EDITORIAL

The electroacoustic community

The theme chosen for Vol. 2 No 1 of *Organised Sound* is one which the editors hope will become a thread for future issues. The reader may be curious why this subject has been chosen.

Only too often in literature concerning music technology are aspects of formalism concerning a given development at the focus of an article. This is obviously part of our means of sharing knowledge and equally clearly one of this journal's key purposes. However, this sharing of pure description is but one part, be it a major one, of the whole. In music technology, as in so many areas, there is a tendency to discover, sometimes with little or no idea of a potential application. The difference between pure and applied mathematics comes to mind. Yet after almost half a century of rapid growth, music technology might be said to be suffering from too many schemes and not enough truly beta-tested applications.

A similar tale can be told of a good deal of music that has been generated using new music technological developments. It is no secret how marginal contemporary music (read: contemporary art music) and especially electroacoustic music (in the broadest sense) within contemporary music remain. This brings to mind the question of what today's musician is trying to communicate. Which community is this musician (or developer) trying to address? Which community is the writer submitting a text to *Organised Sound* trying to address? Does a 'good formalism' make a good piece?

These last two paragraphs are quite dependent on one another. If developments take place without an obvious application, or even an obvious way to find an application, if today's musician is not terribly concerned with the reception of his or her work, are those involved with music technology interested in community at all?

One might consider part of the cultural background of this somewhat curious state of affairs. Since the 1970s in many a Western society the accomplishment and uniqueness of the individual has represented an important means of measuring one's success. This general tendency is in shrill contrast to the traditional notion that music is a collective art. Yet it is odd to note that sometimes there are even jealousies or loss of respect when an individual's work is accepted in wider circles. One is said to 'sell out' to one's public. This is, of course, a black-and-white view of how one can look at today's apparent lack of community.

Still, things are not that black-and-white after all. The International Computer Music Association (ICMA) holds an annual conference that brings together a community of computer music enthusiasts from a number of nations, backgrounds and interests. The ICMA represents a community. There are others, some of which are represented in the current issue of this journal.

Staying with this one example for a moment, it has often been said that the ICMC meetings, the conferences of the ICMA, are inward looking; that is, they address the work of a community of developers, artists and colleagues in allied sciences and keep a finger on the pulse of development. A theme that is given relatively little attention at these meetings concerns sharing the wares of music technology for people outside the ICMA circles. (The circle includes members of the ICMA and other specialists in higher education and their students, as well as those working in important research centres, such as IRCAM in Paris.)

One would think with so many exciting developments taking place, including high-quality works known by very few, that such organisations would try to organise a lobby to attempt to share the wealth. A more down-to-earth option, quite well known in the United Kingdom, is to spend time, outside of one's main work, offering educational projects and training, tickling the fancy of those who might not even know of the existence of this field. This type of outreach work is known in Britain as 'community art', perhaps a misnomer as the community attending nineteenth century opera is just as valid as the ones involved in community art.

DEFINING COMMUNITY

Perhaps at this juncture it might be worthwhile to define the word 'community'. I shall draw from a definition I have used previously. A community is a group with one or more similar interests, however

large or small scale. A community may be local or spread out nationally or even internationally. Internet communities interested in a specific aspect of music technology illustrate the latter. What a community is not is a single person working in isolation, an all-too-common occurrence now that virtually everything is available to the individual at home.

SHARING OUR WARES

Returning to the second and third interlinked paragraphs above, the subject of community essentially embraces the offering of the application of our work in music technology with the group with whom we would like to share our results, be they in the form of an algorithm, an interactive system, a musical composition or whatever.

One of *Organised Sound*'s principles is that its submissions not only describe a technological development or artefact, but that they address readers in both fields of music and of music technology. By bridging this gap two communities can converge. As a consequence of this policy, it is hoped that writers take the time not only to address the 'what's' and 'how's' of their systems or works, but also address the 'why's' of the same allowing the reader to better understand the application or motivating drive for this work. The more this type of information, also a form of knowledge, is shared, the easier it will be to enlarge the community of those interested in the field, as the knowledge will then become more accessible. (This sentence has been written based on the premise that one does not want to confine his or her work to an inward-looking circle. *Organised Sound* is not the ideal publication for such people anyway.) It is with this in mind that this theme of community deserves to be profiled from time to time. In consequence, the journal is founded on the notion of addressing communities and potential communities in music technology in the widest sense.

It must be admitted that many working in the field are not used to spending a good deal of time putting the 'why' view into words. Composers are often especially modest or at least hesitant to do so. But when hearing a work, is it the formalism, which is easier put into words, that one needs to know more about, or is it a more perceptible driving (musical) force, or both? Furthermore, today many non-musical phenomena such as neural nets and patterns derived from genetics are applied to musical structure. Is it apparent that such phenomena are relevant to our field? If there are any doubts, or alternatively if there are any strong opinions why this might be so, these need to be shared along with the system created involving these new musical formulae.

It is important to mention, as many readers are aware, that the field of music analysis is undergoing great changes. The omnipotence of musical text is in question. The role of the interpreter and, perhaps more importantly, the listener are being increasingly taken into account. Any music technology system is developed inevitably to make music. What are the expectations of such systems in terms of the listening experience? Listeners, of course, do form communities. By the way, communication, a part of any musical work, and community have the same etymological root. Our theme of community needs to take into account aspects of reception and execution of work involving music technology.

THE OPPORTUNITY OFFERED BY CONVERGENCE

An exciting aspect of this theme can be found in the fact that there are signs of convergence on the horizon concerning a number of areas, two of which deserve attention here: convergence between music technological developments in a variety of contemporary musics, and similarly between the music of choice in establishments of higher education and major music technology centres. In both cases, the mutual exclusivity of and distance between popular musics and contemporary art music are diminishing.

For decades music technological developments were led primarily by people involved in contemporary music. Since the arrival of MIDI, it seems that pop music technology has seemed to be in the forefront in general. Today, the sampler exemplifies a form of hardware potentially of interest to all. This holds true for digital mixing and sound manipulation environments as well. The Canadian, John Oswald of 'plunderphonics' fame (infamy?), is an individual respected in both electroacoustic contemporary music fields as well as in the area of experimentation in popular music.

Similarly the number of popular music (technology) courses appearing in higher education is inevitably increasing, reflecting education's desire to climb down from its ivory tower to an extent and address the needs of today's and tomorrow's world more directly. This refocusing of education has allowed the chance for musicians coming from a diversity of backgrounds to encounter each other's creative and technological developments, which in turn is catalysing a greater communication between what have traditionally been disjointed communities.

Again, *Organised Sound* has been developed to interest readers coming from a diversity of backgrounds in the hope that developments can be shared and that there can be more cross-talk (in the positive sense) between traditionally separate interest groups in the future.

Surely with the very wide selection of music made today in our post-modern consumer society, most

musicians would ideally like their listeners to come not only from an inward-looking small circle or from one 'school' of listening, but also from other areas than the one that they represent. Therefore the notion of interlinking communities arises.

INTERLINKING COMMUNITIES

Ironically, it often seems as if it is hard to keep up to date with music and music technological developments internationally, as there is so much going on. *Organised Sound* believes in introducing the work of individuals to a wide readership in the hope of spreading knowledge and interlinking communities. To illustrate this convergence notion, it would come as no surprise to this writer that figures making 'bedroom techno' these days have more in common with the 1990s version of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM) *musique concrète* composers than either group would think. There are currently very few occasions where such musicians and developers can meet. By choosing this theme as an ongoing area of concentration, this journal intends to play a major role in interlinking communities whilst supporting convergence.

THIS THEME IN THE CURRENT ISSUE AND BEYOND

There are seven contributions concerning the theme of community in the present issue: two national (The Netherlands – Coenen, Finland – Kuljuntausta), two international (Electronic Music Foundation/diffusion of information – Chadabe, Composers' Desktop Project/sharing of software development – Endrich), one concerning the digital community of CD-ROM artists (Burns), one considering educational applications of Iannis Xenakis' UPIC system (Nelson), and one concerning a more philosophical view of the electroacoustic music community (Richard). These submissions already demonstrate how wide the field is. We hope to hear from other voices in these and other communities in the future. Ideally by sharing what you, the reader, represent, more can participate in the sharing. Music, at the end of the day, was an art of sharing long before music technology could be plugged in the wall. *Organised Sound* would like to play the role of mail box for those interested in offering more knowledge than a formal description, more information than a spec sheet, to music technology communities around the world. This issue's Student Article is its Tutorial Article as well. Odilon Marcenaro compares two programs that are useful in algorithmic composition contexts, MAX and Tabula Vigilans.

Leigh Landy

This editorial expresses the view of its author and is not a statement of editorial policy.