

JRMA audio dialogue Jarman and Cook.m4a

Freya [00:00:00] I guess I just kind of wondered: when you sort of took over, what did you sort of think of the journal at that time? Did you have particular things in mind that you wanted to bring to it? Because your world is quite different from Andrew Wathey's as well.

Nick [00:00:19] Sure. I thought of it as, well, I mean, what's it called? It's called *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*. So, number one, I would like to think of it as the, you know, the British flagship journal, though I realise that *Music & Letters* might have other views about that. So, it never seemed to me that one should be turning it into a kind of boutique journal, if you see what I mean, and having lots of special issues with ideas of mine, and so on and so forth. I mean, it's not the right journal to do that with, but at the same time, musicology was changing a lot. Musicology had changed a lot. I guess I wanted to make it more diverse. So, I definitely had a sort of positive bias towards broadening at the edges, especially, you know, new emerging kind of edges. Also, it was – I'm not sure that I thought about it at the time, but thinking of it now, everybody thinks it's the *Journal of the Royal Musicological Association*, or at least Americans do. But it isn't: it's *Musical Association*. So, I also thought of it as something where people will read a variety of things that maybe they wouldn't have expected to see in the more specialist journals, so that, you know, everybody is reading other stuff as well as their own type of stuff. So, I think those were basically the main ideas I had for the journal.

I saw it as continuing to be reactive. There wasn't a problem with submissions: we never seriously struggled for publishable submissions – that wasn't an issue. So, as I say, it was sort of basically reactive. Occasionally I'd hear a good paper and I'd try and interest the speaker in submitting it. I'm sure you do that the same. So, you know, I would think, 'Oh, that sounds really interesting', or I thought would be really nice to have an article on rock music in China, but I never actually got someone to do an article on China which I would have liked. So, in a sense, I was trying to keep it the same, but to modernise it.

Freya [00:02:32] It strikes me as the great challenge and the joy of this particular journal, and sitting in the editorial chair, that, you know, you do get such a broad range of material. You know, I've had things on – well, it was Nicholas Temperley's wonderful piece on Elizabethan partsongs, you know, and I'll get that in the same few months as I'm reading something on, like, music in the recruitment videos for Finnish far-right groups, or music and radio drama. And then also, you know, a new Mahler symphony source. So, you know, it clearly already exists as a very broad kind of generalist journal. And I think, like you, I have not wanted to do the kind of special issue thing, although I think when I spoke to Rachel Cowgill some time ago – she, I think, edited just after Katharine – she said, oh, you know, one can do that. Well, I don't feel like there's time and space to do it because there's so much coming in. And, as you say, it doesn't feel like that kind of boutique sort of space. But I kind of, you know, I very much like this sort of generalist idea of the journal, but also I'm keenly aware of, like, to what extent can it be generalised? So, every now and again I'll get something that's quite rigorously sort of scientifically, music psychology, for instance, you know, or things that are using quantitative data. And their approach to writing seems so radically different from the kind of humanities-oriented vibe of the journal that I wonder what the limits of that generalism are. Is it really as general as musicology gets – or music studies may be a better term for that? I don't know.

Nick [00:04:38] I mean, one of the things I did want to do was to have a facility for including sound and video recordings, linked to articles. Now, it was never going to be like *Music Theory Online* – which, you know, is a fully HTML journal that therefore can integrate things much better – it was

going to be a URL and the recordings, videos, whatever would be on the Oxford website, and so people would refer to it, but some people wouldn't actually have access to it in those days, you know: I couldn't push it too far. But it was also just about the time, no, it was just before the time when I was running CHARM and getting more and more interested in study recording. And, you know, a dimension of that I worked on, among others, was the sort of empirical side. So, I was actually, I had a research assistant, an American research assistant, and we would go round and do presentations, not for Music departments – we got very few invitations from Music departments – but we got lots of invitations from departments of Computing. So, we would go around and, you know, present collaborative work and process, all of which was totally unfamiliar for me. So, there was a little sort of stream of it. And I'm interested to know how far people are still using the, you know, the recording or the video facilities, or whether they just bung them on their own home site and refer to them, or what.

Freya [00:06:05] Yeah, I mean, to some extent. We had a piece on Enrico Caruso and there was fairly close analysis of recordings, and those definitely went up on the supplementary materials. So, every now and then you get one, you know, there's a few examples, and I think actually this Finnish far-right one will have some video clips, though I think we have to be careful as to how accessible those are, or something. You know, there are obviously political sensitivities around that. So, yes, to some extent. But, you know, clearly the kind of *modus operandi* of the scholarship that comes in is not necessarily thinking through those means, right. So much of what we do is kind of habitually for the written word, that even when we can think, okay, we're allowed to put in a sound example we're 'Oh, well, no, but it's okay, I'll just kind of write it', or something. I think there might be some sense of habit. But I did notice, in fact, as I say, I was looking back through the things [issues], and it might have been like the first full issue you did or it was one of those early ones in an editorial you wrote where it was, you know, declaring this possibility of sound as an accompanying thing. And, yeah, it did strike me that that move from only being able to do the visual and the written to being able to do the sonic was very important, actually, and that even if authors didn't always use it – and they don't still – that actually, it signals something in terms of a change in concern as to what the musical object is. Right. So that, you know, yes, we still get score, analytical-type stuff, but also things that are thinking about sound, or thinking about things that aren't notatable in the traditional Western thing [notation]. So that it, yes, there's a shift in the musical object, even if the method of writing has not shifted radically.

Nick [00:08:21] I mean, I think what I felt going back to the empirical issue you raised, or you know, the methodological issue, is there's got to be something to interest people who work in music studies (I like that term rather than musicology, music theory, etc.), at the end of it, if you see what I mean. It's okay to make people battle a little bit through unfamiliar methodology, provided there's something that speaks to them at the end, because [there's] an awful lot of perfectly good empirical musicology kind of work, but the gains of it are methodological, or whatever, and that's not going to be of interest to people in *JRMA*. So, you know, there had to be a sort some musical, yeah, some musical payback, if you see what I mean.

Freya [00:09:05] Yeah, absolutely. And maybe that's where this difference between it being the *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* as opposed to *Musicological Association* is important – that, you know, there needs to be a sense of how this speaks to music, or musicness or, you know, something, yeah, something musical, as opposed to simply the -ology of it, as opposed to the abstraction of methodology of, yeah, of musicological methodology. That's, you know, when I've got kind of quantitative stuff in front of me, like, okay, fine, but how does this speak, as you

say, to, music? What is the musical payback from this? That may be the, the kind of guiding light in making the decision as to whether or not it fits in the journal.

Nick [00:09:56] I mean, I definitely had a certain feeling that there had to be something to interest most of the sort of existing bodies of readers somewhere. There was one time that I got a submission [on] 16th-century mission music in America. And, you know, I'd never seen anything like that before. It was really interesting. And then I got to know somebody else working in the same field, and I got an article out of them. So, there are actually in that issue two articles on 16th-century American music. And there were some complaints, you know, that this wasn't properly balanced. I wasn't terribly sympathetic to that because I didn't have a list: every issue must include all of these. But I did used to think to myself, I don't want to put off people who say, look, there's nothing here to interest me. So, and, you know, because of the nature of what was coming in, it was pretty broad anyhow. So, I'd sort of vaguely think well, have we got anything contemporary you know, whether it's chronological, or whatever, it was sort of in the back of my mind, but most certainly not at the front of my mind.

Freya [00:11:06] Yeah, yeah. I've definitely had kind of little flurries of things. There was one moment where everything I was reading seemed to be about Mahler, and I was like, 'What's going on?' Like, all of the Mahler scholars seem to be churning out articles and sending them to me.

Nick [00:11:20] You must have had a great temptation to do a Mahler special issue.

Freya [00:11:24] Yeah, exactly, exactly. So, there was, you know, there was a little flurry of Mahler stuff and then, you know, there's been some sort of 1960s electroacoustic or, yeah, sort of graphic score stuff, there've been little kind of clusters of material that that keeps coming in, which is interesting. But I've been very kind of excited by the range of stuff that's been kind of opening up over the last few years of what I've seen.

Nick [00:11:52] I mean, I was just going to say, after I started and we had those editorials, like you said, and so on and so forth, and in about two years it got a bit of a reputation as somewhere you could send something a little bit out of the way that you wouldn't expect *JRMA* to take. And a few years later, *Music & Letters* were doing rather the same thing, and I was telling my grad students, you know, pursuing some really rather out of the way field, *Music & Letters* likes out of the way stuff, or something like that. So, you've got a little bit of reputation and then it builds on itself.

Freya [00:12:27] Do you feel like you managed to do the sort of things that you had in mind to do – that you managed to expand it, or, you know, I think you used the word modernise it in the way that you were you were interested in doing when you started?

Nick [00:12:45] I think so. I did come and, remember, I came from Hong Kong, I mean, I didn't, I'd never taught in Britain before. I'd been a student in Britain, but I hadn't taught. So, I did sort of come with a sense that music studies needed to get a bit more in sync with the world as it actually exists. So, I suppose having tried to do that at Southampton [University Music Department], you know, that was the mentality with which I came to *JRMA*. But at the same time, as I say, not trying to sort of completely take it over and make it something it wasn't.

Freya [00:13:21] Yeah, it's a fine balance, isn't it? Trying to kind of expand it to include things that it hasn't done previously, or, you know, it has tended not to do.

Nick [00:13:35] [While avoiding producing] a kind of rag bag that nobody will identify with, which would be quite an easy thing to do. Yeah.

Freya [00:13:38] Yeah, exactly.

Nick [00:13:40] And it's not only [that] you've got to balance, you know, your ideas of what you could do with it: you've also got to balance that against what you actually can do in terms, you know, because you're driven by submissions. And as I say, we never really had a problem, [but] that doesn't mean we didn't think about submissions. And, you know, there were times when I was probably working a little harder to bring the stuff in than other times or whatever. So, it's difficult balancing the different things that make sense to do but may not be compatible, and then what you can do anyhow.

Freya [00:14:08] Yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And to kind of, you know, bring in things that are, you know, not in the vein of historical musicology, which is, you know, in many ways the kind of bread and butter, or it has been, you know, at times, the bread and butter of the journal, the bread and butter of the Association [RMA]. You know, I think there no doubt is a question of, okay, like what is the place for the historical musicologist and of the historical musicologist, and, you know, where does that sit next to post-human ventriloquism, or the Kinks, or Herzog films, or, you know, Finnish far-right groups, or whatever. And I, yeah, I like to keep a broad church on it, but as a constant kind of question of, okay, what is, but as guardian of the journal, not as like, you know, it's my project sort of thing, but, you know, you're sort of curating it through a little phase and seeing what you can, how you can leave it for the for the next phase of editorship, I suppose.

Nick [00:15:13] What do you think you've gained from doing it? How long have you been doing it, by the way?

Freya [00:15:18] Grey hairs and wrinkles? I think I took it over in – well, I got appointed in 2017, so...

Nick [00:15:26] Ah right. Okay.

Freya [00:15:26] 2018, I think was my first [issue], is that right? Something like that. I think I did – this might be my sixth year.

Nick [00:15:33] Is that when it moved to Cambridge?

Freya [00:15:35] Yes. Well, so, when I started it was with Routledge still, but the move to Cambridge was in the offing already, so, yeah. And Simon Keefe was, I think, Chair of [the RMA] Publications [Committee] at the time and saw through the move to Cambridge.

So, what have I gained? I think I have kind of, I guess, ignited / reignited an interest in a much broader range of music studies than I had, because I've always kind of thought of myself as somebody who puts questions first and musical repertoire second. But, of course, I have a particular set of repertoire that I know more than others and stuff that I have found myself drawn to and exposed to and studied more than others. And I think that, you know, I've really sort of started to just, yeah, I've had a genuine joy at reading stuff that I wouldn't otherwise have read. You know, there's a lot of stuff that we publish that I wouldn't look at twice in a journal publication. But, you know, I've kind of been forced to, and that's been really lovely. And actually, just the joy of working with new people and, you know, I would say that – like, making new friends

is one of my favourite things to do. So, you know, even if they're kind of temporary and it's a professional relationship, you know, there've been some really nice interactions with people and yeah, it's a particular type of networking and I love thinking about how to improve work. I enjoy editorial work in many ways. I also think it was really interesting because for a little while I was working – I wasn't research lead for the department, but I was working on the environment statement for the REF and helping oversee the outputs' reading programme, and just having a sense of, you know, what kind of scholarship is out there that is deemed on some slightly abstract level to be, you know, world leading or, you know, internationally excellent, or whatever the phrases are, that really that gave me a sense of, okay, what I think is good about, you know, what a good structure is, right? How to kind of tell a story in an article. And so I think that's helped me kind of reflect on my own writing in many ways.

Nick [00:18:18] I think I'd basically go along with what you say. That you're reading a whole lot of stuff and actually reading quite seriously: I mean, rather than just glancing at it, you know, that sort of thing. And, you know, it did bring you into touch not only with the people behind the articles, which was nice, but with things that you would never, you know, give some serious thought to. And that was good. There were one or two cases where these were people on their first article, and they had no clue how to write an article, but there was something really interesting in it. Yeah. So, there were two or three times that I almost sort of slipped into the doctoral supervisor kind of role and that that was quite interesting. And I was actually quite happy to do it, even if it took a long time. And to counteract the time that inevitably it takes when one could be doing other things, I was enormously helped by having Ian Rumbold as Assistant Editor, and that really meant I didn't get bogged down with nitty gritty in the way that a lot of other journal editors do. That is a huge benefit.

Freya [00:19:20] Yeah, absolutely. That structure is really helpful for being able to think about the arc of the thing and the general concepts and the argumentation and the organisation, rather than that line editing, copy-editing sort of work that the Assistant Editor takes on. So yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Nick [00:19:40] Our main problem seemed to be getting the anticipated length of the journal right.

Freya [00:19:44] Right.

Nick [00:19:45] So several times we had to postpone an article or accelerate an article or whatever. We never, I think we never got a formula that worked for balancing footnotes against larger text.

Freya [00:19:57] I know, I know.

Nick [00:19:58] [And then of course there were the] music examples.

Freya [00:19:59] Yeah, it's yeah, there's kind of no accounting for it, and it's – they're such kind of moveable feasts in many ways. I have taken to keeping a note of the word count, including footnotes, once I accept an article, right, so that I can sort of see, okay, well, you know, I might usually get five in a thing [an issue], but, you know, if one of them, if there's a few really short ones, I could probably get six in and there's kind of an easy glance there [in the word count]. But, you know. We had a couple of bumper issues last year because we had quite a backlog of things. And I think we just kind of weren't – we didn't have enough pages to get through the stuff that

was being submitted. So, yeah, we've had a couple of bumper issues and we may need a couple more in order to, you know, shorten that time lag again, between acceptance and publication.

Nick [00:20:52] Sure: that's a good problem to have.

Freya [00:20:53] Right, exactly. It's better that way round than the opposite, I think, so, yeah. Cool. Anything else that you want to think about, reflect on?

Nick [00:21:04] I think we've probably said everything that's going to be of any use.

Freya [00:21:09] I think so: I'll press stop. Here we go.