

Integration – Diversification – Focus. Private Collections in Public Music Instrument Museums. Some Notes on the »Collection of Historic Musical Instruments« at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien

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Abstract

In the history of many public musical instrument museums, private collections of aristocrats or wealthy burghers constitute the basis on which large collections have been developed over time. With hindsight, it can be seen that these initial impulses often set the course for a museum's future thematic focus, acquisition politics, and the message of exhibitions. Even today, donations or long-term loans can initiate new principles of collecting and inspire permanent exhibitions. Yet the public museum is faced with a challenge – like Lévi-Strauss said – the *pensées bricoleuses* of individual collectors and the *structures ingénieuses* of the institutionalized and academic collections have to be brought together coherently. Possible strategies may be integration, diversification, and a renewed focus. The silent inclusion of private collections in exhibitions or inventories needs flexible principles concerning a collection's compass; a gradual expansion and a (often short-notice) focus are dependent on additional resources.

Based on selected case studies of the Viennese collection, the present chapter discusses the conditions and the handling of donations and long-term loans in order to show to what extent they define the development of museums and public collections.

Integration – Diversifikation – Fokussierung. Privatsammlungen in öffentlichen Musikinstrumentenmuseen. Anmerkungen zur »Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente« im Kunsthistorischen Museum Wien

In der Historie vieler öffentlicher Musikinstrumentenmuseen bilden private Sammlungen des Adels oder Bürgertums Nuklei, aus denen sich im Verlauf vieler Generationen umfangreiche Sammlungen entwickelten. Diese Initialimpulse erwiesen sich retrospektiv zumeist als unumstößliche Richtungsweiser für die zukünftige thematische Ausrichtung, Akquisitionspolitik und für die Ausstellungsbotschaften der Museen. Auch heute können Widmungen oder langfristige Leihgaben willkommene Anstöße zu neuen inhaltlichen Leitgedanken geben und vermeintlich altbekannte Dauerausstellungen beleben. Das öffentliche Museum wird jedoch vor die Herausforderung gestellt, die – um mit Lévi-Strauss zu sprechen – *pensées bricoleuses* individueller Sammler mit den *structures ingénieuses* des institutionalisierten und wissenschaftlich fundierten Sammelns in Kohärenz zu bringen. Mögliche Strategien hierfür können Integration, Diversifikation und Fokussierung sein. Die stille Einbindung privater Sammlungen in die Inventare oder Ausstellungen verlangt nach flexiblen inhaltlichen Grundstrukturen; eine sukzessive Erweiterung und eine (zumeist kurzfristige) Schwerpunktsetzung sind an zusätzliche Ressourcen gebunden.

Anhand einiger Fallbeispiele aus der Wiener Sammlung sollen die Voraussetzungen für und der Umgang mit Widmungen und Dauerleihgaben diskutiert werden, so dass aufgezeigt werden kann, in wie weit sie die Entwicklung der Museen bzw. öffentlichen Sammlungen (mit)definieren.

From the very beginning, collections of musical instruments have sought to connect the Aristotelian categories of *aísthēsis* and *eídos* with *téchne* and the *idéa* (in the sense of the 'discerning gaze' – *idein*). As such, the musical instrument as a three-dimensional artwork, whose sculptural outer form delights by its contemplative effect, holds an imperfect position. The musical instrument as a comprehensive artwork that transforms numeric relations into musical expression, that unites *physikē* with art and permits technological progress, holds its proper place in the context of the original *mouseion*, as a place of the muses and their arts, of knowledge and of all intrinsic ideas of mankind. A consideration of the eldest inventories of 16th-century chambers of treasures and marvels¹ invites a comparison with the antique institution of the 'temple of the muses' because of their juxtaposition of various objects, including precious works of art and exceptional commodities, mathematical, astronomical and musical instruments, increasing libraries, ethnographic and natural historic specimens and curiosities. Among the founders of the earliest collections are lords who arranged their cabinets individually. The costly lives of their courts were bound to a wide assortment of commodities – as well as the requisite courtly representation with its awe-inspiring insignia – required an organized way of storing these items. Moreover, items that facilitated a better understanding of foreign and own cultures were added. The long-forgotten place of the *mouseion* was evoked in court collections of the late Renaissance; in their midst, *scientia* could be encountered face to face.

The selective presentation of stock items led to their aestheticization, after they had been removed from their original collection and application contexts. As a consequence, the symbolic value of the art-objects that had lost their original function was under permanent transformation. An intuitive understanding of the displayed items became a futile undertaking, and artificial narratives were created in order to offer inventive ways out of the *aporia*. Musical instruments in particular defy symbolic values that are dependent on nar-

atives because they speak through the medium of sound directly to the public, as catalysts of human emotions. They are – literally – technological exceptions, combining *téchne* in the sense of craft and *lógos* in the sense of science and musical language. The musical instrument that is still (or once more) capable of sound transcends its art-, culture- or technology-historical thinghood by enabling sources that have run dry to flow again. It transforms the historical past into a state of permanent existence, transient sounds into immediately perceivable realities.

The two historical nuclei that are captured in the recent inventory of the Sammlung alte Musikinstrumente (SAM; Collection of Historic Musical Instruments) – the cimelia brought together at the court of Archduke Ferdinand II in Tyrol² and the items preserved by the Marchesi degli Obizzi in Padua³ – testify to the different aspirations of musical enthusiasts. At the Tyrolean court and at the castle of Ambras, the princes surrounded themselves mainly with handmade, exclusively designed, unique pieces and valuable gifts dedicated to them, whereas the nobility at castle Catajo delighted in instruments of superb musical quality that proved themselves in daily musical use. In both dynasties, the accumulation of property might have been another motivation for collecting, for »the aim of asset building«⁴ was opportune at all times.

In today's exhibition, the *aísthēsis* and the *eídos* of the Ambras-collection capture the visitor's attention while, in addition, the visitor is stunned by the *téchne* of the items from Catajo, in which the *artes liberales* are united. The well-ordered, once privately owned objects were documented and categorized in historic inventories and transport lists, and their arrival at Vienna and the establishment of the exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Museum (KHM) produced a significant textual focus to the collection considering musical instruments and accessories related to the *Casa de Austria*.

The collection of historic musical instruments benefits from the essential and consistently powerful radiance of its nuclei that – like *kenotrons* – afford a variety of topics to circle around them. At the interface between a restless, fast-paced concert schedule and a permanent, prestigious exhibition of museum pieces of enduring value, these pivotal objects are

1 Early inventories of the collections of the prince-electors of the house of Wettin have survived from 1587, and from 1596 the inventory register of Ferdinand II's possessions at the castle of Ambras has been preserved: Dirk Syndram, Martina Minning (Eds.): Die kurfürstlich-sächsische Kunstkammer in Dresden. Das Inventar von 1587. Dresden 2010. – Archiv der Kunstkammer, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Inventar des Nachlasses von Erzherzog Ferdinand II. (1596), (manuscript) inv. no. KK 6652.

2 Eduard von Sacken: Die K. K. Ambraser-Sammlung. Vienna 1855.

3 Leo Planiscig: Skulpturen und Plastiken des Mittelalters und der Renaissance (Die Estensische Kunstsammlung 1). Vienna 1919.

4 Krzysztof Pomian: Der Ursprung des Museums. Vom Sammeln. Berlin 1988, p. 33.

true treasures in the »city of music«, Vienna, and the »country of music«, Austria, and within their world-famous history of music. Reflection and contemplation, quietness and the immersion in long-forgotten soundscapes, give all visitors unforgettable impressions. The textual focus on the two nuclei that document the roots of courtly instrumental music in medieval and Renaissance Austria forms an ideal starting point for a leisurely stroll through the permanent exhibition in which Austria's music-history is ordered chronologically.

The approaching end of the monarchy allowed the court museums to acquire the estates of the House of Este-Austria, which *expressis verbis* included the musical instruments⁵ that formed a part of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's (1863–1914) so-called »Weltreise«-collection [the collection of the world tour]. The expansion of the two historic nuclei by a younger collection which contained primarily such objects that seemed particularly exotic and were associated with non-European music traditions gave voice to an entirely new aspect that had previously remained foreign to Austria given the Habsburg Eurocentric power politics. With the constitution of an instrument collection by Julius von Schlosser (1866–1938) in 1916 the textual focus on the erstwhile courtly collections was firmly established and an unshakable foundation was laid. The fusion of the three formerly independent nuclei with their individual, object-related orientations and clear fragmentariness led to a new normative core of courtly collections and brought to a close the modern era of founding new collections, whilst a radically new, scientifically well thought-out museum structure made obsolete the former incidental arrangements that, nevertheless, formed precisely articulated, yet autonomous systems.⁶

Forthwith acquisitions were made in order to provide the sumptuous exhibition with fresh nuances. Schlosser purchased a number of musical instruments from the private collection of the artist Friedrich Ritter von Amerling (1803–

1887), whose widow administered his estate until her own death in 1914. Guided by the altruistic ideal of patronage, his collection was now used to benefit young, unestablished artists. The renowned painter Amerling, whose creative energy found an outlet in his collector's passion, cultivated his life style by surrounding himself with select masterpieces and art objects. In the salon of his »Schlössl« [small castle] he exchanged ideas with well-known writers and musicians, and shared in the discussions of prominent exponents of disciplines related to the visual arts. As a private collector, he was successful in generating aesthetic connections, some of which survived into the Collection of Historic Musical Instruments. Here, the harpsichord *Salodiensis* (inv. no. SAM 630) with its imposing lid-paintings and the diligently crafted ivory oboe from Jacob Denner's workshop (inv. no. SAM 318) could now be admired.⁷ Although the visual appeal of these items did not broaden the museum's courtly emphasis, it enabled the diversification of the inventory and the exhibition.

Schlosser used the topos »Alt Wien« [old Vienna] to document the tradition of Viennese instrument-making, broaching the issue of the applied arts⁸ in an explicit manner for the first time and providing a museum platform especially for wind instruments. The careful craftsmanship, technical progress, and physical principles that led to modern instrument-making and influenced the Viennese music-making tradition for generations with its specific orchestral sound, retrospectively labelled as the »Wiener Klangstil« [Viennese sound style], has since evolved into another core concern for the collection and its scientific documentation. Consequently, the topos »Alt Wien« did not exist in isolation but interacted with the textual nucleus of the courtly collections and touched upon different subareas, such as the court's music chapel, its orchestras, instrument-makers, and those awarded titles by the court. Thus, these items were integrated, at least in part, into the collection's initial focus.

Furthermore, »Alt Wien« proved receptive for later acquisitions: some of the woodwind instruments from the private collection of Franz X. Kodeischka (1875–1949), who once restored individual objects of the museum, came into the museum in the mid-20th century partly as dedicated gifts, partly as purchased items.⁹ Instruments by renowned wind instru-

5 Beatrix Darmstädter: The beginnings and development of the Collection of Historic Musical Instruments of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. In: *Il Capitale Culturale* 14, 2016, pp. 173–192. – Beatrix Darmstädter: Julius von Schlosser und die »neu geschaffene Sammlung historischer Musikinstrumente«. In: Proceedings of the symposium »Julius von Schlosser, Internationale Tagung zum 150. Geburtstag«, organized by the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien and the Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien, 6 and 7 Oct. 2016. Vienna [in print].

6 Claude Lévi-Strauss: *Das wilde Denken* (Suhrkamp Taschenbuch-Wissenschaft 14). Transl. by Hans Naumann. 17th ed. Frankfurt (Main) 2016, p. 25.

7 Darmstädter 2016 (note 5), p. 177.

8 *Ibid.*

9 Archives of the SAM/KHM, file 110/2003.

ment makers such as Stephan Koch (1772–1828), Franz Schöllnast (1775–1844), Johann Tobias Uhlmann (1778–1838), and Joseph Hajek (1849–1926) give an unmistakably loud voice to the Viennese tradition of instrument-making within the museum.

The celebrations held by the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (GdM) in Vienna on the Haydn Memorial Day in 1932 provided the framework for radio recordings that made the sound of those instruments that are related to Haydn available to a broad audience.¹⁰ Victor Luithlen (1901–1987), then amanuensis in the archives of the GdM, participated in the recording and received some early encouragement for the later (multimedia) museum education activities which he was to put into practice after his relocation to the Collection of Historic Musical Instruments. Under his leadership, a newly established concert series with strong impact on the Early Music movement in Austria as well as guided tours and introductory talks enjoyed great popularity. From 1939 onwards, the concert-activities were encouraged by the exhibition's politically imposed expansion by taking into account loans from the GdM, the Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum in Linz, and other institutions. The items brought to the KHM were largely spared the catastrophe of the Second World War and could be preserved for posterity; in some cases, they were put into playing condition again following some conservation work. These loans were crucial to the attractiveness of the museum's education programs and exhibitions at the time – first, at the Palace Pallavicini, and later in the Neue Burg. After 1950, legally binding loan contracts were issued for these objects; and since 1947, previously assigned loans have been returned to their owners.

Contrary to present regulations that prohibit active collecting activities by museum employees because of unavoidable conflicts of interest,¹¹ until the second half of the 20th century it was not uncommon to encounter directors of public museums in their own private collections. The amateur musician Julius von Schlosser enjoyed participating in private musical performances and he had a private instrument collection at his disposal. It contained violoncelli and flutes for his personal use, as well as items from Bulgaria and the southern

Slav region, woodwind instruments produced by Viennese makers, including objects made by the master builder Karl Buchegger, an employee of the KHM, and some items by German manufacturers. In 1939, Schlosser dedicated 20 objects¹² to the SAM which he had formerly directed. Primarily, these instruments augmented the inventory of the »Weltreise-Objekte« (world tour items) which formed the starting point for the ethnomusicological collection and complemented the topos »Alt Wien«.

In recent years, donations (or rather, acquisitions from funds of favourable donors and friends of the museum) have become increasingly important because of the smaller budgets in the culture sector. Thanks to the monetary support of Gertrude Kastner (1926–2012), items from the private collection of Helmut Czakler (1946–2015) were acquired, closing gaps within the exhibition, providing illustrative material, and – not least – strengthening the items relating to the Early Music movement¹³ – an essential conceptual focus that has gradually developed over the past 20 years. The idea to this textual focus was already inherent in the permanent exhibition which opened in 1993, in which the revival of the Early Music was displayed on a small scale. Close cooperations with academic and artistic projects in the field of performance practice and the involvement in restoration ventures (some of which led to high-quality replicas) have expanded this aspect of the exhibition and left its trace in the inventory. Moreover, the increasing interest of visitors and music enthusiasts in allegedly »original sounds« has contributed to this trend.

The textual diversification that initially arose from a marginal exhibition theme was also fostered by Alice (b. 1930) and Nikolaus Harnoncourt (1929–2016), who donated instruments of the *Concentus Musicus Wien* to the museum.¹⁴

Another diversification took place in 2012 when a private collector presented items of his harp collection to the museum.¹⁵ The museum made public these new acquisitions in

¹⁰ Wiener Bilder 10, 6 March 1932, p. 11.

¹¹ The International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics for Museums (2017), § 8.16, URL: <http://icom-oesterreich.at/publikationen/icom-code-ethics> [8.6.2017].

¹² Archives of the SAM/KHM, inventory register, pp. 40, 54–57.

¹³ For instance inv. no. SAM 1205 (Carl L. Röhlig: *Orphica*, Vienna, 1795), inv. no. SAM 1206 (Franz K. Bartl: *Abhandlung von der Tastenharmonica*, Brno, 1798), inv. no. SAM 1330 (*Lebendes Bild mit Stahlzinkenwerk*, Vienna, c. 1860), inv. no. SAM 1344 (copy *claviorganum*, Josua Pock (1591), Schleibach, mid-20th cent.), inv. no. SAM 1326 (city of Vienna in c. 1845, model) etc.

¹⁴ Archives of the SAM/KHM, file 26/2003.

¹⁵ Archives of the SAM/KHM, file 49/2007.

a small special exhibition which strongly enriched the current discourse between musicians, organologists, and ethnomusicologists. Because of spatial limitations, the self-contained special exhibition could not be included into the permanent exhibition in full. Consequently, the curators took the decision to emphasise the folk music in the former Habsburg crownlands that already featured in the original »Weltreise«-collection and has grown with further new acquisitions.

At the turn of the 20th century, Ludwig Tröstler (1907–2005) donated objects from his private collection to the museum, and his widow Anni entrusted instruments and manuscripts of famous Viennese musicians – the brothers Schrammel – to the museum.¹⁶ These items have been integrated into the historical focus »Alt Wien«.

A small part of the collection owned by Karl Michael Schreinzer (1884–1960) has become part of this sub-section, too. The items were bought at auction in 2007, thanks to the support of the passionate sponsor Gertrude Kastner.¹⁷

Niklas Maaks famously described permanent loans as »häßliche Tante des Geschenks«¹⁸ (the ugly aunt of gifts) because of the resulting costs and other obligations for the museum, and especially in light of the lender's stipulated right of redemption – but this aphorism applies here only in part. Of course, displaying the loan, caring for its conservation, and including it in multimedia education programs, requires investments. Yet the loans increase the exhibition's appeal, provide a stimulus to curators, art educators and visitors to consider the exhibition from new perspectives, they inspire the public to visit the museum, and they can be used for publicity and public relations. The indirect profitability that resulted from the exhibition's raised value undoubtedly payed off these costs. In the SAM, loans from the GdM that build permanent bridges between the courtly music culture and the living conditions and work of important Austrian musicians have proved to be extremely valuable, as have loans from other private collectors.

Franz Liszt's (1811–1886) last grand piano¹⁹ – a major attraction – was part of the »piano virtuoso of the Romantic period« exhibition and helped to shed new light on Sigismund Thalberg's (1812–1871) instrument,²⁰ encouraging the museum to progressive, international restoration projects. Sometimes loans facilitate a long-hoped for diversification: for visitors they might, for instance, open up new paths towards the history of Austrian jazz²¹ or they might stimulate them to compare different regional traditions in wind instrument-making.²² In addition to such conceptual arguments, an estimate of expenses constitutes a crucial factor in the decision to accept or refuse a permanent loan. Reasonable expenses usually generate benefits not only for the lending party and those borrowing an item, but also for the object itself. The need to keep the instrument under optimum conditions at a highly safe place is likely to concur with the lender's own interests, for their item usually will achieve a value enhancement. Knowing about the mechanisms of the art market, and as a result of their affinity with the museum, several outstanding objects in private possession often find their way from a long-time display into the inventory of a public collection.

From 2003 on many visitors, among them concert goers, musicians, musicologists and instrument makers, have been pleased to see the string quartet by Jacob Stainer (1619–1683), and the violoncello by Giovanni Battista Grancino (1637–1709) that belonged to the private collection of Herbert and Evelyn Axelrod.²³ The conservational condition of these instruments allows their active use,²⁴ and they complement the inventory of the museum perfectly. Moreover, Axelrod offered the »Sunrise«, »Ex-Hellier« and »Ex-Ebersholt/

19 Fortepiano, Erard, Paris, 1862, op. no. 36052.

20 Donation by Francesca Ferrara Pignatelli Principessa di Strongoli, fortepiano, Erard, Paris, 1861, op. no. 33389 (inv. no. SAM 1200).

21 Bass saxophone, Kohlerts Söhne, Graslitz, c. 1930, played in the band of the Austrian jazz pioneer Leo Jaritz (1908–1989).

22 For instance the repeatedly modified soprano saxophone, Edouard Sax, Paris, 1st quarter of the 20th century in comparison with a clarinet of nickel silver from the Austrian Uhlmann-workshop (inv. no. SAM 1306) and an unsigned alto saxophone manufactured in Germany (inv. no. SAM 333).

23 Violins inv. nos. SAM 1068 (Absam, after 1650) and SAM 1069 (Absam, 1671), the viola inv. no. SAM 1070 (Absam, 1678) and the violoncello inv. no. SAM 1071 (Absam, after 1665), and the violoncello, Giovanni B. Grancino, inv. no. SAM 1072 (Milan, 1699).

24 The instruments have been played in concerts in the collection's marble hall on 17 May 2009, on 9 May 2010, and on 15 Nov. 2015.

16 Violins owned by Joseph and Johann Schrammel, Carl Zach, Vienna c. 1883 (inv. nos. SAM 1087, SAM 1089), letter by Joseph Schrammel concerning his violin, manuscript, Vienna, 1895 (inv. no. SAM 1088).

17 Archives of the SAM/KHM, file 147/2000.

18 Cited in Katrin Louise Holzmann: Sammler und Museen. Kooperationsformen der Einbindung von privaten zeitgenössischen Kunstsammlungen in die deutsche Museumslandschaft. Wiesbaden 2016, p. 121.

Ex-Menuhin« violins²⁵ as loans to the museum, where these outstanding instruments were on display in the heart of the stringed instrument exhibition for eight years. Among organologists, there is no need to explain why the »ugly aunts«, as Maak would call them, turned out to be fascinating and highly attractive visual »top models« of the museum that proved to be a true magnet for international visitors.

In 2014, an extraordinary opportunity arose when the widow of Karl Scheit (1909–1993) wanted to know his exceptional lute and guitar collection kept in a safe environment and lasting storage for future generations.²⁶ The co-operation with the museum earmarked, initially, the integration of the loaned items into the exhibition. Today's visitors are fascinated by the world's most comprehensive collection of Renaissance and Early Baroque lutes. Moreover, the private collector's vita and œuvre offer new insights into the Austrian Early Music movement, shaped decisively by Scheit and his wife. Scheit's private collection has taken its rightful place in the exhibition of the KHM, and the historic items now withdrawn from the market escaped the frequently fate of being modified, modernised, and adapted to the preferences of new, private owners or musicians.

Given the assumption that donations and endowments are irreversible, the preference for these types of acquisitions shown by many museums seems plausible – but, de jure, such acquisitions can be annulled, too. For this to happen, the belief that the recipient of the donation to have been guilty of any legally relevant form of gross ingratitude is sufficient. The donators could also seek to have their item returned in the case of impoverishment or of non-fulfilment of explicitly stated contractual terms.

Like other prestigious museums, the Collection of Historic Musical Instruments builds upon a broad, consistently and conscientiously documented, meticulously cared for private collection of court representatives. After a relatively short period of full public and state support, it was partially privatized around 2000. Since then, economic concerns have governed the course of the museum. The axiom of an educational-, cultural- and socio-political output has yielded to that of economic profitability and commercial gain. The support through public and state subsidies has become increasingly

negligible, and risks sinking into oblivion in the near future. In this process, the public museum moves ever closer to patrons and private collectors who are willing – out of altruism or by calculation – to make their holdings accessible to the general public and to share their private look at their collections with the visitors.

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25 Antonio Stradivari, Cremona, 1677; Antonio Stradivari, Cremona, 1679; Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, Cremona, 1737.

26 Archives of the SAM/KHM, files 111/2000 and 4/2006.