

## EDITORIAL



Why *Eighteenth-Century Music*? Thirty years ago, eighteenth-century music research represented a scholarly vanguard: the field was at the forefront in source studies, in performance practice, in investigating local music history and even in its willingness to think critically about the ways it had defined itself historically. These successes were in no small part responsible for a fundamental shift in musicological studies, even if this shift, fed by methodologies derived from literary and critical theory, was more apparent in writings on nineteenth-century music. Perhaps the field of eighteenth-century music studies was slow to reposition itself in this new intellectual environment. Or perhaps there was a feeling that this music ‘could look after itself’, that it is the common property of all musicologists. Whatever the reason, research into music of the eighteenth century was eclipsed in terms of the number of publications, conferences and doctoral dissertations.

This is not to say that eighteenth-century music research has in any way been deficient: on the contrary, having set so many benchmarks, the field continued to develop. And right now, in particular, it seems poised to reassert itself. Not only have traditional methodologies taken on a new lease of life but recent critical methodologies have been recognized as offering new ways to listen to old music. Studies based on rhetoric, aesthetics, cultural contexts and gender theory abound and not only with respect to the works of canonic composers. What is more, in the last ten years many ‘eighteenth-century’ scholars have been deeply engaged in redefining the field and what can be said about it: the question of what constitutes periods and styles has once again come centre-stage.

*Eighteenth-Century Music*, then, aims to fill a conspicuous gap among existing periodicals (a gap not covered by numerous specialist publications or journals with wider remits) and to offer a natural home for research and commentary on music of the eighteenth century. Both our ‘philosophy’ for the journal, and details of its specific kinds of content, reflect our intention to serve the current interests of a large and active scholarly, performing and reading community, welcoming all approaches to music of the period, including source work, theory, analysis, performance practice, studies of historical and cultural contexts and criticism. In addition to substantial scholarly articles, *Eighteenth-Century Music* also includes a section of ‘Essays’, shorter articles based in part on the model of the German ‘kleine Beiträge’. It wasn’t easy finding a title for this section: while ‘Articles’ sufficed for the more substantial pieces, how to encourage that shorter, perhaps more speculative, type of submission that has lost ground in today’s intellectual economy? An elegant solution was suggested by the eighteenth-century cultivation of the essay. Originally ‘implying want of finish’, the genre gradually came to denote something that could be as elaborate in style as a modern-day academic article but covered a more limited range of material. By 1780 Vicesimus Fox, in his *Essays, Moral and Literary*, wrote that ‘Essays may now convey the idea of regular treatises’ (see the *Oxford English Dictionary*, volume 5, page 399).

Beyond articles and essays, *Eighteenth-Century Music* also includes an extensive reviews section, covering books, editions and recordings, while ‘Communications’ gives regular information on electronic resources such as websites and discussion groups, conference reports, accounts of recent and forthcoming performances by prominent performers or performing institutions and information from publishers and radio broadcasters. We encourage the submission not only of articles and essays but also of short communications of interest to a broad ‘eighteenth-century’ readership.

CLIFF EISEN

W. DEAN SUTCLIFFE