue of a new volume is equally the first issue of *Organised Sound* published without the invaluable help of the journal's founding Editor, Tony Myatt. Tony has decided to focus his attention on his personal research as well as extremely exciting developments in the music technology area at the University of York. In 1991, during an extended stay in York as Visiting Fellow I 'camped out' in Tony's office enjoying a concentrated period of research. It was in this room and a variety of local eateries that the formula behind *Organised Sound* was born. (The journal was launched in 1996.) At that time discussions involved all four founding Editors, the two of us as well as Ross Kirk and Richard Orton, both also at York.

Ross and Richard are now Associate Editors and with this issue, Tony joins the Editorial Board. I am fortunate to continue to receive important support and advice from

these friends. Suffice to say that I, and everyone else involved with the journal, wish Tony all the very best in the future.

I would like to thank Hannah Bosma personally for her enormous input in this important issue. It has indeed been both exciting and challenging as she concludes above. She, too, will join the Editorial Board with this issue.

Leigh Landy

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