

Marcus Ramsay Wigan, *The contributions of the Melbourne Festival of Organ and Harpsichord and its successors: 1971-2010*, A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts (Musicology) by Thesis and Coursework At Monash University, March 2017 Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music

Comments on Thesis

For one who has been involved in early music and the establishment of databases for more than thirty years, this thesis has been a delight to read. As an example of eScholarship, I have found that it breaks new ground in historical musicology, as intensive search for and use of digital materials have supplemented the severe lack of conventional documentation and successfully established a coherent if not complete account of the history of an important enterprise in Melbourne's musical history. The strength of the thesis is the thoroughness of its research using the techniques of eScholarship and Digital Humanities. In the light of the paucity of surviving written documents, this seems to be an exemplary piece of data-gathering. The vastness of the information gathered in spite of relatively poor surviving documentation is both inspiring and disturbing to those who have written of the past on the basis of surviving documents only.

The weaknesses in the thesis seem to have arisen from the limitations arising from the MA word-limit and the writer's minimising interpretation of the data gathered. As the writer says in his chapter of conclusions, '*It is clear that a substantial multimedia 'book' is needed to continue the much larger personal project of which the present thesis is simply an initial first stage.*' As it stands, the thesis itself functions as an explanatory guide to the documentation gathered in the appendices.

The implied argument of this thesis is that by the application of eScholarship techniques, the almost-disappeared MIFOH can be restored to an internationally-connected festival of over 40 years with the participation of more than a thousand performers, full details of programs and 80+gig of recordings. Although the writer modestly claims this to be 'simply an initial first stage', it is a demonstration of what can be achieved through modern IT techniques. It may well serve as a paradigm of the historical musicology of the future. We look forward to the databases becoming publicly available and an interpretative history published in book form

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