

Some Thoughts on the Music Archives Held by the Berlin Akademie der Künste

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Historically, the Akademie der Künste is known for its master classes in musical composition held by figures such as Arnold Schoenberg, Ferruccio Busoni and Franz Schreker or, after the war, Paul Dessau, Hanns Eisler and Rudolf Wagner-Régeny. But despite the fact that the Akademie is the parent organisation of the Berlin Hochschule – an extension dating to the late 1860s – it is no longer a teaching institution. An association of artists whose activities range from architecture, the visual arts and music to the performing arts, literature, film and media, the Akademie holds archives which mirror these various departments ('Sektionen'). Furthermore, it hosts a large collection of artworks as well as a library containing many personal libraries of artists whose manuscripts are gathered in the archives. The Akademie helps to give artistic concerns a public voice that goes well beyond that of an individual. The Akademie also serves as a forum for new artistic developments that would otherwise be drowned out by the shrill acoustics of the commercialised world, organising concerts, exhibitions, lectures, discussion forums, film events, theatre and dance performances, etc. While the conference *Musicians' Correspondences and Interaction between Archives* was being held in Venice, Oscar Schlemmer's *Triadisches Ballett* in the

production of Gerhard Bohner with new music by Hans-Joachim Hespos was being shown at one of the Akademie's venues.

The reunification of Germany, and hence of Berlin as well, gave a considerable boost to the Akademie's archives. In the divided city, many institutions existed at least twice, and so when the two *Akademien* were brought together their archives formed a considerable basis for a future collection of different types of archival sources. When I became director of the music archives twenty years ago, I proposed to turn them into a special archive for new music, concentrating on composers, performers and theorists. Starting with approximately 40 personal collections we have reached roughly 160 today, ranging from composers such as Peter Ablinger, Mario Bertoncini, Boris Blacher, Herbert Brün, Paul Dessau, Hanns Eisler, Johannes Fritsch, Alexander Goehr, Friedrich Goldmann, Berthold Goldschmidt, Walter Gronostay, Hans Heller, hespos, Luca Lombardi, Jorge (George) López, Gösta Neuwirth, Friedrich Schenker, León Schidlowsky, Heinz Tiessen, Rudolf Wagner-Régeny, Bernd Alois Zimmermann and Walter Zimmermann to conductor-composers including Michael Gielen, Johannes Kalitzke, Hermann Scherchen and Hans Zender, from pianists like Eduard Erdmann, Wilhelm Kempff, Aloys Kontarsky, Hans Otte and Artur Schnabel to theorists and writers among whom are Paul Bekker, Reinhold Brinkmann, Harald Kaufmann, Wolf Rosenberg, Leo Schrade and Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt. In addition, archives such as those dedicated to Werner Meyer-Eppler, Hans Peter Haller, and Cologne's Feedback Studio cover different stages of electroacoustic and electronic music, while David Drew and Otto Tomek represent influential producers who made possible new directions of music; finally, avant-garde or else forgotten yet eminent twentieth-century composers are present, such as the former student of Josef Matthias Hauer, Johann Ludwig Trepulka.

Since the Akademie's music archives are part of a much larger nationwide institution – which is not however an explicitly national archive, this being prohibited by the strictly federal organisation of cultural life in Germany – we are not free to organise our materials whichever way we find suitable. Rather, we have to follow the rules that we have established alongside our colleagues from the other departments. Since I am discussing an institution whose dimensions are quite different from those representing a single composer – the more than 1,500 *Nachlässe* and premature legacies in the Akademie cover more than 9,000 shelve meters – decisions have to be made that satisfy the needs of architectural collections as well as literature, film, music, and so on.

To be sure, we have huge collections of letters: about 15,000 in the Eisler archive, nearly the same number for Paul Dessau, 12,000 for Bernd Alois

Zimmermann – these sheer numbers will give you an impression of what a huge amount of information will not be available in the future if artists communicate only in electronic form. (I myself am convinced that almost nothing of the electronic formats will survive over the medium to long term, which is however a different topic.)

Naturally, I can provide technical details as to our working methods: we divide, like others, the correspondences into letters to individuals and to institutions, and again subdivide the institutions into categories including publishers, press, theatres/orchestras, radio and TV, agencies and producers, academies, universities, foundations, administrations and so on, all of which is standard procedure. We usually do not file letters according to their subject matter, which would involve a system of cataloguing that is no longer compatible with the remaining collections in our archives. In that respect, smaller archives certainly enjoy a greater degree of freedom. The advantage of a larger institution collecting more than one art form lies in the close links that arise between the different archives belonging to the institution, which is very helpful both for users and for the archivists. Just to give you an example: The Akademie holds the archives of both Hanns Eisler and Paul Dessau as well as the Bertolt Brecht manuscripts and other archives of literary collaborators, not to mention the archives of actors, singers and stage directors such as Ruth Berghaus. Or, for instance, we have not only Alexander Goehr's manuscripts and letters but also those of stage and film director Egon Monk, who staged Goehr's first opera and later asked Goehr to compose for his films.

What seems important to me, though, is that we follow specifically archival methods as opposed to library procedures. In German we call this the *Provenienzprinzip*, meaning that materials are preserved according to their provenance, considering that not only the materials themselves but also the order in which and the circumstances under which they came to us may well be historically significant. We furthermore make a distinction between archives and collections, archives indicating materials that belonged to a specific individual, in our case an artist or a theorist, while collections are usually added to the archives and designate materials that come from a different source (e.g. manuscripts acquired by the Akademie on auctions).

Our letter cataloguing as well does not differ greatly from other institutions: we indicate if they are hand- or typewritten, the number of sheets and pages, and in the case of composers if and which compositions are mentioned.

We had a specific software developed for our needs, with which we had already been working internally for some time. Since 2015 this catalogue has been accessible via the internet (<https://archiv.adk.de/>). We do not plan to make

scans of complete correspondences accessible over the internet. This would not only infringe on copyright laws in many cases, but disregard other much more delicate regulations which don't have to be observed by law in other countries such as, for example, the U.S. Here, I am referring to the *Persönlichkeitsschutz*, the protection of the personal sphere of individuals, which again highlights the special situation of the Akademie: imagine the case two artists writing about personal matters, one of whom is a member of the Akademie. No end of diplomatic troubles would certainly follow if we allowed unrestricted and uncontrolled access to such materials.

Even making letters accessible in our reading room is, in cases in which the author has not been deceased for more than 70 years, a legal grey area. Generally speaking we do allow this, but naturally ask for the author's permission if the reader requests a copy. Also we prohibit letters from being consulted if and when we expect trouble, and in such cases ask for permission from all people concerned.

I have indicated above that I am interested in combining archival work with research, and in doing exactly this we revive older traditions of the Akademie. The Akademie in East Berlin had a research unit of its own, while the West Berlin Akademie commissioned work catalogues of composers ranging from Arnold Schoenberg and Kurt Weill to Josef Rufer and David Drew. Of course, it is not our intention to monopolise research on our collections, but do try to inspire such work by offering a closer look into certain archives. Our personnel enables us to do so: the music archives are managed by six people, four of whom are musicologists. (For those who are interested, I have not included the people who serve more than one department, such as the media service with its digitising facilities, the library, and the historical archives that collect documents spanning more of three decades of the history of the Academy.)

In general, our publications come out in three different formats: 14 volumes have so far been published in our book series *Archive zur Musik des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*. Among these, we have edited – among others – letters from Paul Dessau to René Leibowitz, letters by Hanns Eisler, early letters by B.A. Zimmermann, letters by Peter Ronnefeld, the correspondence between Wolfgang Stresemann and Bruno Walter, the Schoenberg–Stuckenschmidt correspondence. We feel that these volumes offer an ideal access to a composer's archive. One interesting corollary is that in such volumes, entire letters can be published. Letters are an art form in themselves, and whenever possible should not be reduced to mere data reservoirs by extracting short quotations.

Another format consists in exhibition catalogues: the Academy has curated large exhibitions, often accompanied by concerts and lectures, on Hermann

Scherchen, Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Boris Blacher, Paul Dessau, Artur Schnabel, and Wilhelm Kempff. Letters from these archives have consistently been used to clarify historical facts, for example Kempff's somewhat ambiguous position towards the Nazi regime, which is reflected in his letters to the writer Ernst Wiechert from 1942 through 1946.

The most substantial editions of letters are found among the Academy's independent publications, of which I would like to present the two latest, which came out immediately prior to the conference. *Walking Freely on Firm Ground* is the publication of Artur Schnabel's letters to his American beloved, Mary Virginia Foreman, dating to the years 1935–1951, a period that covers almost the entire time he spent in exile and during the post-war years – first in Italy, then in the U.S., and then once again in Europe. These letters originated from the close personal and intellectual relationship between Schnabel and Ms. Foreman, and served mainly as a diary in which he commented on artistic, political and intellectual as well as personal matters. Comparing these letters with his autobiography, it is clear that the reflections found here concerning the Nazi period, his performances and recordings of the time, the difficulties and pleasures he found in his own modernist compositions, his thoughts regarding general cultural developments and so forth are much richer in content than the retrospective commentary provided in his autobiography.

Our most important scientific project of the past decade leaves no room for the external observer to imagine that it is also one of the largest editions of letters we have ever published in one volume. It is the first comprehensive *Werkverzeichnis* or work catalogue for a composer active mainly in the second half of the twentieth century. For this modern *Köchel Verzeichnis* to have been centred on the works of Bernd Alois Zimmermann makes sense: the international reputation of this composer, who stood in the shadow of a somewhat younger group of composers during his own lifetime, is steadily rising. The number of productions of his opera *Die Soldaten* is unparalleled in recent music history, and this despite the fact that there is hardly an opera that requires more resources to produce. Of Zimmermann's approximately 12,000 letters, many are his own – written on a typewriter with carbon copies that remained among his manuscripts. My colleague Heribert Henrich therefore had most of the materials he needed to write the Zimmermann *Werkverzeichnis* in our own archive, which was naturally a great help. Publishing the letters was exclusively aimed at shedding light on compositional processes, in addition to collecting the composer's statements about his works and their difficulties for performers, etc. In the *Werkverzeichnis*, all letters are of course grouped according to individual compositions.

Naturally, it would be impossible for a large archive to publish a work catalogue for all composers whose materials it hosts, not even the major ones. (We have published a much smaller but comparable volume dedicated to Artur Schnabel's compositions.) One should however always try editing as many letters as possible that discuss compositional processes or give direct information about personal and historical matters. Last but not least, these letters are an excellent way to preserve the knowledge gained during the cataloguing of the archives: when identifying sketches, musicologists and archivists come into very close contact with the compositional processes used by a given composer, and this knowledge will always be more extensive than can reasonably fit into the mask of an archival software. Editing and annotating letters – especially those that reflect the genesis of an oeuvre – is an outstanding way to save some of this knowledge and thereby make it accessible to a wider readership.