Foreword

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We are pleased to present the proceedings of the Music Encoding Conference 2021, which was held both online and on-site in Alicante, Spain, on July 19–22, 2021.

For some three thousand years, humankind has been trying to find the best way to encode music for its transmission, and at least seventy of those years have been dedicated to finding the best digital formats. This fact shows that the task of encoding music is actually very complex. The academic community, real people, need to share their thoughts, problems, and projects.

In 2020, the emergence of a pandemic the likes of which our world has not seen for about a century challenged such an exchange, but with a huge organizational effort, MEC2020 was moved entirely online at short notice. We all expected 2021 to be a better year in terms of vaccination rates, the number of infections, and the relaxation of travel restrictions, so a hybrid conference was planned for the third week of May as a link between the online-only mode in 2020 and a re-embracement of in-person events hopefully in the coming years. As the forecasts didn't materialize, the conference was postponed to July. Many participants were interested in attending the conference in person. In the end, however, only a few people were able to travel to Alicante, and most participants registered to attend the conference online. For all attendees, whether online or on-site, we tried to organize the conference such that it would fulfill its mission of bringing people and ideas closer together. This is the reason why, for example, with more than 160 registered researchers from Brazil to Japan and Australia, from Norway to Israel, sessions started at only 3 p.m. local time to create a suitable schedule in which everyone could simultaneously participate.

Organizing a conference in such uncertain times was a real challenge. Most of the decisions remained open until just a few days before the event. The possibility of too many or too few people being present in person shaped the whole program. Given that fact, it was encouraging to see that five workshops could be held with about ninety participants, sixty of whom were enrolled in both sessions on the pre-conference day, and three of the convenors streamed their workshops from Alicante with attendees both in the same room and online. The music event that had initially been planned to be a live performance was rearranged as an online presentation of a play that has been annually celebrated near Alicante since the Middle Ages: the Misteri d'Elx, which was declared one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2001.

Although most of us are used to video calls and online meetings and conferences nowadays, hybrid events are not yet so common and familiar. To experience a partly physical event, two online platforms were used for the scientific part of the conference: ZOOM for the presentations and WONDER.ME for all parallel discussion sessions, breaks, and social events. Two SLACK channels were established for asynchronous communication, announcements, and urgent questions throughout the event. An internal conference website was made available before and during the conference to all registered participants to inform them in real time about all planned events, including about updated time slots and the platforms used, and it provided links to the presentations and PDFs of the contributions. These platforms were coordinated by the organizing chairs and volunteers from the so-called Control Room, a dedicated help desk for monitoring and supporting the conference.

In order to maintain consistency and to simplify visual orientation and the navigation of all the virtual event platforms, a complete visual design project was developed by students of the Alicante Art and Design School (EASDA). They created posters, badges, and all the printed materials for in-person participants, and the banners and videos for the online events.

But the conference was not only challenging for the organizers; it was also a challenge for the presenters. MEC2021 was the first Music Encoding Conference to ask for full paper submissions. Notwithstanding this fact and the still ongoing pandemic, eighteen long papers (oral presentations) and six short papers (posters) were submitted, of which the Program Committee ultimately accepted eleven as long papers and ten as short papers for presentation at the conference and for inclusion in this volume of the conference proceedings. The topics provide a cross-section of the prolific research activities in the field, ranging from Greek neumes to

electronic music, from canonical monuments such as Beethoven or Bach to previously forgotten pieces and traditions from the Iberian Peninsula, from color design to Linked Data or neural networks, from the latest developments in tools and applications to philological issues and cutting-edge approaches to digital music data. These paper contributions are framed by the keynotes held by Álvaro Torrente with Ana Llorens and by Pip Willcox. Additionally, this volume contains a written version of the panel discussion conducted by Karen Desmond and her colleagues at MEC2021. The spelling of these proceedings follows American English, except for contributions from British or UK-associated authors.

The paper "Alleviating the Last Mile of Encoding: The *mei-friend* Package for the Atom Text Editor" by Werner Goebl and David M. Weigl was awarded best paper, and "The OpenScore Lieder Corpus" by Mark Robert Haigh Gotham and Peter Jonas was awarded best poster. These awards were determined by online voting by attendees during the conference.

In our eyes, the acronym MEC not only stands for academic exchange about music encoding and digital music technologies at the annual conference; MEC stands even more for a huge, inclusive community event that features the annual gathering of the Music Encoding Community.

It has been a great honor and pleasure to be part of and contribute to this large, active community as chairs of the Organizing Committee and Program Committee, but a conference like this requires teamwork and collective effort. So we would like to thank the many helping hands in the spotlight and behind the scenes, without whose support and hard work MEC2021 would not have been possible: the members of the local organizing team (Luisa Micó, José Manuel Iñesta, Jorge Calvo-Zaragoza, José Javier Valero; the Control Room and help desk María Alfaro, Francisco José Castellanos, Antonio Ríos; the design team with Alicia Orts, Isabel Llorca, Aida Cabañero, Naomi Barrachina, and Luis González, supervised by Esther de las Heras; the administration staff Antonio Antón and Ana Isabel García); the members of the Program Committee (Daniel Bangert, Marie Destandau, Giuliano Di Bacco, Sophia Dörner, Julia Flanders, Jan Hajič, jr., Kristin Herold, Craig Sapp, Martha E. Thomae) for their tireless and extensive commitment; everyone involved in the virtual MEC2020, all of whom so readily and generously shared their experience and expertise (Anna Kijas and Richard Freedman and their teams for the local and program organization, and Elsa De Luca, Julia Flanders, and Irmlind Capelle for the MEC2020 proceedings); the MEI Board members – with special thanks to the then Administrative Chair Elsa De Luca and the Technical Co-Chair Johannes Kepper –, who have been a very important support and point of contact for us throughout; our invited keynote speakers (Álvaro Torrente with Ana Llorens and their team, and Pip Willcox) for their thought-provoking inputs to the conference; all the workshop convenors for sharing their expertise with the community and all the session chairs for guiding the scientific program so smoothly; and Rubén Pacheco for his marvelous introduction to the Misteri d'Elx. The fifty-seven authors of these proceedings cannot be thanked enough, since they not only took up the challenge of submitting full papers despite their busy schedules and despite a year full of uncertainties and physical and mental exhaustions, but also because they accompanied the editorial process of this volume with responsiveness, flexibility, and patience; and last but not least, a special thanks to our numerous private and institutional sponsors, including the University of Alicante and its Instituto de Investigación Informática, the Instituto Superior de Enseñanzas Artísticas de la Comunidad Valenciana, the Conselleria de Innovación, Universidades, Ciencia y Sociedad Digital de la Generalitat Valenciana, the Spanish Ministry HISPAMUS project TIN2017-86576-R, the MultiScore Project, I+D+i PID2020-118447RA-I00, funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/50110001103, for their support to the local organization, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of the Government of Canada, whose generous support allowed us to fully reimburse all student bursary applications this year.

Sophia Dörner (Berlin) is to be thanked for her priceless help in preparing these proceedings.

April 2022

For the Program Committee   For the Organizing Team
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