

Archives of change

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Summary

This book explores the relationship between innovation and tradition in classical music, and the broader question of how to conserve its artistic heritage for the future. In recent years, declining and ageing audience members – alongside political and social movements – have led classical music institutions and practitioners across Europe to seek to innovate their practice. This drive for innovation is often construed as being in opposition to this music's long-standing tradition and 'museum-like' practice (Smith & Peters, forthcoming; cf. Goehr, 1992/2007). I argue that innovation and tradition are not a priori contrasts. Instead, I aim to show how they intertwine practically in a classical music context. In doing so, I turn to the contemporary art museum – particularly its conservation department – as a role model for approaching the tension between conservation and change both on a theoretical and a practical level. As classical music practitioners encounter the multifaceted challenge of innovation, the question of how to 'conserve' the musical works on which this tradition is built, as well as how to continue with its many practices, has become an urgent one. From contemporary art conservation professionals, classical music practitioners may discover new understandings about how art exists over time, and witness how these new understandings can stimulate institutional change. This has inspired the overarching research question: *How can approaches from contemporary art conservation assist in opening up classical music while also helping to conserve its artistic and cultural heritage?* With this question, I aim to foster a dialogue between classical music and contemporary art conservation. In this book, this dialogue consists mainly of engaging theoretical approaches from contemporary art conservation with empirical research into a range of selected classical music practices.

Chapter 1 begins with an introduction into the above-mentioned tensions, in particular the question of how to bring together the desire for innovation in classical music with its long-standing traditions and the wish to safeguard its artistic heritage. I argue that the comparison between classical music and the museum has become a faulty one: rather than using the museum to indicate the problems that the classical music landscape is thought to have today, I opt to attend to the (contemporary art) museum as a place of potential learning, change, and innovation. Thereby, I also critically interrogate the supposed meaning and discourse of innovation and show how this notion takes shape in the context of classical music. I continue to highlight the relevance of conservation and care in matters of innovation, further making a case for why to look at contemporary art conservation in particular. By suggesting attending to the relation between innovation and conservation more carefully, I conclude that practices of conservation and care might be considered innovative themselves, and that they may enable an active response to the long-standing values, traditions, and practices of classical music in the face of innovation.

Chapter 2 first introduces the theoretical framework of this study before diving into its methodological underpinnings and concrete case studies. It starts with the most obvious point of intersection between classical music and the museum: the artwork. I trace different understandings of the work-concept, first in music philosophy and musicology, music sociology, and new or relational musicology. I underline those approaches that are particularly relevant to issues of conservation. I argue that these fields can profit from contemporary art conservation approaches for three reasons: (1) the question of conservation is not made explicit in music scholarship; (2) music scholarship is largely descriptive, and its insights remain separated from musical practice; (3) the question of the ontology – the existence – of a work is mostly treated as a philosophical exercise rather than a practical concern of the future. Then, I move to the contemporary art museum. After providing a brief development of contemporary art conservation as a field – a relevant aspect because this development has enabled the field to continuously generate new insights – I show how contemporary art conservators have arrived at different understandings of what an artwork is and how it exists over time. I also reflect on how these approaches relate to the previous understandings in music scholarship. Consequently, I introduce the main theoretical framework of this study: conservator and media art researcher Hanna B. Hölling's (2015, 2017a) concept of the archive, archival potentiality, and actualisation. This approach enables me to shift focus from the artwork itself to its institutional, historical, material, and professional embedding, therefore allowing me to explore the richness of what and who is involved in classical music's continuing existence. Moreover, Hölling's theory helps to reveal the contingencies and routines of this existence on the one hand, as well as potentials and entry points for innovation on the other. The theory's relevance for classical music therefore rests in how it allows to trace and understand past and current ways of 'actualising' a work, while recognising points of exploration, change, and space to 'do things differently'.

Subsequently, I relate Hölling's theory to methodologies in art sociology, which approach the making or existence of art as a collective, collaborative, and unfinished process. Translating Hölling's theoretical approach into my own methodology, I move from the philosophical idea of artworks to thinking about classical music empirically in terms of archives. In the last part of Chapter 2, I present my case studies, which consist of three 'archives' in classical music: concert programmes, classical music streaming applications, and an instrument (the violoncello). As my study is inspired by science and technology studies (STS) – particularly the field's interdisciplinary and practice-based approaches in combination with its continuing attention to the role that materials and objects play in society – these three archives are based on exemplary (yet easily dismissed) artefacts and technologies appearing in different classical music practices. I propose to examine the role that these archives play in the continuing existence of this music, and trace in each case study how classical music is both conserved and renewed in and by the involved materials and actors. Although the variety of the case studies requires a range of methods (such as

ethnographic research, qualitative interviewing, and content analysis), the diversity of the cases helps to underline the complexity and specificity in which classical music exists. Considering the heterogeneity of cases and methods, each empirical investigation is preceded by a chapter scrutinising the most relevant scholarly discussions connected to the respective artefact. These chapters perform these artefacts as archives theoretically, while the empirical counterparts show how these archives operate practically. Together, each pair of chapters makes up a part of this book. The time frame of my empirical research ranges from 1950 to 2020. This period is covered by the cases in differing ways; not all of them are analysed for the whole period. The post-war period marks the point of departure, as the musical landscape was in flux during this time. Geographically, the case studies are located in Austria, the UK, Germany, and the Netherlands. These countries have a well-established classical music history and tradition, as well as an active classical music cultural sector, thus providing coherence in terms of the Western European scope of this study.

Part I of the book focuses on concert programmes: paper booklets that audience members can obtain before a concert to learn more about the musical works being played, the ensemble, or other performers. In **Chapter 3**, I introduce concert programmes and the most important scholarly discussions surrounding these objects. After providing a brief history of the concert programme, I suggest that – inspired by the theoretical framework of the archive – concert programme scholarship needs to approach these documents more holistically in order to avoid blind spots in their analysis. First, I reflect on existing research on programme notes – meaning the brief, informative texts on the musical works that one can find in such a booklet – and discuss how scholars have examined their content, reception, and writing styles. Afterwards, I investigate how music historians, archivists, and librarians in particular have approached the concert programme from a more encompassing (yet retrospective) perspective, for example by considering how its many contents and styles relate to concert life, music history, and ephemerality. I conclude the chapter by proposing that neither one of these strands of literature is sufficient to comprehend what role concert programmes play in keeping classical music's heritage alive. Instead, I argue that a proper understanding of these sociomaterial artefacts can only be achieved through an empirical investigation into how concert programmes are produced, written, and strategised within concrete musical institutions.

In **Chapter 4**, I take up this task of examining concert programmes empirically. This chapter takes the reader into the concert programmes of the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (VPO). This comparative case study combines archival research into the history of the concert programmes at these two institutions with insights gathered from qualitative interviews with staff on how these objects are currently produced, written, and made. After providing a broader overview of how these two orchestras' concert programmes developed and changed between 1950 and 2019, I conduct a holistic analysis of these artefacts. Rather than focus on the reception of concert programmes on behalf of the audience, I study their production in four themes that emerge

from my analysis: (1) the expectations that the LSO and the VPO have about their respective audiences and how these shape the programmes, as well as the supposed role of programmes as audience engagement tools; (2) the importance of musical expertise in writing programme notes; (3) conventions and changes in language and writing, and how these both open up and manifest musical knowledge; (4) and the programmes' materialities, designs, and imageries. I find that these booklets help the two orchestras to both conserve and renew their institutional identities and traditions in very specific albeit different ways. Consequently, how concert programmes are involved in the conservation and renewal of classical music depends on situated institutional identities, histories, contexts, and practices: at the VPO, an ensemble catering to an exclusive subscription audience, concert programmes actively safeguard and conserve the ensemble's identity and traditions, and in doing so adhere these objects' supposed focus on *Bildung* – here, of a local (yet internationally renowned) musical culture. The concert programmes of the LSO, in contrast, help to renew the orchestra's identity by increasingly corresponding to the self-given task of becoming more accessible and visible in a globalised cultural landscape. This has, for example, also affected the programmes' use of musical terminology, potentially shifting well-established ways of communicating and writing about music.

Chapter 5 opens Part II of this book, which revolves around classical music streaming apps. In it, I present discussions around online music streaming and the platforms that are significant for a classical music context. Notably, I focus on academic studies into well-established ways and platforms of online music streaming via smart devices – such as music streaming on Spotify and Apple Music – rather than on research into the relatively new practice of live streaming concerts. Starting with mobility, everydayness, and ubiquity, I move to the 'problem' of musical abundance, practices of curating taste and processes of personalisation and recommendation, as well as the idea of discovery. I end with insights of streaming scholarship about digital materiality and collecting. With the help of the literature and the theoretical framework, I suggest that online music streaming apps can be seen as digital archives of classical music. Based on this, I argue that online or 'cloud' streaming can potentially expand classical music's online existence, dispersing the idealist aesthetics and ways of organisation within which this music has so far been firmly structured.

Chapter 6 complements these insights with an empirical analysis of the two classical music streaming apps IDAGIO and Primephonic. Based on a thorough content analysis of the two apps, which I position in dialogue with qualitative interviews of former staff of the two companies, I show how these two services catalogue, organise, and present classical music. Thereby, I critically interrogate the supposed tension between the 'pastness' of the music and the 'newness' of these technologies. In my empirical analysis, I take to heart Jonathan Sterne's (2003) plea to 'wonder less at the purportedly revolutionary aspects of new sound technologies and more at their most banal dimensions' (p. 338). In line with this, I examine the basic functions and features of the two apps. Five aspects emerge as particularly significant in doing so:

(1) the catalogue and how it is organised by the respective platforms; (2) the seminal role of albums on the apps; (3) the potentials and challenges of playlists and playlisting; (4) the introduction of mood-players and radio functions; (5) and the possibilities of collecting classical music online, as well as the implementation of algorithmic recommendation systems. I find that how IDAGIO and Primephonic organise and present classical music combines different medial traditions, such as the conventions of online music streaming in other musical genres, mixtaping, or more traditional ways of listening to classical music (like via CDs and LPs). I conclude that the two services amplify three aspects in particular: classical music's traditional organisational forms and its recorded history; the commodification connected to the two companies' technological start-up cultures; and the issue of utilising music as a means for self-regulation and self-enhancement.

In **Chapter 7**, I move from the previously digital realm to the embodied realm, drawing attention to the role of musical instruments – in this case, the violoncello – in the conservation and renewal of classical music. Marking the beginning of Part III in this book, this chapter takes the reader into the world of higher classical music education and what it means to learn to play an instrument professionally. In order to understand how musicians and their instruments become part of classical music and its tradition, I first present a brief history of the European conservatoire as a site of musical learning and teaching. With help from scholarly literature – of both historical and ethnographic nature – I discuss this institution's pedagogies and the philosophical ideas behind them. From there, I move to the especially relevant phenomenon of one-to-one tuition, also known as the master–apprentice model in other fields of craftwork. I reflect on the challenges and potentialities that scholars have observed when main subject teachers (for example cello teachers) teach music to a student in individual and intimate lessons, often for a period of several years. In doing so, I show how conservatoires do not only engage in the canonisation or conservation of classical music; they also engage in canonising particular teaching pedagogies and models. In the final section of this chapter, I make a claim to leave the idea of musicians and instruments as invisible 'transmitters' of this music behind. Inspired by post-humanist and new materialist literature, I opt for an understanding of the engagement between musician and instrument that is more nuanced, complicated, and agential in negotiating this music's heritage than the encountered conservatoire pedagogies suggest. I draw attention to the oft-dismissed relational engagement between musicians and their instruments. Importantly, this embodied archive rests neither in the musician nor the instrument only; rather, it rests in their intersection and their ongoing engagement.

Chapter 8 then invites the reader into the Conservatorium Maastricht to witness this relationality themselves. I first share my analysis of observations and qualitative interviews conducted in one-to-one cello classes at the institution within the course of one academic year, showing how different engagements between musicians and their instruments may result in different ways of teaching and learning. While this part of the chapter focuses on the lessons and the interactions between students, teachers, and their instruments, I widen

my look and draw attention to the role that these instruments play in the students' lives. I find that these young musicians' cellos are not merely tools to perform artworks, but that these musical works become a means for the students to mediate their relationship to the instrument, uncovering also the insecurities and unknowns in it. In the second half of the chapter, I move to the Cello Biennale Amsterdam – a festival that celebrates and revolves around the cello as an instrument – in order to explore more alternative engagements between cellists and their cellos. Based on online observations and qualitative interviews with participants of the event (specifically its eighth edition), I argue that the Cello Biennale is a site where tradition and innovation meet and reconcile. In order to show how, I first analyse a more traditional element of the festival – the National Cello Competition – and present how the competition is continuously opened up through the commissioning of new and contemporary works and arrangements. I then move to a more experimental concert of the festival, the Cello Octet's performance of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Cello Band*. I discuss how the Dutch ensemble recalibrates and deconstructs well-established interactions between cellists and cellos, for example by developing new choreographies and involving other objects. At the end of the chapter, I conclude that by understanding musical instruments as significant, sounding others, this embodied archive – if taken seriously – might shift long-standing ideas of craftsmanship in classical music practice.

Chapter 9 draws together the insights collected in this book. Throughout, the empirical case studies have demonstrated how artefacts or technologies in classical music are involved in both conserving and opening up this music and its tradition in situated, specific ways. This further demonstrates the intertwinement of processes of conservation and change when it comes to the question of how art exists. On the basis of my empirical research, I conclude that the question of innovation in classical music is a question of conservation: how to conserve and take care not merely of the musical works but also classical music's many heterogeneous practitioners, materials, and institutions (who are also located outside of the concert event)? This heterogeneity demonstrates that conservation and innovation work need to start from classical music as a lived tradition and situated artistic practice, subsequently making clear that conservation and care are fundamental part of any kind of meaningful innovation. By understanding the artefacts or technologies in my case studies as archives, the theoretical framework borrowed from contemporary art conservation studies helps to illustrate something that music or art sociology cannot: it underlines and reveals the contingencies and dependencies that practitioners negotiate when wanting to simultaneously conserve and open up this heritage. It also becomes clear that every archive offers and incorporates a range of potentials that are or are not (yet) explored but which emerge from these situated practices, materials, and actors. This leads me to my main conclusion: I would like to propose that the task of classical music innovation – both for classical music practitioners as well as researchers – is the task to explore and realise the potentials that rest in such classical music archives. Classical music innovators need to *dig out and build on* rather than *break away from*.

In the chapter, I continue to offer concrete suggestions for innovations that employ these theoretical insights in the context of the three case studies: (1) the concert programmes at the LSO and VPO; (2) the classical music streaming apps IDAGIO and Primephonic; and (3) the embodied relationships between musicians and their instruments, specifically in higher music education. I reflect on the potentials and openings pertaining to these situated cases, and in doing so provide an exemplary account of how researchers or practitioners might use these theoretical insights in practice. Based on this, I then propose three tools for classical music innovators to help them explore and discover these archival potentialities. I call these tools archival lenses: (1) the lens of *actualising institutional history and identity*, (2) the lens of *actualising (inter)mediality*, and (3) the lens of *actualising embodied relations*. While each lens is inspired by the respective case studies, they are to be understood as overlapping starting points for observation and exploration, to be further refined and expanded by classical music innovators. As this book has aimed for an exchange between classical music and contemporary art conservation, I then move to the lessons that each case study holds for museum and conservation professionals, further seeking to foster this interdisciplinary dialogue (see also this dissertation's 'Impact paragraph'). Connected to that, I subsequently reflect on the role – or rather, the importance – of interdisciplinary collaborations in the conservation of the performing arts. Here, I also draw on insights from my research process and embedment in the Maastricht Centre for the Innovation of Classical Music. I end with an insight as simple and as complex as can be when glancing into the future of classical music: the conviction that the classical music community cannot – and need not – find answers to the question of innovation all by itself. The contemporary art museum, it turns out, is the perfect place to get to work.