Editorial

By Christopher Haworth, Miriam Akkermann, PerMagnus Lindborg

The term 'computer music' imparts inclusivity and pluralism. Differently to a style- or genre- based definition, the partitioning of our field by medium suggests (in Bob Ostertag's words) "an openness to all the musics which computers make possible" (Ostertag 1998). The ideology of pluralism goes beyond names and permeates the self-understanding of the field as a whole. It is conventional for text books and overview statements on computer music to celebrate the limitlessness of digital audio, where the only restriction on what can be produced is your imagination (see e.g. Mathews, 1964; Boulanger 2000; Manaris and Brown, 2014: 290). Some of the theoretical literature on computer music and its progenitors goes even further, seeing the form as participating in the democratization of sound itself through the abolition of sonic or cultural hierarchies (see Dhomont, 1996).

Yet most of us will have had experiences that rub against these ideals. Indeed, as Bob Ostertag's famous article pointed out, computer music as an academic field is in fact considerably narrower than its name implies, and marked by assumptions about what types of music really count as computer music (ie, musics descended from the western art music tradition), and who really counts as a computer music composer (i.e. white, male, university educated musicians from middle and higher class backgrounds).

Looking back on that article twenty years later we might be able to say that progress has been made in certain dimensions. Recent ICMCs have featured 'club nights' hosting musics derived from house and techno, and live coding comprises an ever-greater share of the research presented at the conference. But has greater diversity of style brought with it a greater diversity of composers and musicians? Are we able to say that our field (e.g. ICMA and its sister organizations, as well as in the wider music academia) truly represents and fosters the music and the cultures that computers make possible?

This issue of Array is the result of the action points agreed by the ICMA

board in our Black Lives Matter statement of 18 January 2021. In that statement we acknowledged that computer music has historically 'perpetuated a white racial frame (Feagin 2013) that has undoubtedly led to the exclusion of musicians who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)' (ICMA BLM Statement 2021). In centering Black computer music, we acknowledge the specific problems within computer music and the ICMA that are raised by Black computer music. While techno, house, funk, and jazz-derived styles represent an increasingly large share of the musics that are performed at ICMC, there is little to no acknowledgement of their roots in African American forms of expression. Most conspicuously, the ICMA has few if any Black members. The fact of Black computer music's simultaneous presence and absence at ICMA therefore reflects the problems that the BLM movement seeks to address.

The challenge of reckoning with Black computer music in an ICMA context will be a long-term and gradual one. With this issue, we make a start on that process, while also extending our focus to other is-sues of representation and access that ICMA as an international organization has a duty to address. This issue thus features statements, provocation and analysis pertaining to the diversification and decolonization of computer music and experimental sound; the gender gap in computer music conferences; the lack of inclusivity in computer music in rural Mexico; and accessibility matters in relation to composers with physical impairments. Together, they raise awareness of existing biases and obstacles within our community, while offering ideas for how computer music as a whole can improve. There is a long way to go, but we hope this issue is a small step in the right direction towards making ICMA an organization that supports all the music, and music makers, that computers make possible.

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