Restructuring Reference Works through Multimedia Content

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Abstract
This presentation is based upon a case study of the New Grove Dictionary of Music online edition. Described are some editorial issues surrounding the conversion of a music dictionary from print to online, and the integration of multimedia sound examples within its text. Strategies for selecting, creating and organising aural musical examples from printed copy are outlined. Also considered is the possibility of interlinking and cross-referencing individual sound examples in order to create new, aural 'maps' of the Dictionary together with the existing cross-references between article texts.

1. Challenges

Figure 1. An example from the Chaconne article

Three main factors must be considered when transcribing a printed musical example into an aural medium:

- Sibelius uses MIDI sounds from the user's PC, so sound quality cannot be determined in production
- Printed examples have their own visual autonomy, but as 'slices' from a musical continuum, aural examples often require this to be added in
- How is the article text, and its place within the dictionary's structure, affected or enhanced?

2. Solutions

The model employed by the New Grove is of a teacher at the piano playing the example to a class. This ensures that the lack of sound definition (instrumental and expressive) in production is no barrier: only examples which are already abstracted from their musical context are chosen (as in figure 1).

An example's aural autonomy — and hence its abstracted nature — is enhanced through Sibelius features such as invisible rests and rallentando markings.

3. Advantages and conclusion

Creating examples as autonomous entities allows increased indexing and population of a single example throughout the text: e.g. the original set of 106 Sibelius examples can be mapped onto over 270 associated articles. Ultimately, this will allow navigation through the dictionary via its musical examples.

Figure 2 shows a hypothetical route through the dictionary's aural content made by a student composer seeking inspiration in ostinato patterns:

Figure 2. An aural map through the dictionary

This map amongst playable musical examples suggests connections between the aural/musical content of articles (such as Ghanaian music and Conductus) not apparent from the existing textual cross references. By isolating musical examples and further integrating them into the dictionary's index structure, the quality and unity of an article is not compromised, but its content is given greater meaning through diversity of reference. In this way advantage has been found in the challenges of online reference publication.