Editorial

Several of the contributions in the current issue of *Studia Musicologica Norvegica* address the topic of music and politics from different geographical and historical perspectives. The first two articles deal with two significant, historic moments in musical life: the «Musikfest» in Bergen 1898 and the ISCM festivals after World War Two.

In his article, Øyvin Dybsand gives a meticulous account of the prehistory and aftermath of the famous events of 1898. Told from the perspective of Johan Halvorsen, new light is cast on the dominant narratives of Grieg’s role in Norwegian musical life. Moreover, Dybsand points to Grieg’s controversies with the musical institutions in the capital, Kristiania, and the consequences that these had for Halvorsen’s position as artistic leader of the National Theatre’s orchestra at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Astrid Kvalbein’s article on the involvement of Fartein Valen and Pauline Hall in the ISCM festivals traces events in the early decades of the twentieth century, up to the end of WWII. The more or less «secret» strategies used to (re-)establish and disseminate Norwegian musical modernism to international audiences are described and illustrated by numerous new sources from Norwegian and international archives. The significance of the friendship of Fartein Valen and Pauline Hall is assessed within the context of Hall’s involvement in the ISCM, and her use of it as a tool in postwar musical politics.

Kjetil Klette Bøhler’s article on the political impact of music in revolutionary Cuba addresses the relationship of music and politics from a different geographical perspective, though, not without interesting comparative implications. He claims that music always has played a central role as a carrier of nationalistic values in a country which has been politically isolated and where the official, political ideology has had a strong impact on the development of a common, historical consciousness. Musical examples illustrate how music in Cuba has been used with opposing political intentions, as an expression of resistance and as affirmation of the «revolutionary spirit».

Harald Rise’s article traces «national features» in Norwegian works for organ from 1850 to 2010. His contribution sheds light on an under-explored topic in Norwegian music history: the relationship of secular and sacred music, and the significant influence church musicians had on the development of musical life in general. From his in-
sider perspective. Rise addresses how the inclusion of the strong, nationalist tradition in secular Norwegian music has been a recurring issue for composers of organ music.

Petter Frost Fadnes’s and Jorunn Thortveit’s article «Playrooms – Adhockery strategies and the utilization of improvisational tools» engages with and brings new perspective to the discussions of educational practice in the wake of Kari Holdhus’s contribution in last year’s issue of Studia Musicologica Norvegica: the so-called «school concerts», an official initiative of the Norwegian government to disseminate high quality music in public schools all over the country. Fadnes and Thortveit recognize as a challenge how these concerts can be turned into genuine interactive and relational experiences within a metaphorical and site-specific frame he calls the «playroom». Fadnes’s and Thortveit’s claim is that improvisation, if adapted to the specific expectations and conditions of the school environment, could be developed into a valuable musical-educational practice in its best sense, including all its participants – performers, pupils, and teachers – on an equal footing.

This issue concludes with an essay by an organist who shares his experiences of performing at a Catholic church in Norway. Peder Varkøy describes the quest of a recently graduated, conservatory-trained organist for artistic freedom when faced with the constraints of theological, dogmatic views on aesthetics and the strong, instrumentalist tradition in which music has a liturgical function. His reflections take an interview with the famous French organist at Notre Dame, Olivier Latry, as a point of departure.

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