

## Society for Music Analysis Strategy Document 2017

### 1. Purpose

This document develops strategic aims that will, following a period of review, inform the conduct and actions of the Society for Music Analysis over the next five years. It proposes a set of guiding principles, which capture and explain the Society's values and purpose, nominates provisional strategic objectives, and sketches the structures that might best facilitate their delivery. The document is intended to initiate a discussion; it is hoped that the Society's ultimate strategy will be formed from the consensus response of the officers and members.

### 2. Guiding Principles

The SMA is the United Kingdom's national learned society for scholarship in the fields of music theory and analysis. The Society's 'charitable objects' are defined as 'the advancement of education in music theory and analysis for the public benefit, in particular, but not exclusively, by the dissemination of the latest scholarly research'.

I propose that these objects encompass a fivefold attitude towards the discipline. Specifically, they suggest:

1. that theory and analysis *have legitimacy as research-led disciplines in the academy;*
2. that theory and analysis *have integrity as professional scholarly disciplines, possessing a distinct identity and academic function;*
3. that theory and analysis *should be central elements of third-level musical education in the UK;*
4. that inter-disciplinarity should be fostered *as a welcome extension of the discipline's integrity and institutional stature;*
5. that theory and analysis *engender core musical knowledge not only for third-level education, but at all educational levels and in the wider social and cultural context.*

In line with this attitude, I propose that the Society's overarching functions should be:

1. to represent theory and analysis in the broader national research context;
2. to support research in theory and analysis at all levels;
3. to represent UK-based research in these areas internationally;
4. to stimulate inter-disciplinary dialogue across the humanities and beyond;

5. to sustain a national disciplinary infrastructure, in the form of plenary conferences, an annual cycle of training events, and a peer-reviewed journal of the first rank (*Music Analysis*);
6. to maintain and promote the presence of theory and analysis as curriculum subjects in second- and third-level education;
7. to foster, advance and disseminate music-theoretical and analytical knowledge in the wider social, cultural and political context where applicable and useful.

### 3. Objectives

The SMA currently maintains a successful cycle of events and activities designed to foster the discipline nationally and internationally. Its membership is small but committed, and its officers perform excellent service to the Society and the discipline in all areas. The closer relationship that will develop with *Music Analysis* under the new charitable structure will further consolidate the Society's disciplinary status and assist in sustaining its international profile.

This document suggests ways in which the best aspects of what we do can be supported and developed, whilst nominating new objectives in line with the values outlined in section 2. The time is propitious for thinking freshly about our strategy in this way, because of the SMA's recent acquisition of charitable status and the structural changes that follow. Section 4 will sketch a new structure and suggest ways in which strategic objectives can be achieved within it. This section nominates a set of objectives in seven areas:

1. Membership
2. Research presence
3. Curriculum presence
4. Postgraduate support
5. Second-level curricula and educational context
6. Professionalisation
7. Creation of a national Institute for Musical Analysis (IMA)

#### 3.1 Membership

One obvious indicator of the discipline's national presence is the size of the SMA's membership. As of the 2016 plenary conference, the membership stands at 97 in total. The membership is stable, and the SMA's activities ensure that the discipline has a national presence disproportionate to its size. Nevertheless, the scale of our membership is slim relative to the overall size of the HE sector nationally. An instructive comparison can be made with the Dutch-Flemish Society for Music Theory,

which represents the discipline for the Netherlands and Flemish Belgium. The Netherlands and Flanders have a combined population of nearly 24,000,000, served by a comparatively small number of third-level institutions offering music in some form (including Amsterdam Conservatorium; Amsterdam University; Utrecht; The Hague; Maastricht; Leiden; Ghent; Leuven; Antwerp; Brussels Royal Conservatorium). The UK contrastingly has over 70 Higher Education institutions offering music, serving a population of over 65,000,000. The Dutch-Flemish Society nevertheless attracts a larger membership than the SMA (currently 127).<sup>1</sup> A second, UK-based comparator is the Royal Musical Association (RMA). The RMA (established 1874) is an older and more firmly established organisation, and its much broader remit naturally encompasses music analysis. The disparity of size is nonetheless significant, and indicates a marginal status for theory and analysis relative to historical musicology, which is hard to explain as a product of institutional history or to justify solely on disciplinary grounds.

I therefore advocate the development of a proactive strategy for increasing membership, pursued in tandem with other measures designed to raise the discipline's status and visibility.

*Objective 1: develop a five-year strategy for increasing membership*

### 3.2 Research Presence

A second indicative metric is the discipline's national research presence. One way to estimate this is via the REF 2014 data. The RMA's analysis of the output submissions for Music (i.e. excluding environment and impact) under UoA 35 (Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts) identifies only 3.3% as classifiable under theory and analysis, falling between education (3.5%) and aesthetics (2.2%). This translates into 52 outputs, compared to 676 outputs for historical musicology, which is the largest category and comprises 42.9% of the overall submission.

These statistics are inevitably circumscribed by shifting disciplinary definitions: it is, for instance, possible that the survey fails to capture analytical outputs that have ultimately been absorbed within other categories. Yet the sheer disparity between analytical and historical research suggests that the presence of analytical research adequately reflects neither its functional relevance for musical knowledge nor its pedagogical value.

*Objective 2: increase the discipline's research presence nationally by growing its institutional visibility, stimulating debate about its academic value, and (as stated in the next objective) supporting research training at undergraduate and postgraduate levels*

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank John Koslovsky and the members of the Dutch-Flemish Society for making this information available.

### 3.3 Curriculum Presence

The extent of analysis' presence in the UK's undergraduate and postgraduate music curricula is inevitably variable and reflects the priorities and complexion of individual departments. In terms of curriculum presence, theory and analysis have not always benefitted from the prevailing inter-disciplinarity of musical scholarship in the UK. The absence of MA programmes dedicated to the discipline is one indicator of this position. The danger is that analysis consequently becomes the victim of a vicious cycle: its decline at undergraduate level drives down the demand for postgraduate training, which removes the need for MA programmes, which shrinks the professional pipeline feeding the discipline's higher presence in the academy via PhD, which reduces the number of dedicated academic posts in theory and analysis, which causes decline at undergraduate level; and so forth.

We should recognise that the discipline's future is in part a function of its curricular security. The Society should play a central role in promoting its value as a core component of any undergraduate or postgraduate curriculum. In particular, we should be proactive in disseminating the following key points:

- Theory and analysis are indispensable curriculum components at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- Their teaching requires professional training.
- Their teaching needs to be embedded professionally within institutions, through the creation of permanent posts in theory and analysis (and see 3.6 below).

*Objective 3: develop a programme for assessing, promoting, supporting and resourcing the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching of theory and analysis*

### 3.4 Postgraduate Support and Training

The Society currently plays an important role in supporting postgraduate training, through workshops, writing groups, conferences, summer schools, podcasts and the activities of the student representatives. In line with the student representative's proposals, I suggest:

- that these activities be expanded and diversified to include a postgraduate journal or yearbook, as well improved online fora for disciplinary debate;
- that we expand the portfolio of educational tools that the Society produces, to include a wider diversity of online teaching and learning materials for undergraduates and postgraduates pursuing study in theory and analysis, as well as postgraduates in other fields (musicology, ethnomusicology, performance, composition).

*Objective 4: build, implement and sustain an annual postgraduate training programme*

### 3.5 Second-level Curricula and Educational Context

The knowledge gap between second and third level in theory and analysis is widely felt, and generates acute problems for teaching the discipline at undergraduate first year, as well for how analysis is structured and taught at higher curriculum levels. The extent of the problem of prior knowledge ranges from issues of erroneous or simplistic terminology to its complete absence from the learning experience of incoming undergraduates.

It is important that the Society lobbies proactively to promote the discipline's value across the education sector. This might include:

- Engaging in dialogue with A-level and GCSE boards.
- Lobbying the Department for Education regularly and proactively in support of the discipline's educational value.
- Engaging in targeted schools' outreach.
- Engaging in dialogue with regional music education hubs.
- Working more closely with other relevant bodies in the sector (for example NAMHE).
- Developing educational materials that could be disseminated to schools and music educators.

*Objective 5: develop and execute a programme for promoting the discipline in the broader education sector*

### 3.6 Professionalisation

The overarching risk that analysis faces in the UK is the dissolution of its professional status. However problematic it might be in other respects, the separate status theory enjoys in some North American institutions secures the discipline's professional condition, by facilitating a postgraduate training pipeline, underwriting the necessity for designated theory posts and maintaining the production of research that defines the discipline's methodologies and their application. UK scholars are critically dependent on this research; but the UK has no comparable structure for the training of theorists and analysts, for discipline-building through publications, or for underwriting the professional security of the discipline within the academy.

I propose that the Society lobbies proactively for a more secure professional structure for theory and analysis in the UK, by arguing for:

- The creation of a secure training pipeline for the discipline, by initiating dialogues in the first instance with amenable music departments.
- The creation of posts in theory and analysis as necessary for the academic profile of any department.
- The promotion of a national-level discourse, which has as its aim the promotion of the discipline's central value for musical research and education.

*Objective 6: develop a plan to support and promote the professionalisation of theory and analysis in the UK academy*

### 3.7 Creation of an Institute for Musical Analysis (IMA)

Many of these objectives could be facilitated by one higher-level objective, which could have as its purpose their annual delivery: the creation of a physical space designated as a national Institute for Musical Analysis.

*Objective 7: plan the establishment of a physical Institute that represents the Society and facilitates its objectives*

## 4. Structure and Delivery

### 4.1 Structure

Our new status provides an opportunity to align our structure more closely with strategic objectives. I propose that this might be achieved by two principal means: by composing the Board of Trustees in a way that permits us to distribute strategic objectives as well as everyday responsibilities among the officers of the Society, and by aligning these two areas of activity in a realistic and achievable way, acknowledging the fact that all trustees give up their time to the SMA in addition to their daily employment.

In order to facilitate the strategy, I propose that, in addition to the current specially assigned roles:

- we establish positions for *two* undergraduate representatives;
- we establish the position of Equality and Diversity Officer;
- we establish the position of Education Officer, responsible for schools' liaison, internationalisation and outreach.

### 4.2 Delivery

The objectives agreed in the strategic plan could be distributed to the trustees, such that pertinent areas of the strategy are aligned with the trustees' responsibilities. In the first instance, the Society

should develop descriptors, which enshrine this relationship. In practice, strategic objectives can be shared between trustees; the following distribution is possible:

<b>Trustee/assigned responsibility:</b>	<b>Task:</b>
President	Strategic Plan; 3.1; 3.6; 3.7
Vice-President/Events Officer	3.1; 3.2; 3.6; 3.7
Treasurer	3.1; 3.4; 3.6; 3.7
Membership Secretary	3.1; 3.3; 3.4
Information Officer	3.1; 3.4; 3.5
Equality and Diversity Officer	3.1; 3.4; 3.6
Education Officer	3.3; 3.4; 3.5
PG reps	3.4
UG reps	3.3

Each objective could be assigned an overarching timeframe, which is agreed as reasonable and achievable by all Trustees.

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