Three views of the 'musical work': bibliographical control in the music domain

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Introduction

Subject specialism within library and information science deals with, among other things, resources and documents peculiar to that specialism or domain. It is important for subject specialists to be aware of the nature and particular attributes of such resources, which may have important consequences for the practicalities of cataloguing and resource description and other library/information services. This paper examines an example from the music domain: the 'musical work'. In the spirit of Birger Hjørland's domain analysis, it is examined from a number of aspects: epistemology, terminology and discourse analysis, and specialized indexing and retrieval (Hjørland 2002). Three 'views' are taken: philosophical and conceptual analysis of the nature of a musical work; the activity of editing music, with emphasis on its relevance to the cataloguing of music resources; and the bibliographical control of music.

The significance of the study is threefold. Examination of the nature of the musical work has the potential: to improve practice in the description of items in music collections; to show relations between the bibliographic description of music and related activities such as the editing of works; and to allow a critique of some newly emerging standards for general bibliographic description.

The study is reported in full in a Masters dissertation, where fuller details of all aspects may be found (Pietras 2012).

Methods

An analysis of the literature was carried out focusing on three topics: the philosophical analysis of the ontology of the 'musical work'; the field of music editing; and the bibliographical control of music. Relevant material was identified through a search for 'works', in both musical and bibliographical contexts, in literature databases and in the catalogues of music libraries.

Both monograph and journal literature was examined; relevant material was largely found to be in the English language, with the exception of the works of the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden. His work, dealing with phenomenological approaches to the musical work, proved to be central to this study, with much additional material found through citations. By contrast, relatively little has been written on the establishment of the text of musical works for publishing, but an active group of practitioners, working either directly for publishers or independently, was identified. To supplement the literature analysis, unstructured interviews were carried out with two such editors, and a detailed analysis was made of the critical commentaries published

with the Urtext edition prepared by Jonathan Del Mar of Beethoven's *Symphonies* (*Symphony no. 1* in particular) (Del Mar 1997-2008). The literature of the bibliographic control of the musical work was found to be primarily concerned with modeling of entities by FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) and FRAD (Functional Requirements for Authority Data), and with the new RDA (Resource Description and Access) standard, as discussed later. The most significant authors here are Richard Smiraglia and Sherry Velucci, whose work has proved central to this aspect of the study. To supplement the analysis of this literature, the student was able to reflect on her own experience as a music cataloguer.

The term 'musical work' is widely used within the domain, by a variety of participants, and with a variety of meanings. Because an analysis of this variety is the main subject of the study, no attempt was made initially to define or restrict the meaning of the term. All other musical concepts referred to, including 'editing' and 'notation', were understood as defined in the standard reference source, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (online version).

Conceptual view of the musical work

There have been numerous and diverse philosophical and theoretical analyses of the concept of the musical work. Some of the main ones are briefly summarized here; a more detailed discussion is given by Pietras (2012). These conceptual analyses, though theoretical in nature, are of direct relevance to the practical activities of a music information specialist. The nature of musical works, perhaps more than any other form of bibliographic entity, has been examined extensively within multiple contexts, and there is no single definition or understanding to encompass it, to the extent that one may doubt whether authors using the phrase are referring to the same entity or phenomenon. Nonetheless, it is clear that musical works, though they evidently have the status of documents, information resources, and works, and so may be subjected to bibliographic analysis and description, have unique qualities. These are associated with the ways in which a musical work may be, indeed must be, interpreted and instantiated, in performance, and the ways in which this changes the nature of the document; for a more detailed analysis, see Smiraglia (2006) and Pietras (2012).

Several authors have questioned the relationship between the composer, the performance, and 'work', focusing on the extent to which it is possible to understand the composer's intentions by what is written in the score and mediated through conventions of notation. Davis (1991) presents two main, and contrasting, viewpoints:

1. the work is still the same, even when performed on different instruments than those intended by the composer
2. to be considered the 'same', the work must be performed in exact accordance with the composer's prescription in every respect

This distinction obviously has great implications for bibliographic description of music; an arranged piece of music will be considered as belonging to a 'work family', or not, according to which interpretation is accepted. Davis argues that although the idea of a

musical work is sufficiently stable for it to be a focus of attention, its nature changes with cultural, sociological, historical and economic circumstances. His views are typical of those who debate the difficulty of understanding and identifying works with a significant historical distance; for discussions on 'historical performance' see Kivy (1995), Davis (2001) and Butt (2002).

Other authors focus on the difficulty of establishing the 'text' of a musical work, considered as written instructions. Treitler (1993), for example, follows the epistemology of Karl Popper regarding musical composition as having "a very strange sort of existence" (Popper and Eccles 1997, pp 449-50); as being neither score nor performances, but rather objects existing in the 'World 3' of objective knowledge (Bawden and Robinson 2012, chapter 3) described by a variety of World 1 documents left by the composer. Treitler argues that the analysis of all possible documents related to a particular work is necessary in order to ascertain the intentions of the composer, and hence the true nature of the work. This idea of presenting all possible variations of a composer's text suggests a need for bibliographic control within music to make explicit reference to all published and unpublished versions of works. Further, Treitler's ontology points to a relation between a musical work and its recordings. A recording plays a similar role to a printed text, and has a status equivalent to a performance, but it has a different mode of existence, and its own historical, cultural, social and economic discourse. It can therefore be considered as a third entity, equivalent to score and performance, with implications for bibliographic control in the music domain. Treitler also offers an insight into the relations between 'concept' and 'practice' in the domain of music. Concepts develop historically, but also play a regulatory role in communication, the validation of practice and the development of shared understanding. The concept of musical work has historically been strongly influenced by performance practice, as well as by economic, social and artistic developments. The musical work as we may understand it today would not have had the same meaning in the past. However, an understanding of the historical context of the work allows current library/information practitioners to bring together materials associated with it, using a broad definition of 'work'.

A rather extreme view, that a musical work changes ontologically over time to the extent that it comprises a different entity with each performance, is put forward by authors such as Jacobs (1990), who sees the score as merely a blueprint which the performers develop into something unique depending on their skills and on the environment. In similar vein, Ridley (2003) argues that a reflective performance of a work may change one's perception of it, or perhaps rather it changes the work itself. Of course, this sort of perspective makes any organization of conventional musical documents problematic, and would dictate that printed materials were ignored or marginalized in favour of the archiving of performances in some way (as we shall see later, this is in fact a practical proposition).

Still other authors take a semiological approach; see, for example, Natiez (1990), Taruskin (1995) and Goehr (1998). This views a musical work as something interposed between an 'author' (the composer) and a 'reader' (performer, critic, theorist, listener, etc.), being interpreted in the processes both of its writing and all subsequent use. This raises issues of how much a performer of, still less a listener to, a musical work can, or indeed should, seek to understand the composer's intentions. It also goes against any fixed form or meaning of 'work'. Writing from a library/information perspective, Smiraglia (2001, p 25) points out that "the more 'a work' is present in culture, the more it is exposed to reinterpretation". So what is the work to be described?

Last, but by no means least, we should mention the phenomenological approach to the musical work, exemplified by Ingarden, a philosopher of the school of Husserl, whose writings have been very influential in the philosophy of music, and has been quoted by many of the authors noted above; for a recent translation of his main work, originally written in 1928, see Ingarden (1989). To simplify a sophisticated analysis, Ingarden seeks to examine the nature of the phenomenon of a musical work, as distinct from a performance. The work is a unique entity, enduring in time, and represented by a score, which conveys, however imperfectly, the composer's intention, and which has spatial, temporal, acoustic and cognitive aspects. His analysis of the musical work is particularly significant for library/information science. The complex nature of the phenomenon is reflected in the multiplicity of actors, activities and discourses within the domain of music. Central to his argument, Ingarden notes the way in which we refer to the 'same' musical work for convenience, ignoring the true complexity of the phenomenon.

Ingarden's work is of particular importance for a consideration of the musical work in information domain terms for a number of reasons. First, it directly influences the way in which works are to be described as bibliographic entities, with performances and scores seen as instantiation of a central musical work. Second, it matches with the idea of the 'information chain' (Robinson 2009, Bawden and Robinson 2012, chapter 10), since it envisages a work created by a composer, instantiated by writing and performance, and then interpreted by different notations, performances, analysis, appreciation etc., all of which have associated documents. Third, the phenomenological approach in which Ingarden's work is steeped has been noted as a valid approach to library/information studies in general; see, for example, Budd (2005) and Bawden and Robinson (2012, chapter 3).

It is clear that the idea of a musical work, far from being a straightforward idea readily associated with a particular type of document, is a complex and contested concept. Even if we restrict ourselves to the idea that a work may be identified with an original text produced by a composer, there are considerable complexities. These are associated with the editing of music materials, invariably necessary when a work has a long life-time, and we now examine the editor's view of a musical work.

Editorial view of the musical work

As is implied by what has already been said, the idea of the musical work as a text cannot rely on the assumption that the composer's writing is the only source of the work. The historical distance from the original composing process, and the multiplicity of printed editions often published with a commercial aim rather than for purposes of scholarly accuracy, often cause problems for musicians choosing sources for performance, and equally for librarians developing collections and describing their contents. It is therefore relevant to consider the editing of music, meaning the establishing of the best text, and its preparation for printing, and its consequences for the music information domain.

There is a strong inter-relation between the editing of music and its bibliographic description; the first about establishing a suitable text of the work, the second about describing it. There is also a practical link: editors require good catalogues to identify materials necessary for the editing task, while librarians and cataloguers need appropriate editions of works. Editors depend on the knowledge and skill of librarians and curators to identify relevant resources, which, in this context, may include such things as manuscripts, letters, concert programmes, annotated scores, early editions, and many more.

Grier (1996) and Caldwell (1995) identify four general aspects of the editing process: location of sources; inspection and description; transcription; and gathering and presentation of additional information. All are obviously involved with documentary resources, and all invoke the question of how much, and what kind of, information can and should be associated with a work, and how it should be presented; the last leads to vexed question of appropriate notation, particularly for older works (Caldwell 1995). Formal methods of comparison and analysis of documents, such as those termed 'stemmatic filiation', for comparison of resources which may contain errors, and 'contamination', to combine documents to produce a single comprehensive version, are used (Grier 1996); an example is given by Del Mar (1997-2008). The resulting linkages and 'family trees' of documents in the music domain have an obvious resonance with modern developments in bibliographic control, discussed later. Both editors and cataloguers have the task of identifying, locating and assessing resources, and then establishing a text and describing a resource. A full understanding of the work of editors is essential for library/ information practitioners in this domain, since the establishing of a reliable text, with associated information, is an essential first step in bibliographic description.

We now move on to consider resource description in the music domain, having in mind the issues of the nature of musical works, and of the editing process, already discussed. The FRBR framework for bibliographic control, with its explicit reference to 'work', has an obvious and strong relevance to the bibliographic control of music, and particularly to the connecting together of resources beyond the description of a specific item, as we have seen to be of particular importance in this domain.

Bibliographic view of the musical work

There is a considerable body of literature on the particular issues and problems of the bibliographical control in the music domain, summarized and analysed by Pietras (2012); only a selection of important contributions are mentioned here. Good overviews of the issues in general are given by Smiraglia (1989, 2006); the same author gives an account of the 'work' as a general bibliographical concept, including a discussion of music resources informed by various of the theories mentioned above, including those of Nattiez and Goehr (Smiraglia 2001).

The essential problems faced in practice are how to decide what constitutes a musical work, where the boundaries are to drawn to denote it as a discrete item, and how much information is to be given about it. The analyses of the theorists mentioned above give some guidance. Treitler's ontology, for example, relates the work to score and performance, giving the score three possible roles, not exclusive, of 'identification', 'instruction', and/or 'exemplification', while the significance of his insistence of including all possible variations has already been noted. Ingarden's analysis of the complexity of the idea of 'work' enables a better understanding, and hence description, of an instantiation. In particular, his emphasis on the character of works which find realisation in a variety of activities can serve as an intellectual background for the process of organizing music information resources.

It is worth emphasising that considerations of this kind are not purely theoretical exercises; library/information practitioners need to understand the contextual and temporal aspects of musical works, in order to provide effective services to users. The context and setting need to be understood for all the forms of music information resources: manuscripts, printed editions, scores annotated by performers, notes, letters etc.; performances, and artefacts relating to them, including programs, press releases, critical reviews, photographs, etc.; and recordings in various formats, including video recordings.

Smiraglia and Thomas (1998) address the issue of defining relations between bibliographical entities, whose multiplicity is caused by their diverse purpose: study performance, etc. Vellucci (1997) made an empirical examination of such relations, by conducting a detailed analysis of bibliographical entities, their descriptions, and the relations between them in the holdings of a music library. She found that music materials do indeed exhibit a high proportion of inter-relationships, with linkages serving diverse purposes, but that these linkages were often not made explicit in bibliographic records. While there have certainly been changes in the music library environment since the study was carried out, its major findings are still valid.

This is significant because in most cases users of music collections will require a particular item because of both its content, e.g. a piece of music for an instrument or ensemble in an arrangement or particular edition, and its usability, e.g. miniature score for study, full score and orchestral parts for performance, piano reduction of the

orchestra, vocal score for the purpose of rehearsal, etc. As Vellucci points out, musical editions may contain additional information, such as technical requirements, list of instruments required, a history of the piece, notes on the composer, a list of sources used for editing, a dictionary of relevant musical terms, etc. An example of explicit linkage is the uniform title given in field 240 of MARC21, through which the various physical formats of one work, and items with a different title, but containing the same work, are brought together. An alternative, and explicit, way of dealing with such relations is exemplified by the computer ontologies have been developed at IRCAM, Paris, to connect all information in any format on musical works composed, performed or recorded in a particular institution (Pietras 2012).

It is also clear that there is a variety of relationships, and of supplementary information, among musical materials which is not present in catalogue records. An example would be the edition of a score used for a recording, rarely mentioned in the formal information provided with the recording, but which might be known through interviews or performance practice. This kind of information will be known by expert users and by experienced practitioners; the kind of detailed knowledge essential for the subject specialist library/information role. Also important for this role is an understanding of the idiosyncracies of user behaviour in specialised domains; an example for this area is the use made of scores by amateur and professional musicians (Winget 2008). An awareness of current economic, social, academic and cultures factors in the domain is also essential, represented in the bibliographical control area by, for example, the popularity of certain recordings, the status of particular authors, recordings and editions of music, and by the presence of certain repertoire in performances. The social nature of works is also relevant, as in the desirability of quoting the name of the editor of a score, so as to allows users to decide if this particular take on the text of the work is appropriate for their needs.

Much recent discussion about improving bibliographic control in music has centred on the development of the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR), and the associated Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD) which provides standard forms for the names or people, organisations, works, etc. (Bawden and Robinson 2012, chapter 6, Patton 2009, Zhang and Salaba 2009). Together these provide a framework for the modelling of bibliographic entities, based on the several types of entity: work, expression, manifestation, item, person (and corporate body), object, event, and place. This appears to be a very helpful innovation for the music domain, in dealing with issues such as the multiplicity of formats of musical scores, the allocation of pieces by composer, instrumentation, etc., and the connection of resources in their historical, analytical, critical, technical and performance background. It is interesting to note the concerns about the definition of entities in FRBR (Zhang and Salaba 2009); these mimic, though in a theoretically rigorous way, the issues noted above, relating to the ontology of musical works. It may be that the deep analysis of entities in the music domain may have lessons for the FRBR framework more generally. This has a practical significance, as the RDA standard for cataloguing and document description, which is

based on FRBR principles, becomes widely used for resource description (Anhalt and Stewart 2012).

However, models such as FRBR are not a panacea for providing information and relationships not included in formal publication and dissemination data. An example is the relation between a score ('expression') and a performance (also 'expression'); any particular performance would involve the reading of the score in a particular edition ('manifestation') by the conductor ('item' – the copy of the score with that conductor's markings. In order to state explicitly the connection between the performance and the text captured in a recording of a particular performance, the information on the source of the score would need to be provided, because it makes a difference to the interpretation of the work; it would not, however, typically be available. Printed music and recordings (both 'manifestation') have common features of the work (title/author) embedded within them, and these are the only features brining them together.

Concepts reflect activities within a domain, and allow the organizing of knowledge within it (Hjørland 2009). Within knowledge organization systems, concepts can lose the contextual domain setting, so that it appears that they have fixed meaning and universal qualities. The analysis of the idea of a musical work shows that this concept, central to the domain of music, and indeed to Western culture, displays a variety of qualities when exposed to philosophical analysis. When developing a systematic approach to bibliographical control, going beyond the arena of formal published documents in order to link in the greater variety of relevant material noted above, explicit attention must be paid to the ways in which a musical work is, by its nature, open to interpretation from the moment it appears as an idea in a composer's mind. Each step in the domain information chain causes the musical work to change, at the same time sustaining the qualities of the individual creation that came to life on a particular date in a particular form. As many authors, including Smiraglia (2006), Goehr (1998) and Talbot (2000) reflect, the moment it enters physical reality, it bears the traces of the cultural and social settings of its creator; for example, a notation system, and the nature of the instruments available at that time. Such traces have significance for any description of the work as an information entity, and bibliographical control systems need to account for them.

Examining discourses, social and institutional in particular, within the music domain suggests that certain concepts have dominance and distinctive roles in particular forms of discourse; see, for example, Goehr (1998) and Talbot (2000). The use of 'work' as an entity seems to relate the FRBR model to those musical discourses which treat the work - rather than the composer, the style of music, and so on - as historically dominant. It is also certainly true that in the literature related to the bibliographical control of music, 'work' has been given a primary position (Smiraglia 2001). It should be remembered, however, that any analysis of bibliographical entities alone will not automatically and necessarily capture the complex conceptual aspects of a musical work discussed above. It will be necessary to explicitly consider these many other issues affecting the

information chain, some of which have been discussed above, if the promise of models such as FRBR and FRAD – in many ways ideally suited to the music domain – is to be fully realized for the benefit of all users of music libraries and information.

Conclusions

Philosophical and conceptual analysis of the idea of the musical work expands the understanding of the idea, and the way in which it functions in the music domain. In particular, the influential phenomenological approach pioneered by Ingarden allows understanding of the intentionality of the activities related to a musical work, and their significance for the information chain and for resource description. The Popperian ontology due to Treitler is also helpful in elucidating the forms of documents relating to the 'work' idea. Analysis of the influence of historical, social, cultural, economic and other contextual factors also contributes to an understanding of the optimal ways of describing and relating documents in the music domain. In particular, it emphasises the need for contextual information which explicitly notes the extent and role of critical involvement, for example performance based on a conscious choice of text. Much of this contextual information is provided by the editing process; a greater awareness of the similarities between, and inter-relation of, the processes of music editing and cataloguing would be beneficial to both sides. This has the potential to improve practices both of the description of items in music collections, and of the editing of the musical works themselves; a synergy which increases the value of the collections.

The music domain can be seen to be particularly rich in domain-specific issues and problems. An appreciation of these, beyond a simple awareness of resources and terminology, is an essential for practitioners in the area; and this will involve engagement with the detailed conceptual arguments presented in this paper. In this respect, music may serve as a particularly clear exemplar for other subject areas and subject specialist information practice.

There are a number of avenues for extension of this kind of study for music information. They include: exploration of concepts developed and shared by music practitioners, and the role of information provision in such developments; further examination of bibliographic entities in music, and its consequences for resource description and information retrieval; and consideration of further lessons from the history of music and its information organization. A detailed analysis of the relation between the editing of musical works and their subsequent bibliographic description is likely to be of particular value.

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