

Related to this is an understanding of the term curator put forward by another prominent theatre scholar on the issue, Florian Malzacher. For him, the term is understood as a “self-provocation” (Malzacher 2017, 17). He explains that calling his practice curating is not just exchanging one term for another, but rather demanding a different approach from oneself, a way of questioning one’s mediating practice through a change of title, effectively reflecting this aspect of curating discussed above.

Significantly, these definitions of the performance curator from the field of theatre seem to closely forecast the understandings of curating music implicitly used by musical practitioners surveyed in section 1.2.1. This not only shows the proximity between experimental theatre and the experimental musical practices of New Music (which can also include Music Theatre), but also the need for scholarship uniquely focused on musical practice itself, in order to identify possible divergences from or extensions to the definitions put forward by Sellar and Malzacher.

### 1.3 Scope and Overview

The first concern of this volume is to develop a theoretical basis upon which a study of festivals for contemporary music can be undertaken. The intention is that this basis be beneficial for the further analysis of both these and other festivals, serving as a new theoretical framework in which to understand them. As will be explored, there exists a gap in the scholarly literature around the conceptual, artistic, and music-historical ramifications of current experimentation with the mediation of CCM festivals.

In the interest of spanning this gap, this book will also engage with a significant body of work that is already critically examining the structures of the festival format, namely the field of curatorial studies. Using this field as a starting point for analysis will make it possible to follow the histories of both music festivals and arts festivals back to a common ancestor, the universal expositions, revealing the set of basic theoretical assumptions that underpin both of these types of events. This approach allows for a transfer of concepts from the curating of large-scale arts events to those of contemporary music, in turn setting the basis for a rapprochement between various festival formats that are not often considered together. This is furthermore significant in that it is approaching festivals for contemporary music in

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engaged venues for music theatre works akin to those of theatre or the visual arts accounts at least partially for the discrepancy between New Music and other performing arts as to their engagement with political topics. This is because these other disciplines would develop more radical forms in independent venues, which would then make their way into larger, more established institutions through processes of canonization and the hegemonic appropriation of artistic critique as of the turn of the century (see also Boltanksi and Chiapello [1999] 2005).

such a way as to both address this knowledge-gap in the musicological literature, while also establishing theoretical bridges to other academic disciplines.

Curatorial studies had until not too long ago focused mainly on festivals of the visual arts and perennial exhibitions. As will be shown in Chapter 3, it has however recently also become connected to performing arts festivals as well. This is the result of a shift in the self-understanding of curatorial practice (itself together with transformations in the art world), which is no longer exclusively related to the field of visual arts, but rather understood as a more general approach to mediation and creating frameworks for knowledge-production. Curating understood as the result of a carefully-composed event is a theoretical approach that aligns the field with theories of performance and the performative turn, and thus with the historic object of the performing arts. The many similar issues that music shares with other performing arts mean that an examination of curatorial studies in this field is particularly useful in developing an approach to curating festivals for contemporary music.

A result of this discipline-agnostic understanding of curating is that the concept can be applied to a wide range of issues. While this leads to a danger of overburdening the term, it can also be used as a methodology for establishing a form of critical mediation across a variety of media and contexts. This is in turn an approach that is also recursively applied to the writing of this volume itself.

For instance, the work begins with a long literature review establishing a definition of curating. While this is important in framing later arguments, it has also been specifically written as a primer on some of the key debates surrounding curatorial practice historically for a specifically musical audience. This means that it takes into consideration the particular concerns relevant to New Music, while also attempting to address these implicitly through a particular linguistic and conceptual framing in order to make it more easily palatable for that particular group. The goal is to present material for further argumentation, but also to lay out a broader framework for further research—such as the many interrelationships between festivals for the arts and their modes of presentation.

This extends to other areas of this volume as well. While musicology struggles with a lack of adequate tools for approaching transdisciplinary musical works, Chapter 3 provides an adaptable framework in the form of a series of concerns, issues, and common contradictions that can be adapted to help understand new registers of musical diversity.

Care has also been taken that the two case studies that are presented here complement each other in order to provide as broad an examination of issues related to curatorial practice and its relationship to New Music as possible. The Munich Biennale shows the potentiality that musical practices can have when unmoored from their relationship to the external reference of a singular tradition, and how experimentation with the process of creating a festival can take place. The Maerz-

musik festival for its part seeks to establish a new relationship to society and to its structures of knowledge-creation—mediated through the festival programming, itself understood by the curator as a quasi-compositional practice. Together, they show two different ways that curatorial practice in music can be realized in practice, with one festival focusing processes of commissioning, and another focusing on the presentation of works. While these two examples among many are in no way meant to represent a comprehensive panorama, it is hoped that they lay the foundation for further reflection on these and other music curatorial practices in the future.

As has been already mentioned, the other aspect of this framework begins to be laid out starting in Chapter 2 with the establishment of a common historical basis for establishing a theory of festivals for contemporary music and visual arts via the case of the Crystal Palace Exhibition and subsequent universal expositions. Subsequent art and music festivals that would spread around the world in the years after the initial success of the format are argued to be linked together through a common basic dispositive of the festival as a mode of subjectification, ultimately connected to a modernist ideology of display.

Having established this commonality, the rest of the chapter focuses on key moments in the discourse around the leadership for visual arts festivals. The focus of much of this discourse is on the relationship between conditions of display and the status of the work, as well as how these issues relate to the professional profiles of arts practitioners (artists, curators, etc.). A main concern of this discourse at the latest since the 1980s has been on problematizing the figure of the curator, which has in turn led to curatorial practice becoming a main subject of reflection and debate in the visual arts since that time. As curating became more formalized and academicized starting around the 1990s, it began to produce a rapidly-growing number of reflective texts on its origins, histories, practices, and ideologies of these figures and their practices.

One outcome of this proximity to the academy has been the emergence of more philosophical approaches to curating, which understand it as a practice of critical mediation, one that helps set the frame and catalyze events of knowledge-production for others. Arguing with theorist Irit Rogoff, this is the facet of the practice that also gives it a critical potential in light of cognitive capitalism's appropriation of knowledge-production. In general, it is this understanding (not definition) of curating that this book takes as a point of departure for understanding what curatorial practice in the field of music could entail.

With Chapter 3, this approach to curating is connected to an understanding of the receiver-centric approach to the art-encounter, argued through a re-reading of the critique of minimalism by performance studies theorist Shannon Jackson. The constitution of the event of critical knowledge creation from the previous chapter is thus interfaced with a complexification of how the modalities of various media

and disciplinary traditions contribute to it. In order to better understand how the specificities of a performing arts tradition inflect this critical charter, curatorial practices in dance and theatre are also examined.

In dance, the complexities of its relationship with both the museum and curatorial practice are examined, looking at the unique positioning of modern dance practices, as well as the issues and possibilities that contemporary dance practice has produced for dancers and audiences alike.

In theatre, the curatorial practice and understanding of theatre curator Florian Malzacher is examined through an investigation of his project *Truth is Concrete* at Steirischer Herbst Graz in 2012. This is in order to study how curatorial practices in theatre interpret their relationship to critical knowledge production. This section is also an opportunity to make a historical and semantic differentiation between the curator and the dramaturg, who is frequently cited in debates around the mediation of performance as a figure with a similar profile. The dramaturg is found to indeed share many similar features to the curator, however it is concluded that both the curator's historical hypervisibility, as well as the large critical discourse that contributes to it, mean that the latter term is gradually supplanting the former.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine the Munich Biennale for New Music Theater, and the Maerzmusik Festival at the Berliner Festspiele respectively, the two case studies at the centre of this volume. In both cases, the approach is to first give an account of the history of the festival since its inception and across its various artistic directors. Cumulatively, these histories build important strata that co-determine current festival editions. They also both offer perspectives on how these festivals have changed over the full course of their development, in consideration also of relevant literature, something that has until now not been rigorously attempted in regards to either of these two festivals.

In examining the Munich Biennale in Chapter 4, this historical examination is followed by an examination of the relationship between the artistic practices of both Daniel Ott and Manos Tsangaris, the current co-directors, and the forms of administrative experimentation they are undertaking at the biennale. Both composers' focus on the composition of heterogeneous elements in their artistic practices appears again in how they constitute the conditions of production for biennale compositions, effectively establishing a link between their artistic and administrative practices via an expanded notion of composition implying a taking into consideration of many diverse (f)actors that constitute the performative event while creating their work. This relates to curatorial practice in its blending of organizational and creative practices, and resembles the skillset required for the contemporary knowledge worker, with whom the figure of the curator shares many similarities.

Several productions by the biennale will also be analyzed, in order to highlight certain other, also artistic, facets of their leadership. The basis of these analyses

was, in addition to research, also the author's own experience visiting biennale productions.

This first-hand experience informs the analysis of the biennale. It also helps to expose areas where the newly-conceived festival can improve its offering, such as in the need to ameliorate its strategies for mediating productions to their audiences. Despite these criticisms, developing an approach to commissioning music theatre works that produces relevant productions for contemporary society and audiences is a significant achievement in the field, and merits further study. They are doing this by encouraging young practitioners to take charge of the mediation of their works as an extension of their artistic practice, mirroring also the transformation of their own artistic practices into a curatorial one.

Chapter 5 compliments this focus on processes of commissioning with an emphasis on the experience of the festival event itself as the objective of the curatorial practice of the festival curator, Berno Odo Polzer. Here once again, the chapter begins with a historical examination of the festival and its origins as the *Musik-Biennale Berlin*—a festival for New Music in the GDR, and its subsequent integration after November 1989 into the *Berliner Festspiele*, where it now still resides.

The festival's focus on presenting individual concerts “composed” by the festival director have led to an analysis of the festival argued through individual works and the specific ways in which they were programmed and presented. Developing out of this, it will be shown that Polzer's music curatorial approach is focused on the specific “composition” and *mise en scène* of musical and other works in order to investigate various concepts and ideas related to music, its history, and its relationship to time and perception.

Polzer's position as artistic director of this festival concentrates a great deal of definitional power in one individual; the festival becomes a realization of his vision. In another example of the usefulness and adequacy of curatorial discourse, it will be argued that this relationship between artistic director and the works he programs has been readily established in curatorial discourse, and that the position he takes is as necessary in the current context as it is bound on a collision course with musical practitioners taking charge of their own processes of mediation, as explored with the *Munich Biennale*.

While this contradiction exists between emancipated values at the centre of the festival and the establishment of the curator at its authorial centre, the festival is nevertheless regarded as a successful instance of using musical means to create a festival that explicitly positions itself towards major societal debates such as decolonization, gender issues, ecological crises, capitalism and neoliberalism, etc.

Between these two case studies, as well as the effort invested in laying a groundwork for music-curatorial thinking, the key output of this book is the connections that it establishes between emerging new forms of experimentation with the mediation of CCM and both curatorial discourses and a newfound critical project. It

attempts to span the gap between New Music practice (including administrative practice) and other forms of contemporary musical and artistic practice through an exploration of the concept of curating.