

Preface

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Over the last thirty years, studies on twentieth-century musical sources have made enormous progress thanks to a combined influence of institutional factors and methodological reflections. The focal point of research has gradually shifted from the work understood as an autonomous aesthetic object to the process underlying its creation, from hagiographies of composers and interpreters to critical biographies, from a celebration of institutions to documentary studies of their operations and their impact on public life. This change of perspective has brought into play both subjective features, rooted in the composer's psychology, and historical-social contexts (communities of musicians, concert associations, editors, organs of information), research on which is now interwoven in countless ways with purely compositional enquiries. The birth of twentieth-century music archives – in particular those that host materials previously belonging to composers and musicians, such as the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel (1973), the Istituto per la Musica of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (1985) and the musical archives of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin (1989) – has provided the ideal conditions for undertaking meticulous, in-depth studies on single works, phases of a composer's production, or aspects of compositional technique. These studies have contributed to creating an image that adheres

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more closely to the multiple paths followed by twentieth-century music and thus impeding superficial approaches and ideological drift.

Scholars who have worked more or less extensively within these archives have acquired and consolidated one fundamental conviction: each source does not simply bear witness to one phase or another of a compositional process, but can also provide crucial information (which cannot be retraced elsewhere) as to the structure itself of a musical message or, in other cases, the dynamics of a cultural milieu. At the same time, a growing awareness can be observed among composers of the historical evidence contained in sources that they themselves produce and that often represent a given moment, no longer strictly private, of a protracted reflection. As Giovanni Morelli underlined, '[...] musicians have gained a higher consciousness of their own "intellectual" dignity, and their conscience has become more troubled and nervous in the last century, beyond the intellectual and nervous conscience they had already had in earlier centuries. Many composers have acted on the residual traces of their own manner of working, leaving various manifestations of self-interpretive intentionality, almost always providing those charged with conserving their memories with a personalised operating scheme' (<http://www.aib.it/aib/commiss/cnsbnt/morelli.htm> [31 January 2016]).

Research on archival sources has now established itself as a fundamental part of any historiographical enquiry, and has also proven its usefulness in debates on aesthetics and music theory in general. For its part, music philology has welcomed many stimuli coming from studies of compositional processes: the manuscript – whether the autograph score that furnishes proof of the 'composer's will', or the copy that highlights one phase of the 'history of the text' – has lost its central position and must now be weighted alongside various types of sources. Twentieth-century music archives bring to the forefront the multiplicity of sources that can be useful in a musicological research increasingly conceived as a multidirectional process. Drafts, working copies and revisions are flanked by a vast array of sketches that range from brief observations jotted down in notebooks or memo pads to entire charts of materials or graphic representations of large-scale sonorous processes. These sources are complemented by elaborations of literary texts for vocal works, projects for staging, prescriptive or descriptive scores of electronic music, synchronisation plans for film or television music, materials intended for didactics or dissemination via the media, rough copies of articles or books, annotations on printed books and scores, correspondences, diaries, photographs and recordings of rehearsals or première performances. The archive is the place in which this multiplicity of sources is conserved, a window that opens up onto the complexity

of artistic practices, a testimony to the inexhaustible nature of hermeneutic procedures.

At the Istituto per la Musica, work on cataloguing and conservation is complemented by activities aimed at promoting the scientific evaluation of the sources. In a purely academic sense, this involves encouraging individual research and forming study groups dedicated to issues that cut across different collections and often call for relations to be established with other archives. These projects are counterbalanced by others that seek to make historiographical knowledge available to subjects or institutions that lie outside the realm of academia. An exhibition of sources, set out around a given topic or chosen to provide documentary evidence of a particular event, is able to communicate its content to a diversified public in an immediately tangible way, without delving into philological or technical-musical matters. Furthermore, internet allows exemplary samples of our holdings to be made public in audiovisual formats that, although necessarily partial, offer a sharp image of the knowledge potentially contained in the sources. Lastly, our workshops that involve collaborations with composers, performers and other figures that participate in music production, guide source-based research towards musical practice, bringing historical knowledge to sectors that for their very nature are often focused on highly perfected technical procedures; the sources thus literally ‘sound out’, acquiring a physical, acoustic nature that is both complementary to and enhances the knowledge accumulated during visually oriented research. All of this leads the multiplicity that distinguishes archival research to become palpable: philological and archival disciplines are refined and updated, piecing together a mosaic whose complete reconstruction provides musicologists with an inexhaustible task. The archive is however also a place where critical faculties are called into play and reach maturity; projects intended for external audiences furthermore allow its ‘civic’ dimension to emerge.

Archival Notes has been created with the intention of bringing together the many stimulating ideas and studies that have sprung out of this new realm of musicological research. At the centre of its interests lie the collections conserved at the Istituto per la Musica. Fully aware of the intricate paths that come together in the creative act, and the network of interrelations that characterised musical culture in the twentieth century, the director and the editorial board have set out to make of this periodical a crossroads at which researchers coming from various backgrounds can encounter one another, a platform on which to exchange information with other archival and research institutions. The periodical emblematically opens with a volume dedicated to a topic – musicians’ correspondences – that concerns all twentieth-century musical archives.