

Time-Capsule Transcript: Warwick Edwards and Eva Moreda Rodriguez

Eva [00:00:00] I am Dr Eva Moreda Rodriguez and I am a Reader in Music and Head of Music at the University of Glasgow. I have been a student member of the RMA since 2006, and a regular member since, I think, 2009 or 10, and, in the last few years, I have also been convener of the Scottish Chapter of the RMA and I have also been Editor of the *Research Chronicle* of the RMA.

Warwick [00:00:26] Hello Eva. My history goes back a little further: I joined as a postgraduate in the 1960s; I gave my first paper, I think it was in 1970; I was inveigled into organising [the] Annual Conference and, occasionally, the Research Students' conference; and then, like you, Eva, I was asked to organise a Scottish Chapter. And, in fact, I think I handed over the Chapter to you at some point! In [the] 2010s, another thing came up: I was asked to do something about the Annual Conference and became unofficial Conference Co-ordinator. And then in the late 2010s became a Vice President, on the agenda of doing something about external communications and a little bit about income generation. So that's a brief summary, I suppose.

Eva [00:01:32] Okay.

Warwick [00:01:33] Well, Eva, tell me a little bit more about your joining the RMA. What motivated you, and what were your first impressions?

Eva [00:01:44] Well, I started as a student member, so I suppose, really, it was not my decision, but, as with many Music departments, my department had a group membership for all students – so, this was Royal Holloway, University of London. I remember it very well: I started my PhD on a Thursday, in October 2006, and then the next Saturday, so just two days later, I attended an RMA Study Day – so, it was one of the very first things I did as a PhD student. So, that was my first contact, first official contact with the RMA. And I remember, so, the Study Day was at King's College, London, and I remember John Deathridge, who was probably organising it, or gave a talk in it, and Nikki Dibben as well. And to me it was – as a student just recently arrived in the UK and very new to British academia – to me it was like, 'Wow, you know, it's amazing that these very illustrious researchers and professors are giving their time to help us very junior, very beginner PhD students'. And also, I was very impressed by the diversity of topics. Obviously, Nikki Dibben was talking about popular music or psychology of music – I don't really remember – but certainly it was not classical music, which was what I was familiar with. Basically, my first impression was extremely positive – that such a community could exist and could be, like, so supportive to early career students. Certainly, it was not something I had ever witnessed, you know, as a student in Spain. What about you, Warwick? I wonder if you can tell me a bit more about how you think the RMA [has] changed and evolved in all the time you've been a member?

Warwick [00:03:31] Well, hugely, as you might expect. But it's not perhaps so much the RMA: it's the circumstances, it's the business. I mean, when I joined in the 1960s as a postgraduate, musical research, compared with today, had an incredibly limited horizon. Brought up as a Cambridge student, there was an awful lot about choral traditions going back to the 15th century, and when some of my colleagues that had started out on research on 16th-century music were going into research in the 19th century, that sounded quite surprising, actually. And then some of them were actually studying, even in the late '60s, *popular* music. And, of course, in the late '60s, there was plenty of it to be discovered in research. But it all sounded very shocking and very surprising. So, the distance we've all travelled has been absolutely immense. I think it's probably to the RMA's credit collectively that it has, by and large, moved with the times. But the change has, of course,

been immense, and it had to, because the world has just changed astonishingly in the last sixty years.

Eva [00:04:42] Yeah. So, I thought it could be a good idea as well, perhaps, to tell the audience some favourite anecdotes, which are obviously RMA-related. I have one, which I think you will appreciate and you will like, which is that – I think it was 2012 or 2013, so, I had just started at Glasgow – and I attended the RMA conference, which was in London – I think it was Senate House – and I gave a paper on a Spanish, well, Catalan-exiled composer, Roberto Gerard, who exiled in Cambridge. And at the end of the paper I had a question from Tim Neighbour, whom obviously you know very well. And so, Tim was, I think he was in the British Library; he was Head of Music Librarianship at the British Library for a while, and he was already of an age when he attended my presentation. And he raised his hand to make a comment, and he said, 'Well, I'm not going to ask any questions, but I will just say that I remember Roberto, very well'. And I thought that was, again, it was amazing for me to find someone in an RMA conference who had met the, a composer whom I had researched. And of course, you know, he had died before I was born, but it was, I suppose, in a way, it was quite emotional, to find that kind of connection. And as I said, it happened in an RMA context. So, I'm not sure if you have any other anecdotes or any other episodes you'd like to share.

Warwick [00:06:12] Oh my goodness. I'll just tell one story, actually. Many years ago, the RMA offered its big award for historical music to the Belgian musicologist, Philippe Vendrix. And Philippe wanted to give his inaugural address in French. And that was fine: no problem. [The] only problem was it emerged that his understanding of the Dent Medal was not ours: he thought it was the 'tooth' medal: got it? Anyway, we should return a little bit to how the RMA has changed, and I guess where it's heading in the future. Do you have thoughts?

Eva [00:06:54] Yeah, I mean, I suppose in the time that I've been a member and especially, you know, since becoming, kind of a fully fledged member and taking up positions within the RMA, I have seen that this process that you mentioned of research interests diversifying, in a way, has accelerated or it has expanded even more. So, for example, the whole practice-led branch of research, popular-music research has a dedicated group as well. And I suppose this will only continue, you know: in a way this will only become more and more diverse. There's also the question that there might be, I imagine, challenging times ahead, especially with all the crises within higher education. And I think probably we are at a risk that Music in higher education in the UK will shrink, will become smaller. I mean, we've already heard of department closures in Oxford Brookes and other places. So, I suppose there is this risk, and I suppose it will be a quite important challenge to the RMA to (a) oppose those measures and (b) make sure that this shrinking, which – let's hope it's not too substantial – but to make sure that, even if numbers are smaller, that this diversity and this vibrancy is preserved and it doesn't become more of a monoculture. So, I would say that that's probably one of the challenges in the next few years. What about you?

Warwick [00:08:18] Yes, I mean, goodness knows what the future holds, and it's very worrying the way the discipline is proceeding. And I think [the] RMA does, along with many other organisations, you know, we have an advocacy role and it's terribly important. My sense is the best thing we can all do – and this is membership and leadership alike: the Council, of course, which has a really responsible role here – the first thing is to be alert constantly to how concepts of musical inquiry are changing. The organisation started off 150 years ago with essentially musical inquiry. The people that were inquiring were mainly composers, actually. Nowadays, we can talk about inquiry in terms of musical research in all its diversity. As you say, we've now taken on board that making

music is research, composing music is research. And there are any amount of different subdisciplines. So, being alert to what they are: we need to be reactive in a certain sense, but very sensitive. At the same time, I guess, trying to distinguish between passing fashions and things that have long term significance. It's very interesting: when I first got involved in thinking about whether the annual conference was meeting the needs of members. (This wasn't really my initiative: I was asked to look into it and given a little working party to chair and get on with it.) And my young colleagues did an absolutely amazing job in research on why a conference was needed, how often it was needed, how it should serve the needs of the whole country, all the disciplines, and so on and so forth. As that research proceeded, one of the things that emerged very clearly – they polled Council members and they polled the membership at large – and it became evident that there was quite a gulf, a difference of opinion on these things between Council and the membership. And that brought it home to me, really: that's something you need to be constantly alert to. I certainly know when I came onto Council, I brought my own agenda and ambitions, and I'm sure you did too, joining the Council as Scottish Chapter representative. But having that kind of instinct for what the whole membership is, and also the potential membership – all those involved in inquiring about music – seemed to be just so important.

Eva [00:10:52] Yeah, I mean, I'm sure there are all these challenges lying ahead, but I am sure that the RMA will be up to the task. I mean, it's been for 150 years, so, yeah, let's hope there's at least another 150 years to come.

Warwick [00:11:05] Yeah. That business about how well established the RMA is – and it is the envy of organisations around the world – but just being aged – 150 years old – you know, it's amassed a huge amount of experience and seen a lot of changes. There's ever-growing danger, though, that then you get complacent, with it. Certainly, we've had a lot of discussions and arguments that really revolve around that kind of business. And the youngsters coming on Council want change. And the first thing to say is 'Well, why do we need change?'. But then you really have to sit back and think: some things you don't need to change; other things, yeah, you really do. Another thing struck me as being very important looking to the future, is the striking up of partnerships with organisations of all kinds. I think again, the RMA has been quite good at that, but we've always been through looking: is there some other organisation, or what is going on that's not directly linked to the primary objectives of the RMA? A very good case is looking at what's going on in schools, in education short of higher education, which obviously has huge implications for what's going on in it for the for the discipline. I've often thought there's a tremendous amount of public interest in musical inquiry. They don't come anywhere near the RMA. I mean the kind of discussions that you hear on Radio 3, about music of all kinds, and the kinds of discussions you hear on Radio 2, about popular music of all kinds, and so on and so forth. This is another world entirely apart from the RMA. Should we be connecting with these people too, just to make sure that we don't get too self-satisfied and isolated?

Eva [00:12:50] Yeah, I think in the current world, yeah, you have to explore all these options. Okay. Thanks very much, Warwick: that's been an interesting chat.

Warwick [00:13:00] We could go on for an hour.

Eva [00:13:02] Sure: of course!

Warwick [00:13:04] And, well, happy birthday to the RMA.

Eva [00:13:06] Happy birthday!