CLASSICAL MUSIC FUTURES
PRACTICES OF INNOVATION

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12. The 'Museum Problem' Revisited: Learning from Contemporary Art Conservation

Denise Petzold

Classical music is supposed to have a 'museum problem'. In the introduction to this book, Neil Thomas Smith and Peter Peters describe this problem as 'a practice trapped in the past, unable to respond to contemporary currents in society and increasingly irrelevant to what is happening around it.' The future of classical music – and the current drive for innovation that seeks to secure this music and its relevance in society – is often seen to be complicated by the 'rigidity' of this music's past, meaning the traditions and routines engrained in its production, performance and experience. Particularly in Western symphonic and orchestral music, these traditions have remained very stable, relying on well-established rituals that aim to deliver profoundly aesthetic encounters with artworks for whose performance musicians have undergone years of education and training.[1]

In her seminal book *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, philosopher Lydia Goehr demonstrates that classical music and the museum are indeed no strangers to each other.[2] She identifies the emergence of the musical work in the late eighteenth century, when the establishment of art museums was in full swing. As visual art became

1 James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

2 Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

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collectible and thus conservable for future display, it enjoyed a new autonomy enabled and safeguarded by the museum. Connected to this,

> music had to find a plastic or equivalent commodity, a valuable and permanently existing product, that could be treated in the same way as the objects of the already respectable fine arts. Music would have to find an object that could be divorced from everyday contexts, form part of a collection of works of art, and be contemplated purely aesthetically. [...] The object was called 'the work.'[3]

This development is commonly understood as the objectification of music. It led to the formation of canons, repertoires and collections, which Goehr has famously called the 'imaginary museum of musical works'.[4] This (supposedly intangible) collection might be argued, however, to be far from imaginary: as the author herself shows, the 'musical work' has become regulative of the institutions, organisations, and everyday practices of classical music. It has become a crucial part of the traditions of Western classical music. While Goehr's insights are still relevant and helpful to understand the persistence and solidity of musical works in classical music practice, they do not necessarily solve the challenges that classical music faces in relation to the future, and which Smith and Peters outline at the beginning of this book.

In this chapter, I revisit the museum in order to re-articulate classical music's 'museum problem'. I propose that this comparison is in urgent need of correction; a correction that might give rise to new insights, potential and lessons for classical music. The museum is an important institution to investigate when asking how classical music and its works can be brought into the future. This has also been recognised by scholars of classical music. In their book *Classical Concert Studies: A Companion to Contemporary Research and Performance*, Martin Tröndle and Esther Bishop emphasise recent developments in the museum, and in museum studies, as exemplary for classical concert studies. The authors suggest that museum studies' increasingly interdisciplinary approaches, as well as their forward-looking discourse, have contributed positively to the institution's development and relevance in society.[5] It is no coincidence

3 Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, pp. 172–73.
4 Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, p. 8.
5 Martin Tröndle and Esther Bishop, 'Concert Studies', in *Classical Concert Studies: A Companion to Contemporary Research and Performance*, ed. by Martin Tröndle (London: Routledge), pp. 1-8.

that these authors turn their glance towards the museum: after all, both art museums and classical music institutions (such as orchestras or conservatoires) are in the business of transmitting artworks and artistic heritage.[6] Both also look back on long-standing organisational systems, historical traditions and professionalised practices that are now considered to be in crisis and require a response.

Yet, in contrast to Tröndle and Bishop's rather general outlook, I propose that it is in two intertwined, concrete aspects that the contemporary art museum is particularly relevant to classical music: firstly, to gain new understandings of the ontology – the existence – of artworks over time; and secondly, to explore how new understandings of this ontology may transform the institution and its practices. Both of these points are anchored in a particular branch of the art museum and its studies: contemporary art conservation. New understandings of how artworks exist, after all, fundamentally relate to the task of conserving artworks for the future, and the role that the museum plays in this process. This question of conservation is relevant for classical music. The future of classical music cannot only be one of changed concert formats on the one hand, and a decolonised and diversified canon on the other. The future of classical music also needs to address how we, as classical music practitioners, can and want to take care of those extant works that have become so beloved and iconic, and for which we have built our concert halls and conservatoires. What role can these works play in the future of the practice and how can we transport them there in meaningful ways, especially in the light of recent economic, political and social developments and movements? An answer to this question, I propose, can be found in a specific theoretical approach from contemporary art conservation studies, which I will introduce shortly: conservator and media art researcher Hanna Barbara Hölling's take on the artwork's archive, which includes the notions of archival potentiality

6 The orchestra as a conserving apparatus is for example highlighted by James P. Burkholder, 'The Twentieth Century and the Orchestra as Museum', in *The Orchestra: A Collection of 23 Essays on its Origins and Transformations*, ed. by Joan Peyser (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2006), pp. 452–479, and Veerle Spronck, 'Listen Closely: Innovating Audience Participation in Symphonic Music' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Maastricht: Maastricht University, 2022).

and actualisation.[7] This approach highlights the heterogeneous and shifting relations between actors and materials that are involved in an artwork's identity, history and 'realisations' over time and which posit that change, transformation and process are at the heart of an artwork's meaningful existence.

Connected to this, it is the fluidity and process-based nature of contemporary artworks that have caused transformations in the museum as a conserving, 'fixating' institution. In their book *Museum of the Future*, Christina Bechtler and Dora Imhof describe the tension that results from the coming-together of the 'liquidity' of the contemporary arts and the 'solidity' of the museum, and how this tension has enabled changes in the institution.[8] For many art museums and their professionals, the question of how contemporary artworks can be 'kept' is not merely a rhetorical or philosophical one but an urgent, practical concern. How to keep, for example, artworks that are unstable or unruly in terms of their materials, that change or unfold over time, that are ephemeral and even immaterial, such as performance art, conceptual art or time-based media art?[9] This problem has forced museum professionals to actively rethink and transform well-established ideas and practices of conservation, thereby critically interrogating the potential futures of such works, as well as their own and the museum's role in them. The result is a radical expansion of the understanding and practices of conservation, which moves away from attempting to 'fixate' artworks and towards caring for changing artworks on an institutional level. This shifts the emphasis from the artwork as a transcendent and universal object to a complex

7 Hanna B. Hölling, 'The Archival Turn: Toward New Ways of Conceptualising Changeable Artworks', in *Data Drift: Archiving Media and Data Art in the 21st Century*, ed. by Rasa Smite, Raitis Smiths and Lev Manovich (Riga: RIXC / Liepaja University Art Research Lab, 2015), pp. 73–89; Hanna B. Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive: Time, Change, and Materiality in Media Art* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017).

8 *Museum of the Future*, ed. by Christina Bechtler and Dora Imhof (Zurich: JPR Ringier, 2014), pp. 5–6.

9 As time-based media art conservator Pip Laurenson explains, 'the term time-based media refers to works that incorporate a video, slide, film, audio or computer-based element. Time-based media installations involve a media element that is rendered within a defined space and in a way that has been specified by the artist. Part of what it means to experience these works is to experience their unfolding over time according to the temporal logic of the medium as it is played back.' See Pip Laurenson, 'Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations', *Tate Papers* 6 (2006), n. p.

entity situated in concrete, localised practices. This understanding, I believe, is of utmost importance for the future of classical music practice and how we understand musical pieces within it. It concerns not only how to continue or change the performance of musical works, but also addresses how these works are introduced, taught and learned at musical education institutions such as conservatoires in the first place.

In what follows, I will first provide insight into the challenges raised by contemporary artworks for museums and the changed notion of conservation that went hand in hand with these challenges. This is important for classical music, as it sheds new light on both the theoretical and practical implications of 'conserving' artistic heritage – and the potential role of institutions and organisations in this process. I will then continue to examine Hölling's theoretical understanding of the artwork's archive, archival potentiality and actualisation in more detail. This chapter will then introduce two practical examples in relation to the archive – the MCICM's experimental concert *People's Salon* and my own ethnographic research at the Conservatorium Maastricht – before ending with some concluding remarks.

Transformed and Transforming Museums

Since roughly the late 1950s, contemporary artworks have challenged the logics and workings of museums in many domains of practice, above all conservation. They do so through their materialities, which have become increasingly processual, fluid and ephemeral. There are countless examples that vividly illustrate the problems these works cause for conservation: performance artworks like the sung works of Tino Sehgal are supposed to leave no trace or documentation behind; the installations of Nam June Paik incorporate already obsolete technologies; works featuring organic matter such as those by Anya Gallaccio slowly decay in the midst of the museum's exhibition space.[10] The dematerialisation and changeability of contemporary artworks

10 Artworks that consist of actual music and sounding elements also played an increasingly important role in galleries and museums, as can be seen with help of the avant-garde Fluxus movement of the 1960s.

marked a point of departure for museum conservators.[11] So far, studies and practices of conservation built on a scientific paradigm at whose heart lay physical preservation, including the prevention of damage or decay, minimal intervention, reversibility and the authenticity of the object.[12] With the advent of contemporary art and the introduction of ever more materially complex artworks in the museum, conservators were forced to seek out complementary understandings and approaches to account for those works that exceeded the limits of this scientific paradigm.[13]

This led to the emergence of contemporary art conservation as a field that is – just like music – very much positioned at the intersection of practice and theory. As conservator and researcher Hélia Marçal explains, contemporary art conservation experienced a significant boom in the mid-1990s, roughly ten years after its establishment as a field.[14] It consists of an active network of museum professionals who address and examine the new and manifold challenges of contemporary art conservation.[15] The result is an extensive, ever-emerging body of theoretical and practical work that interrogates how artworks exist, as well as the museum's tasks and responsibilities in these existences.[16]

11 Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, 'The Dematerialization of Art', *Art International* 12 (1986), 31–36; Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973).

12 Miriam Clavir, 'The Social and Historic Construction of Professional Values in Conservation', *Studies in Conservation* 43 (1998), 1–8. For earlier histories of art conservation in Europe see also Alessandro Conti, *History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art* (London: Routledge, 2007); as well as *Histories of Conservation and Art History in Modern Europe*, ed. by Sven Dupré and Jenny Boulboullé (London: Routledge, 2022).

13 Importantly, even today, many discussions in conservation studies are informed by the non-interventionist ethics implied in the scientific paradigm.

14 Hélia Marçal, *Contemporary Art Conservation* (Tate.org.uk, 2019), https://www.tate.org.uk/research/reshaping-the-collectible/research-approach-conservation

15 For an in-depth look into these developments and histories, as well as specific projects and events, see Marçal, *Contemporary Art Conservation*, n. p. It is also important to note that many of the old networks still exist today, yet new cross-institutional collaborations and projects are being continuously founded and added, making the field a particularly active and dynamic one.

16 Famous examples include *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art*, ed. by IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé (London: Archetype Publications, 2005); Pip Laurenson, 'Emerging Institutional Models and Notions of Expertise for the Conservation of Time-Based Media Works of Art', *Techné* 37 (2013), 36–42; Salvador Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (London: Routledge,

Often, such artworks have also stimulated museum professionals to come up with new ways of working and organising, for example when it comes to documenting, seeking collaborations with external stakeholders, and considering new institutional models for such external and interdisciplinary collaborations.[17] Contemporary artworks thus have fundamentally challenged and changed the logics and workings of the museum. Importantly, conservators have described them as similar to music due to their fleeting nature, and sought out different kinds of music in order to better understand the existence and performance of such artworks – going so far as to introduce musical practices like the writing of scores or notations into conservation practice.[18]

While the performative nature of artworks is nothing new to classic music practitioners, this point is important insofar as it shows that an institution – which is made for preserving artistic heritage, and which rests on long-standing ideas and practices – can calibrate, change and expand its ways of working based on new theoretical understandings of what an artwork is and how it exists.[19] One of these new

2005); *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, ed. by Julia Nordegraaf, Cosetta G. Saba, Barbara Le Maître and Vinzenz Heidiger (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press / Eye Film Institute Netherlands, 2013); Vivian van Saaze, *Installation Art and the Museum: Presentation and Conservation of Changing Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013); *Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths*, ed. by Alison Richmond and Alison Bracker (London: Routledge, 2009); *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice of Contemporary Artworks*, ed. by Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011); Renée van de Vall, Hanna B. Hölling, Tatja Scholte and Sanneke Stigter, 'Reflections on a Biographical Approach to Contemporary Art Conservation' in *ICOM Committee for Conservation 16th Triennial Meeting Lisbon 19–23 September 2011* (São Paulo: Critério Artes Gráficas / ICOM, 2011), pp. 1–8; Renée van de Vall, 'The Devil and the Details: The Ontology of Contemporary Art in Conservation Theory and Practice', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 55 (2015), 285–302.

17 Laurenson, *Emerging Institutional Models and Notions of Expertise for the Conservation of Time-Based Media Works of Art*, p. 42.

18 Laurenson, *Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations*, n. p.; Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, p. 42.

19 For example, conservators and museum studies scholars have addressed the potential death or complete loss of the artwork in the realm of the thinkable, raising the question of what that would mean for the museum and its relevance to culture and society. See: Alison Bracker and Rachel Barker, 'Relic or Release: Defining and Documenting the Physical and Aesthetic Death of Contemporary Works of Art' in *ICOM Committee for Conservation 14th Triennial Meeting The Hague 12–16 September 2005*, Preprints Volume II (London: James & James / Earthscan, 2005), pp. 1009–1015; Katrina Crear, 'The Material Lives and

understandings has changed the notion of conservation fundamentally: the acknowledgement that change is an inherent part of the identity of artworks, and that the institution's task is to take care of these changing works rather than attempting to 'fixate' them. Thus, focus has very much shifted from a dichotomous understanding of a work's transcendent or unchanging identity and how to perform or 'execute' this identity, towards tracing the complex, heterogeneous entanglements in which a work's identity is embedded in specific contexts and environments including various actors and materials. Connected to this, Marçal highlights the question of how to conserve the social and participatory dimensions of performative works, a question relevant also to classical music practitioners, for example when considering the role of different concert formats and how they may connect to the artwork.[20]

The insight that artworks are embedded in changing networks and relations – and that these have a fundamental effect on the work – is also valid for institutions such as the orchestra and the conservatoire, in which practice is still very much directed at faithfully executing a musical work. While constructivist insights like the above have been extensively discussed in new musicology and music (and art) sociology, it is remarkable how separated these theoretical insights have remained from the practical organisations and workings of most classical music institutions and organisations.[21] Coming back to the beginning of this

Deaths of Contemporary Artworks' (unpublished doctoral thesis, London: Goldsmiths University of London, 2012); Rosario Llamas-Pacheco, 'Some Theory for the Conservation of Contemporary Art', *Studies in Conservation* 65 (2020), 487–498. Moreover, insights from contemporary art conservation do not stop at contemporary works; they are now also used to question how museums deal with seemingly 'fixed' objects such as paintings and sculptures. See: Fernando Domínguez Rubio, *Still Life: Ecologies of the Modern Imagination at the Art Museum* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

20 Hélia Marçal, 'Conservation in an Era of Participation', *Journal of the Institute of Conservation* 40 (2017), 97–104.

21 Relevant art and music sociological work includes for example: Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, 25th Anniversary Edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008); *Art from Start to Finish: Jazz, Painting, Writing, and Other Improvisations*, ed. by H. S. Becker, R. R. Faulkner and B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Antoine Hennion, 'From Valuation to Instauration: On the Double Pluralism of Values', *Valuation Studies* 5 (2017), 69–81; Antoine Hennion, 'Objects, Belief, and the Sociologist: The

chapter, the reason for this lies partially in what is considered the 'museum problem', which hampers change and innovation. Luckily, contemporary art conservation might provide one understanding of the ontology of artworks that is particularly interesting in that regard: Hölling's take on the archive, archival potentiality and actualisation.[22] Together these notions prompt an alternative understanding of the artwork 'itself', while at the same time allowing for the history, surrounding practices and traditions of a work or practice to exist (and change) in meaningful ways. Achieving this balance seems an important task for classical music institutions, which rely on a long-standing practice on the one hand, but desire to experiment and innovate on the other.

Into the Archive!

An archive is, usually, a physical place for storing, preserving, organising and cataloguing information, such as (historical) documents, materials or public records. Yet, as the philosophers Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have famously pointed out, the archive is by no means a neutral space – rather it is one that presents specific cultural, political and systemic conditions for knowledge production.[23] In the archive, information is not only kept and preserved but also discarded, eradicated and (actively) forgotten. This insight has resulted in the archive existing in a state between physical repository and theoretical concept, the latter of which has gained increasing popularity in recent decades in the humanities and social sciences. This development is described as the 'archival turn'.[24] While the concept draws on a long and complex history, which I do not intend to trace here, it is important to note that recently

Sociology of Art as a Work-to-be-Done', in *Roads to Music Sociology*, ed. by Alfred Smudits (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2019), pp. 41–60.

22 Hölling, *The Archival Turn: Toward New Ways of Conceptualising Changeable Artworks*, p. 87; Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, p. 154.

23 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1972); Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', *Diacritics* 25 (1995), 9–63.

24 Sara Callahan, *Art + Archive: Understanding the Archival Turn in Contemporary Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022); Gabriella Giannachi, *Archive Everything: Mapping the Everyday* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016).

the archive has become subject to discussions on postcolonial thought and decolonisation, as well as the performance of cultural memory.[25]

In this archival turn, the concept has, inevitably, also entered the arts.[26] Contemporary artworks have increasingly been understood as archives themselves, consisting of and presenting complex material, with often fragmentary pieces of information and histories that need to be navigated and negotiated by curators, conservators and collectors. In contemporary art conservation studies, the concept of the archive gives rise to new understandings of the continuing existence of artworks. Hölling, for example, has used this concept to grasp how the artworks by video and media artist Nam June Paik relate to issues of change and variability. She argues that

> Conceiving of an artwork apart from its archive is unthinkable because the artwork is irreversibly bound to its archive, which shapes its identity, and because its actualization is dependent on the archival realm. The archive is, in fact, an active part of the artwork, rather than some distinct and static repository of documents.[27]

An artwork is thus inherently attached to an archive. This archive, according to Hölling, includes those elements that the artwork needs to exist or to be brought to existence, that give it form.[28] These are physical and 'virtual'. The physical sphere of the archive contains the materials that are part of the artwork, such as objects and materials, historical documents or physical settings. The virtual sphere entails intangible elements such as knowledges and embodied skills, like being able to perform certain artistic techniques.[29] These two archival spheres cannot exist without each other: both of them are needed to 'actualise'

25 For a more in-depth look into history of the archive as a concept, see Marlene Manoff, 'Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines', *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4 (2004), 9–23. For a reflection on postcolonialism, decolonisation and cultural memory see: Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form', *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 87–109; Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

26 *Art + Archive: Understanding the Archival Turn in Contemporary Art*; *Cinema and Art as Archive, Form, Medium, Memory*, ed. by Francesco Federici and Cosetta G. Saba (Milan: Memesis International, 2014).

27 Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, p. 160.

28 Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, pp. 9–10.

29 Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, pp. 142–53.

the artwork. Actualisation is the process of bringing the artwork into existence. Crucially, what this actualisation ultimately looks like is dependent on what Hölling calls 'archival potentiality'. Archival potentiality describes a state of possibility and openness in regard to the elements from the two archival spheres that are activated for this actualisation.[30] So, what the artwork will be is not obvious or fixed to begin with: rather, this is a creative and largely unpredictable process, in which conservators and other involved (human and nonhuman) actors negotiate the available (and unavailable) contents of the physical and virtual sphere to bring the artwork into existence. Crucially, this process is also not completely open but contingent: the artwork cannot be simply 'anything' but draws on what is in the archive's two spheres. In addition, 'not only does each new actualization emerge on the basis of the archive, but every new actualization of a work enriches its archival potentiality and generates subsequent realizations.'[31] This means that every actualisation again enters the artwork's archive, expanding and adding to possibilities of future existences. Actualisation, then, is an accumulative – rather than repetitive – process of realisation brought about by the various entangled actors, who navigate the artwork's archive and its potentiality.

Importantly, this reading of the archive also entertains certain ideas of the past and history. As the formation of the archive is recursive and ongoing, it does not present a static domain that only refers to or draws from the past. Instead, it hosts a myriad of potential present and future paths of action. As a 'dynamic entity directed to the future', changeability and transformation is an inherent part of this archive.[32] Hölling notes that in the context of conservation, this means 'not to return to a past "original state" or to yield to a preoccupation with a distant past, but to effect an active and creative "presencing" of artworks.'[33] The archive, therefore, allows for a future-orientated understanding of the changing existence of artworks. As the archive is dynamic, so are the artworks and their identities: they exist as shifting entities in which past, present and future co-exist.

30 Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, p. 154.
31 Ibid.
32 Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, p. 164.
33 Ibid.

Looking at Hölling's theory from the perspective of classical music, the archive might be argued to enable both a more constructivist or performative reading, as well as a more essentialist music philosophical one. Particularly the distinction between archival potentiality and actualisation seems, at first glance, to echo the dichotomy between the 'transcendent' musical work (embodied in the score) and its performance proclaimed in so many Platonist literatures.[34] After all, how is actualisation ontologically different from the music philosophical idea of performing or transmitting a fixed work? In other words: what new lessons can classical music draw from the archive's understanding of artistic ontology? In the next section, I will dive deeper into the implications of the archive for classical music and offer two examples of how this concept might be understood to work in practice.

Archives of Classical Music: *The People's Salon* and Violoncellos

Instead of suggesting an iterative understanding of performing 'the work itself', Hölling's archival theory underlines the heterogeneous actors and materials that are involved in a work's continuing existence. Thereby, the archive, archival potentiality and the process of actualisation emphasise this existence as one that is constantly changing and future-directed. Through its attention to the archive's situated contents, Hölling's approach can help us to understand and attend to how an artwork is in a continuous process of becoming.[35] The possibility to make this process

34 Stephen Davies, *Musical Works & Performances: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

35 From this perspective, the archive is much more akin to recent approaches in relational musicology, music sociology and music mediation theory, which focus on how music is mediated in and through the relations between human and nonhuman actors. See for example: Georgina Born, 'On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity', *Twentieth-Century Music* 2 (2005), 7–36; Georgina Born, 'For a Relational Musicology: Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 135 (2010), 205–243; Antoine Hennion, *The Passion for Music: A Sociology of Mediation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Floris Schuiling, 'The Instant Composers Pool: Music Notation and the Mediation of Improvising Agency', *Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia* 5 (2016), 39–58; Floris Schuiling, 'Notation Cultures: Towards an Ethnomusicology of Notation', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 144 (2019), 429–458.

explicit with help of this theory is also what makes it so important for classical music: acknowledging and working with a musical work's archive and its potentialities may foster innovation, help us understand what *meaningful* innovation in classical music can concretely look like, and enable new or alternative existences of these musical works in the future.

A crucial benefit of this approach for classical music consists in the idea that the change a work goes through is neither arbitrary, nor does it happen simply for the sake of changing. Instead, it proposes that change is rooted, anchored. This means that although change is constantly happening, not everything is possible, because the archive draws from past actualisations and histories. For classical music, this is a particularly helpful aspect: it means that what is already there does not need to be radically overturned or broken away from in order for the practice to change or open up in meaningful ways. An example of this is the recent rise of innovative or experimental concert formats. Instead of introducing new ways of performing or participating in a classical music concert for the sake of innovation, attending to a work's archive could enable ways of experimenting and engaging with the histories, practices, contexts, and experiences that it is connected to. In short, the archive teaches us that the past and history are something to be worked *with*, instead of *from*. And not only that: having to negotiate a work's archival potentialities means that this past, its histories and resources, need to be addressed explicitly rather than implicitly.

One example of this is a concert organised by the Artful Participation team of the Maastricht Centre for the Innovation of Classical Music (MCICM) in January 2020, called the *People's Salon*.[36] The programme of the *People's Salon* was built on and inspired by the personal memories and (hi)stories of the friends of Philzuid (South Netherlands Philharmonic), a community of loyal audience members and supporters of the orchestra, in a collective effort between the friends, the orchestra and the team of researchers. Their memories and stories, often connected to

36 For more information on the concert, as well as the MCICM's Artful Participation project, please see: https://artfulparticipation.nl/experiments. Notably, the *People's Salon* has been received so positively by the audience that the format has been repeated again in April 2023 at the Parkstad Limburg Theaters in Heerlen, this time under the title 'De Verhalententoonstelling'.

particular pieces of classical music, became the baseline for composing the evening's programme. In the concert, a handful of friends shared these personal memories and experiences with the help of touching personal introductions before having the orchestra play the pieces of music in question. The performance space (AINSI in Maastricht) as well as the programme notes played an important part in contributing to this evening. The space invited participants to exchange their own stories about the music in the breaks with its cosy and open atmosphere and card prompts distributed across tables; the programme booklet became a tangible materialisation of the histories and memories shared, which people could take home and re-read later.

Although the *People's Salon* addressed the question of meaningful participation and not archives, in hindsight it might be argued to have also done the latter: activating and exploring these musical works' archives and potentialities in ways that drew from the situatedness of these pieces in the specific orchestra and its community. It also questioned who may be involved in the actualisation of those musical works and how so. This arguably changed not only the concert format and audience experience. It also affected the archives of these musical pieces, which expanded and became filled with new and hitherto unknown stories, creating new understandings, meanings, and (hi) stories of these works and their contexts; not only for the audience but also for the musicians, other involved orchestra staff, and the organising team. At the heart of the *People's Salon* was not a faithful execution of preconceived ideas of what these artworks should sound like, but the creation of a musical experience that would do justice to and acknowledge the relation between these pieces and the people who listen to them. With the help of the *People's Salon*, it also becomes clear that the actualisation of a work can never be a complete representation of its archive. Rather, actualisation – as seen with help of the specific focus of the concert – is fragmentary and dependent, both in terms of the contents of the archive, as well as the decisions and judgments made by who- or whatever is involved. It is an exploration into the hidden and the possible, without undoing the concert event as such. In fact, it was exactly because it simultaneously built on well-established concert conventions that it was so well received by the participants. The *People's Salon* struck a balance between employing an innovative approach while

acknowledging the routines of the orchestra staff and audience that were needed to enable and enjoy this concert format in the first place.

While the *People's Salon* created new shared meanings that entered the musical works' archives in the context of the concert event, in her theory, Hölling elaborates that the archive of an artwork is decentralised.[37] For classical music, this means that resources for actualisation may also be found outside the concert event or the very moment of performance. Therefore, the theory also provides the opportunity to investigate other connected materials and practices that are involved in these musical archives, but have remained largely neglected or invisible.

In my own doctoral research project, also part of the MCICM, I used the concepts of the archive, archival potentiality and actualisation to investigate how different musical artefacts continue to bring classical music into existence practically.[38] One of my case studies revolved around the violoncello, a string instrument that is – also from a historical perspective – deeply embedded in the practices and traditions of classical music. Through ethnographic research – meaning observations of cello lessons over the course of one academic year at the Conservatorium Maastricht, as well as semi-structured, qualitative interviews with cello students and teachers – I found out that not only artworks have archives but that actors such as musicians and artefacts (here: instruments) are attached to archives, too. For example, how students learn to play a musical work – and what they learn – is fundamentally shaped by how they experience their concrete physical and affective relationship to their own instrument, meaning how they navigate its specificities and characteristics and the stories that they connect with it. During my research, students illustrated that aspects such as corpus form, fingerboard (in what distance the notes are arranged), positioning of the bridge (which dictates the distance between strings and fingerboard), the strings, and capabilities for projection and sound affect the decisions they would make regarding playing, technique and performance of a work. For one student, this meant that he avoided playing certain notes on the A string, as he perceived the sound as too sharp; for another, this

37 Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, p. 146.

38 Denise Petzold, 'Archives of Change: An Art Conservation Studies Approach to Innovating Classical Music' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Maastricht: Maastricht University, 2023).

entailed being able to flexibly react to the occasional 'moods' of her cello, expressing that she saw her instrument more like a significant other than a tool, which, at some points, seemed to actively contradict her ways of playing and ideas for a piece. The cellos thus afforded certain manners of handling and playing a given piece, which were intimately connected to the students' understandings of this human-instrument relationship as an archive. But not only the physical aspects of playing or performing technique played a role. During their studies, musical works merged with the students' biographies, their relationship with their instrument, including their musical but also personal development. Therefore, it can be argued that the relationship between a musician and their instrument is an integral part of the archives and thus actualisations of musical works. These relationships are, however, often silenced in practice: students are expected to demonstrate excellent technical skill on any given instrument, while the affective connection to their instrument is at best ignored.

Insights like these reveal new archival potentialities to act(ualise) on, new options for exploring how musical works exist. For example, giving students room to attend to the physical and affective relationship with their own instrument in music education institutions (such as the conservatoire) might enable a better understanding into how this relationship concretely affects the understandings, performance and experience of musical works. Connected to this, asking students to research or write a biography of their instrument could be insightful in grasping how its particularities and characteristics could add to a work's archive. This might give students a tool to address and engage also with the affective aspects of this long-lasting relationship, a relationship in which they then could also start to interrogate what these works and this tradition mean to them. Especially at the conservatoire, activities like this can shift focus from the aesthetic idea of transcendence of the musical work – which still very much revolves around the idea of the performer as mere executioner controlling and mastering an inanimate instrument – toward understanding the learning of this tradition as being part of a situated dialogue or engagement between various humans and materials. This would also consider the changes that these actors and materials go through over time, again shifting the archives of the musical works. More importantly, it might help us to attend to

the exclusionary systems within which classical music still operates: for example, the so-far dismissed role of disabled bodies in the performance of this artistic heritage.

Past as Prologue

In this chapter, I have sought to demonstrate how the museum, and particularly contemporary art conservation, can help us to address the future of classical music, its works, tradition and practice. The contemporary art museum illustrates that change and innovation within an art institution – which is meant to preserve artworks – is intimately tied to new understandings of how artworks exist through time. Contemporary art conservators have recognised that change plays an important role in the works' identities and their continued meaningful existence. The idea to take care of this change (instead of trying to 'freeze' artworks) thereby also draws attention to the heterogeneous networks and relations in which these works are embedded, all of which are subject to transformation over time. Connected to this, I proceeded to illuminate one of these new theoretical understandings on the artwork's ontology: conservator Hölling's take on the archive, archival potentiality and actualisation. In what followed, I described the implications of this approach and explored how it could be used practically, accompanied by the examples of the MCICM's experimental concert *People's Salon* and a case study on a classical music instrument – the violoncello – taken from my own research.

Drawing on this theoretical approach, two main arguments can be made for the case of classical music. Firstly, it highlights the existence and importance of the archival potentiality of musical works, meaning the manifold available and unavailable resources in these works' archives on whose basis they will be actualised. This means that by examining these works' archival potentialities further, we can expand and add to the ideas, materials, actors and sites used for actualisation. This is what happened at the *People's Salon*, which opened up and added to these works' archives from a perspective of the audience members, potentially shifting the works' performances, understandings, as well as how they are experienced.

This is connected to the fact that secondly, not only might works might be seen as attached to archives; but they are part of archives of other actors and artefacts, too – such as instruments and the people who play them. This has become visible when for example wanting to understand how the relationship between musicians and their instruments shapes musical tradition. This opens up further potentials for exploring how and where musical works 'reside', indicating that understanding musical works merely as archives of particular musical tradition(s) is a narrow and limiting conception. Moreover, and connected to this, the theory helps us to become aware of the exclusionary systems, logics and workings within which classical music operates as a practice, such as ableism, racism, sexism, classicism and the like.

Yet, and this is a crucial point when thinking about the future of classical music, the archive does necessarily enable a complete disconnect from or letting go of its contents, meaning the histories, pasts and traditions of this practice. Rather, both archival potentiality and actualisation *start* from what is present in the archive. That way, the archive – and specifically archival potentiality – presents these past practices, conventions and traditions as something that exists alongside present and future ways of actualisation. The recursive logic of the archive can engage materials and practices from different times in a dialogue, to let them affect each other in a dynamic fashion directed toward actualisation. This way, classical music's heritage might step into a fruitful engagement with contemporary life: history becomes a prologue, so to say, for a book that is still to be written.

This approach not only shakes the idea of a 'fixed' or transcendent work but raises the question of how to care for the musical works and the actors connected to them for the future in new ways, a question that has so far remained largely unarticulated. With its focus on existing artworks, the archive is particularly good at helping to forge new histories, articulations, re-contextualisations, and connections. This is what the 'imaginary museum of musical works' will need: a re-attending to these work's potentials and openings, because it is only through change that these works can stay relevant and meaningful in the future – especially

a future that will, hopefully, be further characterised by decolonisation, diversification and equality.[39]

As seen in contemporary art conservation on both a practical and scholarly level, this acknowledgment or engagement will require a new kind of work from the institutions in which these works are so firmly embedded, meaning orchestras, ensembles, collectives, conservatoires, music schools, art schools, festivals, concert halls. It might thus be helpful to critically interrogate what understandings of musical works these organisations currently employ or imply, and what kind of understandings are necessary for these works to remain meaningful. After all, archives do not just exist: they are made. If these works ought to stay not only artistically and culturally, but societally relevant, we need to better understand our own normative frameworks, which have long been compliant with the idea of transmitting transcendent artworks, finding a universal language, and fixing the music. In contrast, archives are scattered, localised, incomplete; this is what makes their contents so colourful, so diverse, and worth attending to.

To conclude, the 'museum problem' is not a problem about the keeping of the past, and how this past supposedly exists in tension with contemporary culture and society. Contemporary art conservation has demonstrated that the 'museum problem' of today is a radically different one from before: it is the question of how to manage change and forge new (hi)stories, of how to appropriately care for works that are by nature transforming and transformable, leading us to question the very institutions that have a duty to keep, to maintain and to preserve. And why should it be any different for classical music?

39 I am not suggesting, of course, that there is no acknowledgement or agreement on the idea that change is inherent part of this music – particularly movements like Historically Informed Performance (HIP) are very aware of acknowledging the changes that musical works may undergo, including the impossibility of returning to an 'authentic' or 'original' state. The works we play today are not played, experienced, or listened to in the same way than even years or decades ago. Rather, the archive brings different questions to the surface, such as how we can take care of this change, and what kind of change we envision for these works.

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