Inaugural Winter Symposium

Models, Theories and Approaches

Saturday 21—Sunday 22, July, 2018

G. M. Badger Laboratories (The University of Adelaide)

Adelaide, South Australia

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The Ludomusicology Society of Australia

Models, Theories and Approaches

While recognising concerns idiosyncratic to the sub-discipline, video game music scholarship maintains connections with film music studies and musicological practice, and embraces the composition, performance, interaction and commercial facets of the medium. The development, application and evaluation of analytical approaches to game music scholarship continues to manifest debate, and this discussion forms the theme of this symposium.

Neal Acree (Web Keynote Speaker)

Neal Acree is a BAFTA nominated film, television and video game composer whose work includes the massively popular game franchises World of Warcraft, Overwatch, StarCraft, Diablo, Chinese MMO Revelation Online, shows like Stargate SG-1, Stargate Atlantis, Witchblade and 30 feature films. A versatile and prolific composer with roots in classical, rock, electronic music and world music Neal Acree's music has been recorded and performed by orchestras around the world including the hit concert tour Video Games Live. - www.nealacree.com/home

Sir Geoffrey Malcolm Badger

As Vice-Chancellor, of the University of Adelaide, Geoffrey Badger accompanied music department staff at their urging on a journey to central Australia to camp, visit the local Aborigines and experience their musical traditions, leading to the formation of a university centre for Aboriginal music studies. It is thanks to Badger that this music centre was created, and it is with pride that the LSA holds this symposium, furthering the scholarship of music in video games, in the building bearing his name.

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Symposium Programme — Day 1, July 21st

9:00-9:45	**Registration, Tea & Coffee**
9:45-10:00	**President's Welcome**
10:00-11:30 Chair: Iain Hart	**Session 1 - "Case Studies"** 1. 'Musical Narratives: Cutscenes and Evolving Themes in *Final Fantasy X*' *Sebastian Diaz-Gasca* 2 'From Skyrim to Skellige: Music Delineating Environment in Fantasy Video Games' *Barnabas Smith, Brendan Lamb* 3 'Embodied Musical Performative Acts Involving Real and Virtual Worlds: A Case Study of a Participatory Music Video Game' *Mary C. Broughton, Jane W. Davidson*
11:30-13:00	**Break 1 - Lunch**
13:00-14:00	**'Delegate Round Table Discussion** - Models, Theories and Approaches
14:00-15:00	2018 Winter Symposium Quiz
15:00-15:30	**Break 2 - Tea and Coffee**
15:30-17:00 Chair: Mary Broughton	**Session 2 - "Diversifying Approaches"** 1. 'Processes for analysing and studying chiptune music outside of traditional western notation' *Callum Kennedy* 2. (Refreshment Opportunity) 3. Remote SSSMG Member Web Presentation *James Tate*
17:00-17:30	LSA Annual General Meeting
19:00	Symposium Dinner

Symposium Programme — Day 2, July 22nd

9:00-9:30	**Tea & Coffee**
9:30-10:30	Web Keynote: **Neal Acree** (composer)
10:30-11:00	**Break 3 - Tea and Coffe**
11:00-12:30pm Chair: Sebastian Diaz-Garcia	**Session 3 - "Perception and Perspectives"** 1. 'Old as Time Itself: Searching for Foundations of the Music-Play Relationship' *Barnabas Smith* 2. 'Icarus the zombie: The death and reanimation of Microsoft Flight and the inadequacy of nostalgia' *Iain Hart* 3 Delegate Round Table Follow-Up
12:30-13:00	**Symposium Conclusion** Debrief, thank you's, final housekeeping, AOB

Sebastian Diaz-Gasca

Title: Musical Narratives: Cutscenes and Evolving Themes in *Final Fantasy X*.

Abstract: The study of videogame music is largely focused on the interactivity of games and soundtracks; however, game music also plays an important part of a game's narrative in its non-interactive segments: cutscenes. As a non-interactive narrative element, cutscenes play important exposition roles, providing context for the diegesis and the interpretation of musical elements within it (Egenfeldt–Nielsen, et al., 2008; Howells, 2002; Munday, 2007; Poole, 2000). In the case of games with lengthy gameplay, such as RPGs, relationships with or interpretations of a game's narrative evolve with the aid of themes and other sonic cues often in these non-interactive segments (Newman, 2007; Collins 2008). Themes and leitmotifs become an important musical tool in storytelling which, Lind (2016, p. 96) agues "requires transformation over time". In the case of *Final Fantasy X* (Squaresoft, 2001), the 'Yevon Theme' appears as a recurring theme which appears in several locales and plot points as a motif and a full theme. Each of these gives a different meaning through texture and context; much of which is given through non-interactive sequences. Although the 'Yevon Theme' remains the same, its meaning changes as gameplay progresses, a transformation that is a product of plot, thematic composition, cutscenes, and thematic segmentation; allowing players to understand the nature of the story's true antagonist. By borrowing approaches from film and game studies, this paper looks at how the meaning of the 'Yevon Theme' evolves through gameplay as a consequence of interactivity and the lack thereof in *Final Fantasy X*.

Iain Hart

Title: Icarus the zombie: The death and reanimation of *Microsoft Flight* and the inadequacy of nostalgia.

Abstract: Nostalgia is powerful. It pulls us towards experiences that we once had and that we long to have again. It is also a tool employed by video game developers to turn a profit, both in the creation of sequels to popular games and in re-releases of old games. *Microsoft Flight* was such a sequel, the next in a long and popular lineage of flight simulators, and a series reboot aimed at a more mainstream audience. But *Flight* never achieved the heights of mainstream success, and it never gained widespread support from fans of the original *Flight Simulator* series. *Flight* was grounded after a few short months, and within two years the online services supporting the game were shut down, making even existing installations of *Flight* unplayable. While games often become unplayable over time due to obsolescence and hardware deterioration, this game death was swifter than most, and more complete. This paper looks at the study of game music beyond the point of game death. For *Microsoft Flight*, the use of third-party, fan-developed game modifications (or 'mods') can re-enable the study of *Flight* and its music, though not unproblematically. Nostalgic practices (like modding, emulation, or remastering) reveal both pathways to the analysis of rare or extinct games, and the difficulties arising from the changed authorship and substance of the video game text. Such difficulties are exacerbated in regional or small-scale markets, where the intrinsic rarity of a game text produces a paucity of resources for nostalgic practices together with a higher risk of textual obscurity. Though feeling the nostalgic pull of texts unfamiliar to the rest of the world, Australasian ludomusicologists need to be aware of the transformational effects of nostalgic practices and should try (whenever it is still possible) to play the past as it was made.

Barnabas Smith, Brendan Lamb

Title: From Skyrim to Skellige: Music Delineating Environment in Fantasy Video Games.

Abstract: Situated within similar fantasy environments, *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* and *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* share numerous aspects of design, with environments replete with densely forested regions, sheer cliff faces, permafrost imbued tundra and frigid, fast flowing rivers induced by the melted snow from towering mountain ranges. Landscape and narratological emotion within the gameworlds are supported through their non-diegetic scores utilising orchestral, vocal and folk elements. It is in fact the diegetic music found in each gameworld, predominantly performed by characters throughout the environments, which share the most musical commonalities. This in-game music espouses approximations of 14th century and neo-Medievalist traditions, with Medieval and Scandinavian Viking architecture featuring castles made of cubic stone, timber houses with thatched roofing and cobble stone marketplaces. In light of this and other cultural indicators such as NPC attire and parlance, there would appear to be musical anachronisms throughout the musicscapes of these games. As creations of fantasy, however, such musical endeavours are not necessarily historically inaccurate, but rather aligning with, or challenging, the normative musical contributions to media of this genre. This presents a compelling musical dichotomy of fantasy tropes and historical depictions, and this paper seeks to explore these differing musical approaches in similarly designed single player, open-world RPGs.

Mary C. Broughton, Jane W. Davidson

Title: Embodied Musical Performative Acts Involving Real and Virtual Worlds: A Case Study of a Participatory Music Video Game.

Abstract: Video games and their sound have been theorized as representing communicative, performative acts for the gamers that involve a virtual audience. Through an observational case study, using well-established research methodology for examining human behaviours in a range of contexts, gamers' bodily behaviours are analysed to understand how the game is embodied. Results of the analyses indicate that the physicality of the game constrains players' movements, attention, embodied expression, and interactivity in the real world. The goals of the game – timing accuracy and winning points – appear to be the prime motivators for player interactions. The interactivity between real and virtual worlds being primarily uni-directional – driven by the goals of the game. The study also strongly indicates that physical engagement with the game is highly enjoyable and presents an opportunity for players to act out "star" personas. Taken together, the findings suggest that the participatory music video game context shapes the players' socio-psychological and musical processes, and these differ to the embodied expressions and interactions observed in musical performative acts in the real world. Future research would benefit from the incorporation of objective, technology derived measures of player embodied interactions with video games and their music as a complement to subjective and inter-subjective observational approaches. A contemporary notion of musical performative acts needs to accommodate real-world and virtual contexts, digital technologies and platforms.

Callum Kennedy

Title: Processes for analysing and studying chiptune music outside of traditional western notation.

Abstract: In recent years video game music and audio has become a large cultural force, being celebrated through multiple facets and avenues; from the concert hall to the traditional rock band (Cheng, 2014). Sweeping orchestral scores have become the standard for many video game scores and because of this the study of video game music has become more widely practiced. In traditional classical music studies composers and performers will study compositions from early classical composers like Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven etc.; In video game music studies this is no different, as analysts study works written for the Nintendo Entertainment System, Nintendo Gameboy, Sega Megadrive, and many more systems (Hopkins, 2015). Studying musical works written in this idiom requires a level of differentiation from general musical analysis because of the setting and many other factors. (Kennedy, 2016) These factors include the limited technical specifications of the systems, the allocation of space for audio in a game cartridge, and the limited storytelling aspect of games from this period. Audio for these systems is generally processed on-board via code on the cartridge, and as a large majority of these consoles are also synthesis based this code also includes sound design elements. (Tomczak, 2011) Music in this style can be studied through scripts of code such as Musical Macro Language (MML) and trackers such as Famitracker and Little Sound DJ (LSDJ) as these mediums present the musical gestures from a place closer to sound source than general music notation can.

Barnabas Smith

Title: Old as Time Itself: Searching for Foundations of the Music-Play Relationship.

Abstract: The profundity of Huizinga's aphorism "next to Homo Faber, and perhaps on the same level as Homo Sapiens, Homo Ludens, Man the Player, deserves a place in our nomenclature" remains as relevant today as it did in the mid-20th century. From theories of cognitive development to child psychology praxis, the employment of 'play' as a mode of interaction, socialising and problem solving provides bases for stipulations of morality emerging from play itself. It has and continues to pervade our existence, taking the form of battlefield-emulating contact sports, quotidian entertainment activities, and of numerous tendrils extending into colloquial parlance. The discovery of a primary process executive circuit for play within the mammalian brain suggests our behaviour is governed, in part, by a literal play circuit. Through the grammatical regulation of a verb, playing can also extend to the creation and experiencing of sounds organised according to various time-based and sound wave variant schema we understand to be music. Within this phenomenon is, among many others, the studied discipline of learning an instrument, the cultivation of aesthetic appreciation, and a communication tool more powerful than perhaps the spoken word itself. There is a deep connection between play and music that is irreducible within the prism of linguistic clauses. Transcending aeon-spanning conceptualisations of society and culture, to corporeal governance and axiomatic emotional responses, through to the notion of consciousness itself, it is the variegated foundation elements of the play-music relationship that this paper explores.