Music Archives in the Twenty-First Century: The Challenges of Politics and Technology

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I

The transition to the twenty-first century represents a threshold in the research of twentieth-century music, which can now be perceived, more than simply chronologically, as a self-contained period. This change of view for observers in fact corresponds with musicology's gradual move away from previously dominant models of contemporary history [*Zeitgeschichte*] with its presumption that narrators take part, at least indirectly, in the events that they describe. The music of the twentieth century has plainly become history: as the expression of a different state of things, it is accessible to current experience in a mediated fashion – without that meaning we lose sight of the fact that its effects stretch into the present. An important factor in this change of perspective was the collection, description and inventory of primary sources, which made the foundation and expansion of music archives possible. Accordingly, in criticism, the gap has widened between source-based accounts on the one hand and descriptions that are based on personal impressions or ideological premises on the other.

The archival landscape has become so complex that it is impossible to list all relevant institutions. Nevertheless, I would like to name the most common types of archive that are dedicated to music of the twentieth century:

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I. Archives that arose from the acquisition of legacies as well as the collections of living composers. The most extensive institution of this type is the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, the contents of which have been accessible for research since 1986. Meanwhile, this archive preserves more than 100 collections of composers and performers from many countries. The first acquisitions made by Berlin's Akademie der Künste in the area of twentieth-century music go back to the 1970s, a move towards collecting that gained significant momentum after the reunification of Germany. These acquisitions comprise around 140 personal archives and a dozen institutional archives; the largest portion originates from members and *Meisterschüler* of the academy or from the city's musical life. A similar national development characterises the Institute of Music at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), which since its founding in 1985 has acquired 27 collections, mostly from composers.
II. Private archives with public financial support that are dedicated to one composer. Foremost among these is the Arnold Schönberg Center (Vienna), which opened in 1998 and is descended from the Arnold Schönberg Institute at the University of Southern Californa (Los Angeles), which was founded in 1973. The Archivio Luigi Nono (Venezia) and the Fondazione Isabella Scelsi (Roma) must also be mentioned in this context. These institutions combine exemplary archival work, philological research and support for performance practice.
III. Musical collections that are incorporated into larger archives. So, limiting myself to Europe, the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the British Library are particularly prominent examples.
IV. Finally, documentation centres, in which the archiving of sources is facilitated, whether in paper, electromagnetic our audio-visual formats. Here, the Centre de documentation de la musique contemporaine (Paris) and the British Music Collection (University of Huddersfield) are prime examples.

Technological development confronts these institutions, like all archives in the humanities, with opportunities and challenges. The gathering of data within digital media has not only optimised common working processes like securing, preserving and indexing of sources, but it has also improved the accessibility of the stored materials through the publication of metadata. Here, the newly inaugurated database at the Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt (IMD) stands as an exemplar – it performs a great service to research. With this step the archive positions itself on a global level; it has drawn the obvious conclusions from a transformed academic landscape, which is populated by researchers from all areas

the world. The proliferation and differentiation of researchers stand in a reciprocal relationship with the digital innovations in source indexing: new users work with newly available sources according to their own academic traditions, from which new questions arise. The historical picture of the twentieth century is transformed not only internally, as the archives make a huge number of formerly unknown documents, but also through the hermeneutic approach which is shaped by the cultural horizon of the new interested parties.

This shift does not only have a geographical character, however. The release of metadata online opens far more space for new recipients and forms of reception. It helps to further differentiate the audience of what was formerly known as 'New Music [*Neue Musik*]', which today emerges as a segment of a wider, multi-layered twentieth-century music culture. The dissemination of music of all kinds through electronic media and the breach of numerous copy right laws have led to a proliferation of score exemplars and audio/video recordings, one that has no historical precedent; it is hardly possible today to keep track of the flow of these resources along different paths and in disparate circles. 'New Music' steps, therefore, out of its institutional bounds and is received now by subjects as a symbolic power that they did not previously know or to which they reacted with suspicion.

Digital archives take part in such encounters that involve various subjects. The behaviour of the community online is fundamentally different from a concert audience or the readership of academic literature: the ways in which individuals attain their objects are unpredictable to a high degree; moreover online users themselves intervene in media processes and can influence the dynamic of their network in various ways. As empirical research has recently shown, participants in social media do not adhere to professional hierarchies, instead attaching great value to personal experience. The ideal of participation, which is central to significant theories of democracy today, promotes a transfer of knowledge in new forms that could not have been imagined in the past.[1]

Here is the great opportunity for music archives: they profit from social groups whose interest is encouraged by the omnipresence of musical impressions in everyday life. This leads, however, to a shift in the basis of archives' legitimacy: the reason for their existence lies not only in themselves (as a place to preserve collective memory), but rather in their effects on society – an expectation that politicians express more and more frequently. So, the archive is subjected to contradictory trends. On the one hand, the relationship between archival work and research becomes even more distinct: time-dependent knowledge threatens to become lost if today's academics do not analyse the documents and artefacts; a closer cooperation between archives and universities is therefore necessary. On the other hand, the significance of an archive – besides its ability to enrich academic discourse with

new materials and viewpoints – is expressed in initiatives that pertain to the sphere of social praxis. In the repertoire of earlier periods it is a known fact that the knowledge created by source-based research can reverberate through performance practice, but the advantages of this approach for the performers' community of twentieth-century music are at present underestimated. Workshops, in which the reconstruction work of musicologists raises problems of musical interpretation provide benefits for both career paths. A further field of archival research's social effect is the further education of social strata that do not engage professionally with music but are interested in honing their views in cultural contexts. Here the new technologies come to their aid, as shown by the quick spread of Open Educational Resources.

The network that is unfolding before our eyes through digital data processing encompasses people and institutions that characterise the music culture of the twentieth century as a whole. Serial music, the theoretical foundations of which were predominantly developed in Darmstadt, was a transnational movement that synthesised what previously were national currents. Thereafter, this trend towards synthesising grew even further. In 1982, when I was first a student at the summer courses, influential personalities like Brian Ferneyhough, Gérard Grisey, Helmut Lachenmann and Wolfgang Rihm represented well alternative concepts of writing and listening to music. Yet their particular aesthetic positions, which were the result of diverse influences, gave meaning to the debates between colleagues as these took place on common theoretical ground. The reconstruction of such networks belongs to the most urgent tasks of contemporary historiography. Musicological research may enjoy the advantages of a cultural-political and technological environment that favours the preservation and recovery of cultural heritage. But both – politics and technology – raise new questions.

II

First of all I will comment on a type of source that is represented in most music archives – and in particular the IMD: *correspondence*. The meaning of such documents was made manifest by the publication of the Boulez/Cage correspondence and thereafter with the formation of the research project *Correspondence of the Viennese School*.[2] These undertakings have strengthened the awareness that letters often hold information that cannot be found in other sources. They can bring new insights into the genesis of a work or a theoretical text, throw light on the conditions of a performance, uncover institutional power struggles, make perceptible the emotional

background of a festival and so on. This multifaceted status led in individual publications to extended critical reports as well as the inclusion of supplementary sources, measures that far exceed conventional requirements for basic information. The edition has developed into an academic undertaking *sui generis* that, if anything, corresponds to a self-contained historical study. Correspondence proves itself to be a source with centrifugal forces – always pointing outwards from itself. This brings us back to the question of interconnections between sources but on a larger scale: to the interconnections between archives.[3]

Meanwhile the publication of correspondence between primary protagonists in musical life has quantifiably grown, but the aims and editorial criteria are anything but unified. The publication of an organic collection of documents presupposes a significance that goes beyond the interests of a handful of scholars who would consult it as a matter of course in their academic work. In principle, every collection of letters offers good reasons for historical interest but the marketing strategy of publishers demands careful selection. The hierarchy is determined by the culture industry, which places 'prominent personalities' at the forefront. This comes into conflict, however, with the knowledge that correspondence between figures considered secondary can also provide important material for research. Further problems are produced by the location of correspondence within an exchange process involving multiple subjects; thus arose the tendency to document the relationship of a composer with many partners as, for example, in the 2005 *Correspondance* of Claude Debussy, edited by François Lesure and Denis Herlin, and the newly published *Selected Letters of John Cage*, edited by Laura Kuhn.[4] An additional obstacle is raised by the fundamental limitations of archives: the publication of correspondence, if it aspires to be an important undertaking, creates the appearance that a particular, private relationship between two people has wider relevance. This expectation often comes into contradiction with barely erasable doubts as to the completeness of the corpus. All in all, the question as to the ethical behaviour and methodical stringency of editors is thornier here than in the publication of sketches and autograph scores. The problems span many areas: the treatment of sensitive data, the possible resistance of living people or their descendants, the profusion of languages used, the illegibility of handwritten passages and the connected possibility of also publishing a facsimile alongside the edition.

The technological innovations of the last decades spur us on to solve these problems. It could even lead to a revolution in conventional practice. The world wide web has established the preconditions for making information accessible to all users; the possibility of networking of archives and the creation of platforms that include information from multiple institutions can promote an authentic

representation of the communicative dynamic, as it formed in a particular context and at a particular time. The undifferentiated coverage of archives' complete stocks of letters on an internet portal would make no sense; rather technology allows carefully channelled searches (through the choice of keywords, dates, people, etc.) of extensive source materials that have potentially important consequences for the narration of historical events or the understanding of an aesthetic idea. The complexity of such research at multiple virtual locations suggests building groups of researchers whose projects must have clearly defined objectives and a solid methodology. The relaying of research results can in turn take place online and the problem of different languages can be solved by the format of transcription (or facsimile) and English translation. In such technological terrain, the choice between selected letters and a complete edition is fundamentally dissolved: there are only selections, but the criteria can be constantly altered, and the source materials expanded at will, without going to the trouble of a new edition.

The insertion of archives into the contemporary media landscape sets the premises for a more accurate definition of the 'public sphere [*Öffentlichkeit*]' – upon which the achievement of a publication [*Veröffentlichung*] is based. Research that runs simultaneously at multiple archives and which consults extensive source materials requires a large group of researchers from various countries – a group that already forms a type of 'public sphere'. In particular cases, the breadth of such groups can be extended through the inclusion of students and experts from other fields and this larger unity comes closer to the 'community' of online parlance. The new technological context allows digital platforms to regulate different levels of accessibility to different groups – the Scholars' Workspace format for fine art that was recently initiated by the Getty Research Institute fits this mould. The goals and functions of this platform is described by the institute as follows:

> Getty Scholars' Workspace™ is an online environment designed to support collaborative art-historical research. It provides a space and a toolset that enable research teams to examine digital surrogates of works of art and primary source materials, build a bibliography, translate and annotate texts, and exchange ideas. With Scholars' Workspace, research and communication are consolidated into a single online location accessible from anywhere.[5]

The possibility of centrifugal movement belongs to the dangers as well as the advantages of new technologies. It encourages a wide-ranging questioning of the sources as well as an immersion in their diverse aspects. However, the more extensive the available source materials and the bigger the groups working on them, the more highly-charged are the questions regarding the legal boundaries. Existing laws in Europe are strict, yet spreading here, if only informally, is the principle of 'fair use', which one must grant the researchers involved in the academic handling of data

(including sensitive data). An overly literal application of the existing copyright law in this area can lead to a deadlock, which can be avoided by the integrity of a research project and the reputation of the leading personnel guaranteeing that correct procedures are followed.

In order to limit the spread and use of published images online, archives usually turn to two precautions: low resolutions and digital watermarks. Recently, so called 'tiling' systems were developed that prevent users from downloading an entire image: the stored data always corresponds to only one metaphorical mosaic tile of the complete image visible on the screen. These precautions are admittedly only deterrents, as all information online is in principle available to acquire. Currently, the Fondazione Giorgio Cini is taking on software that was developed within the International Image Interoperability Framework™ (IIIF). This software has the potential to accommodate the divergent expectations of data protection, readability in high resolution and easy handling of metadata.[6]

The archives devoted to twenty-century music provide in addition abundant information on concert life. The network of people and institutions, which is a distinguishing feature of its history, becomes tangible on this level. Most existing narratives on festivals and concert series aim primarily to give an account of the events as they occurred and the modes of their reception; a deeper perspective that is able to explain the structure of programmes and the choice of performers in relation to analogous initiatives seldom comes into play. To give an example: a comparative study of concert programmes of the Domaine Musical, the Donaueschinger Musiktage, Warsaw Autumn, the series 'Incontri musicali' and the Darmstadt Ferienkurse could throw light on both the shared criteria and the specific traits of individual institutions. Indeed, the identity of an institution first manifests itself in relation to its environment. Has a 'canon of new music' ever existed? I am rather sceptical here, but even if this were true, one should understand such a canon as the result of a dialectic amongst the institutions. With this in mind, what is required are research projects that compare sources from different archives. A digital platform that collects inputs from individual scholars would also be helpful here. This would support the availability of significant amounts of information that is meaningful for the dissemination and reception of new works – that is, for music history in general.

III

In conclusion, I will refer to an area that has played a considerable role in the

musicological research of the twentieth century: sources charting the creative process. Originally I wanted to leave this type of source, which is available only to a lesser degree at the IMD Archive, in the background. Yet, an article by Laurenz Lütteken published June 2017 in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* prompted me to comment upon the significance of primary sources for both historiographic reconstruction and the understanding of compositional techniques. The author asks the political question of the legitimacy of archival arrangements, on which I have spoken above from a different perspective. Although he is himself a musicologist, Lütteken believes music archives are over-financed. Convinced of the fundamental role of the work concept – particularly the authorised, published work – he asks the rhetorical question: 'But is […] the path [to the completed work] of comparable interest? Must the branching traces really be preserved for an imaginary posterity?'.[7] The fertile soil for doubts concerning the academic significance of bequests frames Johannes Brahms' decision to destroy all evidence of his creative process as well as his unpublished autographs. Yet since Gustav Nottebohm and Heinrich Schenken, the rigid separation of the genesis and content of a work has been considered untenable. Moreover, it is astonishing that such an outdated position has re-emerged in a renowned feuilleton after fundamental research has been carried out on protagonists of twentieth-century compositional history (primarily Schoenberg and Stravinsky). I say *protagonists* consciously, as in Lütteken's article another problematic distinction is rehabilitated: that between great and lesser masters. This differentiation has indeed no eternal validity and, like the canon, is continuously redefined by the actors in musical life – performers, musicologists, concert organisers, the media etc. A further reason for the indispensable function of music archives is how the work of artists is embedded in their environment. This aspect transcends the – already important – revealing of the mental horizon within which the invention and realization of a musical idea originate. Philological research has shown that these horizons have a cultural imprint, i.e. are shared by various actors. The meaning of an influential work is not only explained by its immanent coherence, but can additionally be recognised in the ways it reacts to its cultural environment. Scholars refusing to acknowledge archives' material would miss out on this crucial issue of historiography.

For all these reasons, the creation of an online database by the IMD is an important step into the future. The archives devoted to twentieth-century music offer a cornucopia of sources: from sketches to work revisions, from diaries to letters, from newspaper cuttings to work contracts, from audio to video materials, and so on. The wealth of their relationships throws light on the interface between work concept and the living environment. A music archive

is not only one location in which a past event is preserved. It is also a window through which light falls on the artistic creativity of the present and music's entire communication system. And it also provides a warning for researchers in that it confronts them over and over again with the infinity of hermeneutic processes.

Translated from German by Neil Thomas Smith

Notes

1 See *Bibliotechnica. Humanist Practice in Digital Times*, ed. by John Tresch, Venezia: Fondazione Giorgio Cini (San Giorgio Dialogue, 2014) (on line volume in preparation).

2 See *The Boulez–Cage Correspondence*, ed. by Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Robert Samuels, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995 (first edition *Pierre Boulez, John Cage. Correspondance et documents*, réunis, présentés et annotés par Jean-Jacques Nattiez en collaboration avec Françoise Davoine, Hans Oesch et Robert Piencikowski, Winterthur: Amadeus Verlag, 1990); *Briefwechsel der Wiener Schule*, herausgegeben im Auftrag des Staatlichen Insituts für Musikforschung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, 6 volumes since 1995.

3 This topic has been discussed during the conference *Towards a Network of European Archives of Twentieth-Century Music – Musicians' Correspondence and Interactions between Archives* (Fondazione Giorgio Cini and Fondazione Ugo e Olga Levi, Venice, 27–28 June 2014). The texts presented during the conference have been published in *Archival Notes. Sources and Research from the Institute of Music*, I, 2016 http://onlinepublishing.cini.it/index.php/arno/issue/view/12.

4 See Claude Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, édition établie par François Lesure et Denis Herlin et annotée par François Lesure, Paris: Gallimard, 2005; *The Selected Letters of John Cage*, ed. by Laura Kuhn, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2016.

5 http://www.getty.edu/research/scholars/digital_art_history/getty_scholars_workspace/index.html (last accessed 9 July 2018).

6 For further information, visit the website iiif.io

7 'Aber ist […] auch der Weg dahin von vergleichbarem Interesse? Müssen die weitverzweigten Spuren wirklich einer imaginären Nachwelt erhalten werden?'. Laurenz Lütteken, 'Nur der Papierkorb wird weggeworfen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 141, 21 June 2017, p. 3.