THE FOURTH ANNUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF EARLY MUSIC ON STAGE AND SCREEN (REMOSS) CONFERENCE

MUSIC AND MEDIEVALISM

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, 15-16 JUNE, 2018
Music and Medievalism: the Fourth Annual Representations of Early Music on Stage and Screen (REMOSS) Conference

University of Edinburgh, 15-16 June 2018

The Representations of Early Music on Stage and Screen (REMOSS) study group would like to welcome you to our fourth annual conference.

REMOSS’s previous activities have been largely focussed on the use of early music in stage and screen contexts; this conference is hoping to widen that perspective, though, turning its focus towards ‘medievalism’ as a methodological and aesthetic lens through which to further interrogate and enhance our original themes—and even open up new possibilities for future events.

This is an exciting time for REMOSS: in just the first half of 2018 we have seen the publication of our first edited collection Recomposing the Past: Representations of Early Music on Stage and Screen, as well as a REMOSS themed section in the most recent edition of the book series, Studies in Medievalism.

We look forward to welcoming you as part of our community. We have a regularly updated blog which you can find at http://blogs.bcu.ac.uk/remoss/, and you can sign up to our mailing list at remoss@jiscmail.co.uk

Also, follow us on Twitter at @REMOSSBrum

This conference has been generously supported by the Royal Musical Association
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Thursday 14 June

18:30 Free concert of music by the Binchois Consort with a pre-concert talk on the project ‘Space, Place, Sound, and Memory: Immersive Experiences of the Past’ at St Cecilia’s Hall

Friday 15 June

11:00-12:00 Travel, arrival, and registration

PAPER SESSION 1

12:00-13:30 Adam Whittaker (Birmingham City University), ‘Musical hagiography: recomposing the life of St Francis on stage’

Ralph Corrigan (Independent Scholar), ‘“So, is Musike to be considered, that the Minde may be preferred, before the eare”: Taking John Dee’s approach to Damon Albarn’s Dr Dee’

James Cook (University of Edinburgh), ‘Quaries of Light: Medievalism, Digital Art, and Immersive Exhibitions’

13:30-14:30 LUNCH

PAPER SESSION 2

14:30-16:00 Alessandro Restelli (Independent Scholar), ‘Ancient musical instruments as furnishings: the case of Milan between the Nineteenth and the Twentieth century’

Laura Stokes (Brown University), ‘Early-Nineteenth-Century Concepts of the Medieval in Music’

Jacob Sagrans (Independent Scholar), ‘Gaudete’: A case of musical medievalism in contemporary England

16:00-17:30 BREAK

17:30 DINNER
Saturday 16 June

PAPER SESSION 3

10:00-11:30

Giovanna Carugno (University of Parma), ‘The use of medieval-sounding tracks on the screen: the case of Chanson balladée’

Alex Robinson (Paris-Sorbonne University), ‘‘Official’ (televisual) History, Music and the Reinforcement of Popular Imagination: the Case of David Starkey’s Monarchy’

Alexander Kolassa (Institute of Musical Research), ‘Timeless Pasts, Complex Presents: Bloodborne and Ferneyhough (via Piranesi and Lovecraft)

11:30-12:00 BREAK

PAPER SESSION 4

12:00-13:30

Dan Donnelly (University of Toronto/OISE), ‘From the Screen to the Stage: Performing Medievalism in the Music of Final Fantasy’

Jennifer Smith (University of Huddersfield), ‘Vikings, song, and Early Music’

Dean Chalmers (University of Edinburgh), ‘Retro-sounding or Sound Retro? Shovel Knight, Medievalism, and the Neo-retro’

13:30 END of conference
ABSTRACTS

The use of medieval-sounding tracks on the screen: the case of Chanson balladée

Giovanna Carugno (University of Parma)

This paper aims at analyzing one of the most noteworthy case of the use of a medieval-sounding track on the Italian tv screens: the Chanson balladée, composed in 1977 by Antonino Riccardo Luciani for the program “Almanacco del giorno dopo”, which gave some information on the current day and on general aspects of the Italian culture (cooking, gardening, language and regional dialects). The soundtrack accompanied the opening and ending of the program and was played during the displaying of drawings made by the Baroque printmaker Jacques Callot. It is clear that both the music and the images were conceived to give to the program an “early” atmosphere, without a specific connection to a particular historical period. However, the public considered for a long time the Chanson balladée as a “real” medieval composition, referring it to the repertoire of virelais composed by Guillaume de Machaut. But, what makes the Chanson balladée medieval-like? Why there was a misunderstanding on the origin of this soundtrack? This paper will answer these questions and provide an analysis of the Chanson balladée, according to its target for a television show, that was daily broadcasted as a “bridge” between the news and dinnertime movies.

Retro-sounding or Sounding Retro? Shovel Knight, Medievalism, and the Neo-retro

Dean Chalmers (University of Edinburgh)

Shovel Knight (2015) is a medievalist media representation of an ambiguous, fantastical, and ‘ancient’ past – think suits of armour, magic spells, and waltzing abound. Simultaneously, it is a videogame designed to evoke 1980s retro aesthetics, namely through chiptune audio and pixelated visuals. It is a complex combination (or combo, if you will) of two popular and distinct imaginings of the past, (re-)created in a nostalgia-laden construction of authenticity from the present.

In this case, technological mediation is a major factor in such a re-creation of the past. The constantly accelerating iteration and innovation of computer and media technologies have propelled videogames as a medium forwards since the 1980s, but not only in terms of interactive and audiovisual production values. The kinds of systems of cultural and historical signification or representation have developed significantly as well. While Shovel Knight, for all intents and purposes appears as if it might be an authentic Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) game, the developers at Yacht Club Games have been candid in their acknowledgement that Shovel Knight would not run on decades-old hardware. In fact they have delighted in revealing the subversive design decisions and development practices that balances so well the ‘feel’ of both a new game made in an old way, and an old game made anew.
Individual representations of ‘non-contiguous’ pasts have been explored thoughtfully elsewhere in scholarship, particularly by Will Gibbons and the contributing editors in *Recomposing the Past: Representations of Early Music on Stage and Screen* (2018). A bold, multi-layered case such as *Shovel Knight* provides the opportunity not only to support and build upon our current understanding of representations of ‘medievalist’ early music and ‘retro’ 1980s music separately in videogames, but an insight into the markedly subversive way that contemporary videogame developers (amongst other media creatives) are combining them as well.

**Quarries of Light: Medievalism, Digital Art, and Immersive Exhibitions**

*James Cook (University of Edinburgh)*

Carrières de Lumières, an unusual performance space formed from a disused quarry in Provence, has a history of arresting displays. Last year’s offering ‘The Fantastic and Wonderful World of Bosch, Brueghel, and Arcimboldo’ offers an interesting insight into prevailing attitudes about music, painting, culture, and history in the modern world. As an installation equal part entertainment and cultural/historical exercise, it offers a window into the way that curators of today balance the competing demands of spectacle, history, and education, as well as the interplay of contrasting media. I seek to argue that, though none of the painters who provide the mainstay of the visual spectacle (filtered through Terry-Gilliam-inspired animation) are truly medieval, a broad medievalism stands at the heart of the musical approach used to tie the installation together. The music is, at times, seemingly disparate. A mix of Mussorgsky, Led Zeppelin, Orff, and others – it is medievalism that ties together the musical palette, and together with the fantastical painted subjects, creates a truly immersive experience steeped in fantastical medievalism.

“So, is *Musike* to be considered, that the Minde may be preferred, before the eare”: Taking John Dee’s approach to Damon Albarn’s *Dr Dee*

*Ralph Corrigan (Independent Scholar)*

Damon Albarn’s 2012/13 Opera *Dr Dee* intentionally set out to present Elizabethan and contemporary musical instruments and styles in direct juxtaposition. But the approaches he took are unusual, and deliver unexpected results. In addition, no original recording survives, and Albarn has re-recorded the surviving material in a number of different versions. The lack of a definitive article poses both a problem and an opportunity. Without the original, we rely on memory and extrapolation, perhaps taking ‘mind over the ear’. But this paper will also look at how Albarn manipulates the medievalised elements in each iteration, to examine what we mean - at least in this instance – when we define something as medievalism. It will also seek to relate John Dee’s own approaches to music to Albarn’s composition and, indeed, to musicology itself.
From the Screen to the Stage: Performing Medievalism in the Music of Final Fantasy

Dan Donnelly (University of Toronto/OISE)

The Final Fantasy series is one of the longest-lived, most recognisable, and most popular video game franchises of all time. The high quality of the series’ music has long been one of its defining features, and the popularity of Final Fantasy soundtracks, sheet music, remix albums, and live orchestral concerts has launched series composer Nobuo Uematsu to a kind of cult celebrity status. While Uematsu’s music only sparingly invokes the kind of medievalising tropes that might otherwise be expected in a series so firmly rooted in the High Fantasy tradition, it is notable that two of the most prominent examples of musical medievalism in the entire series—Final Fantasy VII’s “One Winged Angel” and FFX’s “Hymn of the Fayth”—are immensely popular with audiences and very often serve as focal points in live performances of the series’ music. In addition to exploring these works’ outsized roles in Final Fantasy’s official concerts, this paper will also examine a performance of the “Hymn of the Fayth” by the Swedish group Orphei Drängar that goes even further than the source material in dressing up the music—quite literally—in medieval garb.

Timeless Pasts, Complex Presents: Bloodborne and Ferneyhough (via Piranesi and Lovecraft)

Alexander Kolassa (Institute of Musical Research)

This paper proposes an unlikely constellation—juxtaposing the varied, even contradictory, elements of distinct texts, times, and corpora. That is to say, the neo-gothic horror videogame Bloodborne (2015), and the music of arch-British late modernist Brian Ferneyhough (1943-). As well as the labyrinthine eighteenth-century etchings of Italian artist Giambattista Piranesi (1720-1778), and the cosmic horror fiction of writer H.P Lovecraft (1890-1937). Groupings of this sort serve to demonstrate—or so the paper will argue—an interesting set of interconnections, which, through appeal to a sort of sublime complexity, reveal how medievalism (as a mode of cultural expression) is capable, in diverse ways, of reconstructing time and interpreting history.

To this extent, then, the paper sees in medievalism an important response (or dialectical ‘partner’) to modernity; a counterpoint for prevalent modernist teleologies of history and culture. At medievalism’s atemporal horizon, the complex architectural imaginations of Piranesi and Lovecraft become the lens, here, through which Ferneyhough’s modernism might be transformed into a kind of gothic monster for an era of cultural and digital convergence, and Bloodborne a kind of (neo)modernist artwork or body of critique. Troubling such rigid distinctions—as that which might separate a corpus of art music from a videogame—not only recalls the fluid presence-orientated cultures of pre-modern times, but also suggests models for understanding challenging art works in our liminal era where new technologies and social orders demand radical new aesthetic responses.
Ancient musical instruments as furnishings: 
the case of Milan between the Nineteenth and the Twentieth century 

Alessandro Restelli (Independent scholar)

Between the Nineteenth and the Twentieth century the interest in ancient instruments as relics of early musical cultures certainly supported the phenomenon of collecting these type of objects. Yet another kind of interest could affect the same phenomenon, independently of the historical musical role played by the ancient instruments. They were collected also because they were real accessories able to suggest the atmosphere of a glorious past and therefore considered antique items perfectly fit for historical furnishings, appropriate ornaments to decorate households.

The specific case of the antique market in Milan between 1881 and 1953 provides useful information. Obviously there were several auctions in the city during that period, conducted by dealers like Giulio Sambon, Luigi Battistelli, Lino Pesaro or Alfredo Geri, but ancient musical instruments weren’t often put up for sale. However, it’s important to remark that in case of sale they were hardly ever auctioned as exact musical lots. On the contrary, almost always they were explicitly included in the lots of furniture and showcase objects. Moreover, the scarce descriptions of instruments in the auction catalogues tended to highlight decorative features, shapes or materials of the instruments (specially of keyboard instruments) just in perfect comparison with armchairs, cabinets or console tables. Finally, different Milanese antique dealers or collectors such as Luigi Arrigoni or Fausto and Giuseppe Bagatti Valsecchi used to join different ancient instruments to obtain evocative trophies to hang on house walls.


Alex Robinson (Paris-Sorbonne University)

The last few decades have witnessed a proliferation of activity in medievalism studies, most obviously in the realms of cinema, televised drama and video game. However, despite the growing interest in the interpretation, reinvention and reception of the Middle Ages in cultures post-dating this period, research into the portrayal of “official history” in television documentaries remains a relatively nascent subgenre. This is particularly true when it comes to the musical element, yet this aspect raises important questions about how perceptions of past centuries and their cultures are reinforced in modern times. Are audience’s expectations of historical documentaries different from cinema, and does the music reflect this? What purpose does music serve in documentaries, given that dramatic considerations are supposedly less critical, and how does this affect the soundtrack? Given their raison d’être, are their musical scores more historically informed than those of other screen-based genres (like film), or does “period feel” music (where it is actually present) merely perpetuate the same preconceptions of the past that are found elsewhere? Using such questions as a springboard for further investigation, this paper is divided into two main sections. In the first, issues arising from music’s use in television history documentaries are considered on a broader level; these observations then provide a platform for more
detailed investigation of the music in some of David Starkey’s documentaries for Channel 4, notably his acclaimed Monarchy series (2004-6), which traces the history of the English rulers from Saxon times to the present day.

‘Gaudete’: A case of musical medievalism in contemporary England

Jacob Sagrans (Independent Scholar)

For nine weeks in 1973 and 1974, the UK top 50 singles chart included a recording of the Latin Christmas carol ‘Gaudete’ sung by English folk rock band Steeleyle Span. Since then, a diverse array of other English ensembles have performed and recorded the carol, including church choirs, professional classical choirs, and classical–popular crossover groups. In this presentation, I explore the medievalist significance of ‘Gaudete’ in England since the 1970s. This medievalist appeal of ‘Gaudete’ may seem surprising since the carol is not strictly medieval, nor is it English. In fact, ‘Gaudete’ originated in central Europe in the Renaissance and it only arrived in England in the mid-19th century (Keyte and Parrott 1992). Drawing on scholarship on musical medievalism (Kreutziger-Herr 2014; Yri 2004), I argue that ‘Gaudete’ can resonate with English listeners because it exemplifies a genre (the carol) with deep roots in medieval English sacred, musical, and literary practices. When musicians perform and record “Gaudete,” they draw attention to English traditions that seem to date back to the Middle Ages. This can ensure listenership among audiences that value these traditions and want assurance that they are continuing in a modern England marked by increasing secularity and religious and ethnic diversity.

Vikings, song, and Early Music.

Jennifer Smith (University of Huddersfield)

The construction of what can be considered an authentic “early music” performance in video games is variable. A video game’s genre, narrative, gameplay, environment, and player dynamic highly encourage the style, and fundamental elements, that surround the supporting composition. The inclusion of early music in a video game does not necessarily portray only “medieval” settings but can be used as a tool to identify an environment that a player considers “early” in its history or “medieval”. The Banner Saga (2014, Stoic Studio) is a fantasy tactical role-playing video game that is inspired by Norse mythology where players control the actions of both humans and giants (Varl). The music, composed by Austin Wintory (Journey, ABZÜ), uses western orchestral instruments to represent a Nordic/Viking environment, using open chords on wind and brass instruments to portray snow ridden environments, yet it is the infrequent use of the sung voice that situates the game within this Viking style. This paper will consider the inclusion of the voice in music when representing an environment that can be considered “early” or “medieval” to players, alongside the extent to which the environmental music exhibits this idea of authentic “early music”.
Early-Nineteenth-Century Concepts of the Medieval in Music

Laura K. T. Stokes (Brown University)

In the early nineteenth century, the chronological, musical, and aesthetic boundaries of the “medieval” in music remained far from settled. Indeed, as Annette Kreutziger-Herr has argued, the proximate boundary of the medieval was flexible and could extend as far forward as the French Revolution. Examination of early nineteenth-century writing and scholarship on this subject shows that the medieval functioned conceptually as a site of imagined (and perhaps impossible) spiritual renewal and as a wellspring of national and cultural identity, but also a potential target of disdain and an indicator of the superiority of the present. The potential for the medieval and its music simultaneously to stimulate such contradictory ideas rests on its chronological distance, which rendered it mysterious, and its geographic and ancestral immediacy, which rendered it a group cultural possession. This paper will examine works by three early-nineteenth-century Germanic writers—Anton Justus Thibaut, Raphael Georg Kiesewetter, and Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen—and the varying positions they took on the historical medieval and its music. These positions then influenced the turn toward medievalism in nineteenth-century composition and performance, especially in Germany.

Musical hagiography: recomposing the life of St Francis on stage

Adam Whittaker (Birmingham City University)

The lives of saints have fascinated readers and scholars for centuries. This fascination continues to the present day, with countless stage and screen retellings of these stories. Hagiography, the term used to describe a whole range of genres dealing with the lives of saints, is something of a problematic label. Texts which are broadly classified as ‘hagiographical’ fall into many genre categories and thus to accept ‘hagiography’ as a genre in its own right is a bit problematic. Instead, it forms part of a nexus of historical texts that engage in a rhetorical reconstruction of the past. Passion and miracle texts would constitute hagiographical texts, as would some which may be classified elsewhere as historia. More recent scholarship has sought to better understand antique piety and has explored the “alterity” of these texts, with the marvellous being a focal point in understanding historical attempts to suspend disbelief.

Indeed, such an approach holds similarities with some of the examples discussed in previous REMOSS conversations which have explored the ways in which music forms part of the media mirror that reflects society and cinematic codes. Might stage and screen media therefore constitute a form of modern-day hagiography? This paper considers the musical representation of St Francis’s life in Messiaen’s Saint François D’Assise (1983), exploring the ways in which his distinctive musical language helps to evoke a sense of historical sound and the importance of music in a recomposition of St Francis’s life.