"Living in a Material World," Contemplating the Immaterial One—Musings on What Sounds Can Actually Tell Us, or Not

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Just as I have two titles for this contribution, I also have two beginnings; nevertheless, they are directly related, as I hope to clarify. Let me commence with the narrative behind the second title. Recently, an American colleague distributed a short clip, which he encountered on the website of the Franz Schreker Foundation. Members of the Suppressed Music mailing list, to which I subscribe, reacted with gratitude, stating that they were delighted to "finally" see some *unique* (italics EW) footage of a moving Schreker.[1] The MP4 file of only 32 seconds may not have a telling sound, yet the clip tells us a lot of other things.[2]

This is indeed a fascinating piece of home movie material in which we see Franz Schreker (1878–1934)—the one on the left, with his spouse Marie (née Binder, 1892–1979), a dog and some friends and colleagues, to whom I will return shortly. Of Jewish descent, Schreker moved to Vienna in 1888, studied at, and was later appointed to the Vienna Music Academy, presently known as the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, where the *Telling Sounds* project is hosted. So, Schreker could be of interest to the project. Short story short: Schreker was widely considered to be the future of German/Austrian opera before his music was banned by the Nazis. He died from a stroke two

1 Email message to The International Centre for Suppressed Music Mailing List on behalf of Lloyd Moore, 5 March 2019. The text is as follows: "Dear List, Buried deep on the Schreker Foundation website is this fascinating piece of home movie footage of Schreker, his wife Maria and some friends from what is likely sometime in the 1920s: http://www.schreker.org/neu/engl/works/Schreker.mp4. LM."

2 Cf. f.n. 1. "Movie (from the archive of Artur Rodzinski)." http://www.schreker.org/neu/engl/works/Schreker.mp4

days before his 56th birthday. These vicissitudes of his life are by now well-known.

The film is without a doubt a 'document humain,' compacted into only seconds of moving images. It indeed appears to be a 'unique' item. Yet, of course, it is not. In the first place, it is a digitally 're-mediated' piece of footage—not original source material. The genuine film reels are what may be considered as 'unique,' not this digital copy in its second life online, subsequently generating multiple copies on multiple computer screens.

Some of us may even already know that this footage, in better quality, has already circulated the Web since 2014 as part of a more extended clip which features the private materials of the Polish conductor Artur Rodziński (1892–1958).[3] The clip features many more well-known figures from the musical world, among them Richard Strauss, Vladimir Horowitz, Leopold Stokowski, Maurice Ravel, George Gershwin, and Karol Szymanowski, to mention only the most famous ones. A question that may then pop up is: does that make the recently disseminated Schreker clip useless as a source for research? Of course not. The silent shot clip offers us no audio track, so sound doesn't reveal anything; nevertheless, the clip does provide all sorts of germane information in the realm of 'Alltagsgeschichte,' the history of everyday life. We are presented with a peek into a private life where we encounter the relaxed 'off-stage doppelgänger' of a composer at the height of his fame; a personality in his social habitat who is still in our times (or perhaps better: once again) considered an important figure in music history. In its own right, the contemporary dissemination of the clip testifies to the fact that the Nazis failed in wiping Schreker off the face of history. This process is intimately related to recent Schreker reception: the restoration of his reputation and the reevaluation of his creative work. At the same time, we can deduce, at least partly, information about Schreker's social network due to the clip, and the network depicted in it had a strong American orientation. The person to the left of Mrs. Schreker is Richard Hageman (1888–1966), a pianist, composer, and conductor of Dutch descent who initially moved to the United States in 1906, where he won an Oscar in 1939 for his score for

3 "Archival Footage of Artur Rodzinski." https://youtu.be/kqQuKD8URFE

John Ford's *Stagecoach*.[4] The person on the right is Olin Downes (1886–1955), who was, at the time, music critic of the *New York Times*.[5]

Schreker may have been an important figure in the institution that later became the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, but his online presence in the Österreichische Mediathek, one of the two main archival sources for the *Telling Sounds* project, is limited to only thirteen audio sources dating from the mid-1970s on—therefore consisting of mostly fairly recent productions. All are surely posthumous. In the other main source of the project, the Phonogrammarchiv, Schreker is not present at all. That, however, can be duly explained—which leads me to my second opening.

In 1925, the British magazine *Gramophone* featured an article on "Archives in Sound."[6] In it, the Phonogrammarchiv in Vienna was lauded as the first of its kind, having been established as early as 1899. The sound archive in Vienna was, and is, an exemplary archive of cultural memory, although (modern) Western music was and is not documented there. *Gramophone* already stressed back then that it was, first and foremost, a treasure trove of "specimens of dialect and language, voices of famous people, and so on."[7] The archive did not so much exclude music in general, but the documented samples were of a typically ethnomusicological nature, with records of folkish performances, mostly from faraway places. Hence, the emphasis on sounds other than those of Western music was duly recognized in the *Gramophone* article. When one consults the archive today, the search term 'music' yields only some forty hits available online; none of these, indeed, features Western music.[8] This may come as a surprise in a city, which, within the musicological narrative, is not only hailed for one, but even two of the most influential 'schools' in music history. The absence of music is, of course, the consequence of rigid choices of collection criteria. Space, even digital space, is limited, and archives must focus, even specialize. It is subsequently unavoidable that archival collections reflect existential questions such as 'What is the main goal of our archive?' Related sub-questions are typically: 'What to acquire, and what not?' 'Which

4 Kathryn Kalinak, Nico de Villiers and Asing Walthaus are preparing a critical biography of the composer Richard Hageman (Peter Lang Publishers).

5 The film seems to originate not from the 1920s, as had been suggested by the members of the mailing list (see f.n. 1), but must date from the early 1930s, as a simple comparison of his photographs reveals.

6 Pollak, "Archives in Sound."

7 Symes, *Setting the Record Straight* 231.

8 "Phonogrammarchiv." https://www.oeaw.ac.at/phonogrammarchiv/

audio or audiovisual sources may have a surplus value or significance for our specific collection; what is relevant for the target audience?' And so on.

The most important yet subjective words here are surely 'value' and/or 'significance.' Despite being slippery, these are of the essence. The general information on the *Telling Sounds* project also refers to its task of "wissenschaftliche Auswertung:" scholarly (r)e-valuation.[9] In the 1920s *Gramophone* article, the Viennese archive was already considered exemplary as a national library of recordings and worthy of imitation. Nevertheless, it took until 1951—more than half a century—for the British Institute of Recorded Sound (BIRS) to, for instance, first open its doors. Subsequently, the British Museum, the Public Record Office, the BBC, a number of universities, and assorted other educational bodies principally joined forces in this particular UK endeavor.

120 years after the first, pioneering *Telling Sounds* initiative in Vienna, the current *Telling Sounds* research project can therefore boast of a long and established Austrian scientific tradition with international repercussions and reputation. However, simultaneously, we may stand at the crossroads of both contemporary challenges and future initiatives. In the paragraphs below, I will attempt to reflect on some basic concepts from the *Telling Sounds* project as now defined and to address the fluidity and overlap between those concepts. The first part will briefly address the issue of the materiality of audiovisual archives. I will subsequently concentrate on audiovisual documents as part of our cultural heritage; the abovementioned 'value' of archival documents is key. I will conclude with stressing the importance of documenting the 'cultural biography' of audiovisual sources.

The first general theme of the 2019 conference was: "AV Documents: Analysis in Context," with a subtitle in brackets: "close reading, materiality." Let me first share some thoughts on the second concept: materiality. When we discuss the materiality of these relevant 'objects,' we are basically dealing with the recording as the carrier of audiovisual information—incidentally studied in combination with the machine which is the necessary compliment to be able to replay the artefact for perceiving the information recorded. In more physical terms, we need the equipment to turn "sound waves into electrical charges into mechanical energy and back into sound waves."[10] Colin Symes coined the metaphor of the "transducer" for this process of converting musical information from one source of energy to the next. This is realized via a

9 "Telling Sounds." https://www.mdw.ac.at/imi/tellingsounds/?PageId=8

10 Symes, *Setting the Record Straight* 212.

"chain of transducers associated with the reproduction of sound: discs, record players, amplifiers, and loudspeakers."[11] But in terms of archiving such a complicated issue as 'cultural memory,' the materiality of the audiovisual artefact and its physical operation is of only limited importance. The history of technology is, of course, part of that larger realm of cultural history, yet the more fundamental cultural value of these artefacts is defined by what is 'registered on' them as the 'immaterial' complement of the audiovisual document. A CD or a DVD is essentially nothing more than a coaster, a shiny round object to rest a glass of wine on, or perhaps a mirror of only average quality, unless that is, you have a decoding tool which unveils an immaterial realm which is concealed—invisibly and inaudibly—inside the magical disc. An open door, surely. However, we need to continually keep the distinction between the two in the back of our minds.

This may be in line with how the Council of Europe (CoE) has defined the diverse manifestations of our cultural heritage, 'Kulturerbe' in German. "Cultural heritage shapes our identities and everyday lives," the CoE argues "[i]t surrounds us in Europe's towns and cities, natural landscapes and archaeological sites. It is not only found in literature, art and objects, but also in the crafts we learn from our ancestors, the stories we tell our children, the food we enjoy in company and the films we watch and recognize ourselves in."[12] A recent slogan stated: "Our heritage: where the past meets the future."[13] Isn't this an important aspect of the *Telling Sounds* project?

The Council of Europe has defined four types of cultural heritage useful for finding relevant methodological access to our material as well. In accordance with the first two categories, the artefact of the audiovisual document is (1) 'tangible,' however, it communicates (2) 'intangible' practices: knowledge, artistic expression and so on. For our research, both the tangible materiality and the intangible immateriality of AV documents can be sources of upmost importance. However, there is more. Dismissing for our purposes the (3) 'natural' category of the Council's cultural heritage concept (consisting of landscape, flora and fauna) the final category (4) addresses digital resources.

11 Ibid.

12 "European Year of Cultural Heritage." https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/about_en.html

13 "Our Heritage: Where the Past Meets the Future." https://www.interregeurope.eu/heri coast/events/event/1765/our-heritage-where-the-past-meets-the-future/

Even digital, or digitized documents are considered a cultural heritage category *sui generis* in the eyes of the Council. Rethinking the Franz Schreker MP4 clip as it was disseminated through the internet: it may not be unique, but it does display aspects of the composer's private habitat which overlap with his professional network, including various figures of cultural importance. Therefore, by situating audiovisual documents in even three of the four overall categories established by the Council, the societal and cultural importance of our research on audiovisual materials is both unmistakable and manifest. Nevertheless, this subsequently makes an unequivocal, unambiguous approach towards such sources a challenge. And there is, yet again, even more to it.

In his book on the material history of classical recording, *Setting the Record Straight*, Colin Symes stresses the significance of what he calls the "narrative architecture"[14] provided by the (often overlooked but nevertheless related) textual contexts and/or dimensions. He specifically refers to related cover/liner notes, magazines, advertisements, et cetera. These can all be relevant to and complementary sources for our research, be it as background information, as receptional evidence, for network or target group analyses, and for other contextual clues. Yet, these may be documented and included in collections other than phonographic or AV media archives. Once again, questions of definition and identification surface: why does a given archive collect certain types of sources? This leads to meta-questions, such as how archives containing different artefacts from perhaps different periods are (inter)connected. To address these issues, it is relevant to situate audiovisual documents in broader sociohistoric contexts, or cultural circumferences. Collections can become sterile and meaningless, unless preserved in context—and to apply this to our project here and now: preserved, yet also analyzed, researched, or contextualized; and ultimately, publicly disclosed, consciously shared. It is relevant, therefore, to define the different types of appraisals of the audiovisual documents to be researched.

But how to judge the value of an object? Every new generation may propose different arguments to define the slippery issue of value or significance. How to judge whether an (audio)visual source is worthy of collection, documentation and/or study? What arguments can be brought forward? In the Netherlands,[15] a four-letter level qualification was introduced around 2000.

14 Symes, *Setting the Record Straight* 212.

15 For this contribution, the volume Beirens, *Achter de muziek aan* has been a crucial inspiration.

This taxonomy ranged from A (denoting the artefact as unique/irreplaceable) to D (referring to objects that no longer fit in any given collection). Armed with this taxonomy, heritage collections were scanned. But despite giving administrators arguments to critically evaluate their archives, these rather managerial qualifications hardly provided the researcher with ammunition for scholarly analyzing or (re)contextualizing the content of their interest; a much desired "wissenschaftliche Auswertung" needs more tools and handles. Often, collecting has occurred rather intuitively, given the abundance of audiovisual sources surrounding us; well-argued and systematic criteria of how collections are to be established are increasingly needed. Such criteria also immediately raise more fundamental questions including: what to archive, what to study, and…why?

To answer these pertinent questions, archives frequently make use of the Australian *Significance 2.0* taxonomy. This method was developed by Roslyn Russell and Kylie Wink for the Collections Council of Australia. The idea was to "strive for more sustainable collections" and to stress "the potential that collections hold for further innovative thinking," according to the Chair of the Collections Council.[16] I will use their method as a springboard for more advanced reflections. The *Significance 2.0* taxonomy proposes four primary criteria for consideration: (1) historic significance, (2) artistic or aesthetic significance, (3) scientific or research significance, and/or (4) social or spiritual significance.[17] Briefly and to the point: if an object tests positive on at least one of these four criteria, it can be considered 'significant'—worthwhile to document, and subsequently: worthwhile for further study. *Significance 2.0* also incorporates four additional, comparative criteria for assessing archival importance: (a) provenance, (b) rarity or representativeness, (c) condition or completeness, and (d) interpretative capacity.[18]

Freely interpreting the primary criteria, we could argue that the historic significance is probably the most clear-cut category to grasp. In audiovisual terms, reference could be to a recording or a broadcast recording of a premiere of a musical piece which is considered important, or a piece by a composer considered significant, or a performance by an important performer, ensemble, orchestra, et cetera. Or, in more general terms: a recording of a

16 Russell, *Significance 2.0* v.
17 Ibid. 39.
18 Ibid. 39–40.

specific performance which relates directly to historic events. The rare newsreel footage of Furtwängler in Berlin in 1943 is illustrative for the position of music within a politicized context. Historic value can also probably be given to propaganda sound films. On the verge of losing the war, the Nazi propaganda machine released, for example, the film *Kolberg* (1943/44), directed by Veit Harlan and with music by Norbert Schulze, composer of the famous war song "Lili Marleen."[19] This tale of patriotic resistance stood in stark contrast to reality during the 'Totaler Krieg' which sacrificed even the youngest of German civilians while cities were being fiercely bombed (and movie theaters were closed) and turned into burning ruins. The movie holds historic significance yet only when narrated within an adequate context.

To skip the second category for the moment, and turning first to scientific or research significance, we can state that this criterium is also fairly easy to judge. In specific musicological terms, the object could be a manuscript of a composition deemed important. Consider what Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg did with his scores with his precious performative notes in blue and red. In AV terms, scientific value would probably best refer to a recording which documents important information of a certain performance practice. For example, consider the typical use of violin portamento which we can see and hear in the early Mengelberg films, which were recorded in the Tobis Sonores studios in Épinay-sur-Seine near Paris in 1931. Previously, I have contextualized these recordings in the way they were produced, who was involved, etc., in concurrence with comparative performative information.[20]

With regard to audiovisual sources, the remaining categories of the *Significance* 2.0 method are not always as straightforward to define relevant to our audiovisual sources. The artistic or aesthetic category is ambivalent or somewhat unarticulated as it may refer, for example, to the 'beauty' or the artistic quality of a performance, scoring high on those performative criteria a music critic might employ. Additionally, this criterium is convoluted in the sense that "no two critics [or for that matter: musicologists -EW] might ever agree in their concept of criticism, and different reviews by any one critic may vary in emphasis."[21] Moreover: issues of taste can change over time, both generally and personally. Transferring the aesthetical category to AV-registrations, we can also consider incorporating information distilled from the stage design of

19 Harlan, *Kolberg*. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0036989/
20 Wennekes, "Mengelberg Conducts Oberon."
21 Schick, *Classical Music Criticism* 21.

a certain opera production. Both interpretations (the aesthetic value of a performance versus the aesthetic value of a stage design) can, of course, overlap with the previous two categories as well.

The most complicated feature of the Australian system, therefore, is the final category: social or spiritual significance. Here, I am again indebted to a Dutch/Flemish publication entitled (in translation): "Follow the music."[22] It addresses many relevant, even urgent challenges concerning cultural heritage.[23] When many volunteers are prepared to be involved in a certain project, social significance is generated. Maintaining mechanical instruments, for instance. The amazing amount of annual performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* in the Netherlands is included as one of the examples of this specific sound value category,[24] as is the specific tradition of performances of Gustav Mahler's symphonies, for which conductor Willem Mengelberg laid the foundation[25]—both traditions are listed by Ellen Kempers in the *Achter de muziek aan* publication.[26]

Or, to transfigure these local Dutch examples to Viennese music culture, we can grant the 'Neujahrskonzert' important social significance (23 online hits in the Mediathek) as well as the performance and composing practices of the Waltz within Vienna's cultural history (163 hits). Audiovisual recordings of all these examples are not only of historic, scientific, and/or aesthetic significance, they have a social impact, aiding in the identity of the specific Viennese musical culture. The *Significance 2.0* categories do not, however, provide the issue of cultural value exhaustive treatment. Reflecting on the criteria addressed above, and following Kempers's adaptation of *Significance 2.0*, objects can also be scrutinized in terms of their symbolic value, their 'calibration' value, their 'linking' value, as well as their rarity. Symbolic value relates to the aforementioned historic value and defines its relation to important national or historic events. The calibration value becomes apparent when there are many other objects which relate to the specific one under discussion.

The linking value, on the other hand, addresses an object's link to striking developments marking societal, scientific, or cultural change, or: in our case, an object's link to significant musical developments, for example: the early music revival. However, "Television […] has contributed comparatively little to

22 See f.n. 15.
23 Kempers, "Waardering en selectie" 77–78.
24 See for instance: Wennekes, "Nachwelt im Nachbarland."
25 Zwart, *Conductor Willem Mengelberg* passim.
26 Kempers, "Waardering en selectie" 77–78.

the revival [….] television executives have understandably been wary of filling their screens with musicians wielding viols, crumhorns, and Baroque flutes, no matter how gifted or telegenic they may be."[27] We could, nevertheless, refer to Hindemith's adaptation of Monteverdi's opera *Orfeo,* which he presented in Vienna in 1954. This performance created momentum for Nikolaus Harnoncourt's innovative, revolutionary take on early music only a few years later. "This performance had the effect of a bolt of lightning on me," Harnoncourt reminisced: "I immediately began to occupy myself with the music of Monteverdi."[28] An audio recording of the *Orfeo* in this linking value performance is commercially available, as well as an audio fragment in which Hindemith explains his take on the opera.[29] It is not included in the two archives of the *Telling Sounds* project, but digitized and publicly accessible via YouTube.

The categories mentioned above are at least of some use for the 'Auswertung' of audiovisual sources. Having said that, the boundaries between all categories—the ones from *Significance 2.0* as well as those contextualizing these—are not always clear-cut or unambiguously detectable. Occasionally, they are even rather fluid. This is clear when we examine, for example, the *Austria Wochenschau* episode broadcast on 11 November 1955. It features the reopening of the Wiener Staatsoper a few days prior. The episode is digitized and available online via the portal of the Österreichische Mediathek.[30] Given the importance of the Staatsoper itself, and the significant reasons why it was closed in the first place, the narrated event shown in the *Wochenschau* episode is of historic as well as symbolic importance with, at the same time, an eminent linking relevance to an important turning point in Vienna's postwar music history. Fragments of the opening production of *Fidelio* conducted by Karl Böhm afford us aesthetic information on the specific performance practice of the time as well as the actual approach to stage production design (the 'Bühnenbild' was supervised by Clemens Holzmeister). Therefore, this specific audiovisual document also provides us with additional musicological and theatrical information. Additionally, the episode refers to the strong social significance of the role opera played/plays within Viennese society. The

27 Haskell, *The Early Music Revival* 123.

28 "New Changing Exhibition in the Hindemith Cabinet." https://www.hindemith.info/en/institute/publications/hindemith-forum/hf-39-2017/changing-exhibition/

29 "Hindemith Orfeo: Hindemith über seine Aufführung des Orfeo bei den Wiener Festwochen 1954." https://youtu.be/kwDq7KCgIPg

30 "Wiedereröffnung der Wiener Staatsoper." https://www.mediathek.at/atom/15BD3239-287-000CA-00000B28-15BC4BC7

audiovisual footage is rare since there are only incomplete audio recordings of this specific production in the archive (a complete audio recording can, however, be found on YouTube).[31] The online clip provides us with immaterial subtexts surrounding the unique event of the reopening of the Staatsoper. Yet the online clip is, in itself, not unique or even rare. Only the original television film would be a unique archival piece—in both its material and immaterial relevance.

This last category, the rarity of audiovisual artefacts, subsequently provides us with an interesting and multifaceted criterium, especially when it is relevant to visual reproduction in mass media. Is the archival object unique, or one of many? A one-off or a multi-millions-off? The questions raised in the *Significance 2.0* publication pose six relevant sub-questions: (1) "Does it have unusual qualities that distinguish it from other items in the class or category?" (2) "Is it unusual or a particularly fine example of its type?" (3) Is it singular, unique or endangered?" (4) "Is it a good example of its type or class?" (5) "Is it typical or characteristic?" and ultimately: (6) "Is it particularly well-documented for its class or group?"[32] Here, rarity directly encroaches upon the notion of originality. It is common among musicologists to search for the most authoritative source, that is, the one closest to the inception of a composition: a manuscript, an early print and so on—are there relevant concordances, et cetera? For gramophone recordings, the master is, in fact, the sole original. The rest are all reproductions. Nevertheless, sound archives of a cultural heritage nature seldom include masters.[33] Since audiovisual recordings have increasingly become 'editions' (consider the, on average, two to three hundred edits that German 'Tonmeister' Volker Strauss made in a single Mahler symphony conducted by Bernard Haitink on Philips),[34] this fact may stand at odds with both the scientific and aesthetic categories within the *Significance 2.0* method of qualification. A record is, consequently, not so much a testimony of a certain *performance* practice, but rather, first and foremost, of a *recording* practice. We should qualify these as recording aesthetics in line with the concept of "Perfecting Sound Forever," in reference to Greg Milner's eponymous book on the history of recorded music.

31 "Historic Reopening Wiener Staatsoper." https://youtu.be/tAEPTsBLvKs

32 Russell, *Significance 2.0* 40.

33 Television registrations were commonly broadcast live and, in most cases, never recorded. Compare with the paragraph on radio broadcasts below.

34 Bank, *De klank als handschrift* 153.

We have observed that the Council of Europe features a separate category for digital resources originally created in digital format or digitized later. In musical, musicological, and technological terms, however, there is an essential distinction between those two variants. In the case of 'born digital' material, no information or quality is lost—the reproduction is an exact copy of the original. This differs strikingly from a musical registration or recording which is subsequently digitized (or copied and/or registered in another format). From the single original master, copies are generated and multiplied for distribution. With each successive copy, information is lost, the sound quality reduced in a process defined as "generational loss."[35] Strictly speaking, in the latter case the reproduction is *not* an exact copy of the original. A later form of re-mediatization cannot intercept this process of (negatively) influencing the condition of the audio.

Radio broadcasts are a different kettle of fish and are a far more complex, less systematic type of source. Nevertheless, recordings of broadcasts do display a variety of manifestations. For a long time, since the early 20th century, broadcasts were live, one-time only events meant to be consumed directly via radio. Recordings of broadcasts were incidental and co-incidental; companies did not systematically record or archive their programs. The arrival of the tape recorder in households starting in the 1950s increased the possibility of preserving broadcast material. Due to the involvement of private collectors, such material has occasionally been included in sound archives. A parallel can be drawn with the introduction of the home video cassette recorder, which reached the mass market in the mid-1970s. Recording on tape is of a strikingly different ontology than recording on video disc because recording on the latter is definite and permanent; tapes, on the other hand, could be overwritten and re-used.[36] (This topic makes us drift too far from the topic of this chapter.) Nowadays, broadcast companies upload programs online in digitized formats, whereas shows were previously taped and stored, at times to be digitized at a later stage. Sound archives have at times taken up the collector's gauntlet by digitizing radio broadcasts. For example, a recent press release states: "The Archive of Recorded Sound at Stanford University, in collaboration with the Stanford Media Preservation Lab, recently completed the digitization and cataloging of 684 analog recordings of The Standard Hour radio

35 Hovinga, "Audiovisuele dragers" 148–9.
36 Milner, *Perfecting Sound Forever* 106–7.

broadcasts that occurred between 1938 and 1955. […] These historically significant programs were the first broadcast radio series in the US devoted to symphonic music."[37] TV programs are comparable in the sense that, in the past, they were broadcast live; these days, we can replay and study them repeatedly via online sources. Although, as a rule, the recorded object is mass produced, it can still be unique in alternative fashions. Enter the so-called 'cultural biography'—or perhaps more in line with Symes's architectural metaphor: the biographical architecture.

The contextual information provided by the cultural biography can be of utmost importance because it offers the leverage necessary for any cultural (re)valuation of an artefact. The cultural biography provides contextual information on who the makers, the producers, performers, and the previous owners may have been. It is comparable with the provenance criterium of *Significance 2.0*. Even the special relationship of a certain object to a city can be of importance. By addressing questions of previous ownership, or chains of ownership, or even the reasoning behind production and dissemination, we exit the material realm of artefacts and reenter their immaterial world. This second domain extends beyond the contours of emotional and/or social content/context. Objects can acquire sentimental, i.e. 'priceless' value due to such contexts. Or, as Colin Symes formulates it: "They are thus retained irrespective of their material condition, which in some instances might be very decrepit. In the light of their special status they are sometimes even 'enshrined;' that is, they are withdrawn from circulation and framed in some way, such as being housed in special cabinets."[38] Symes was not aiming to define a sound archive. However, for me, this is exactly how his statement can be interpreted—doesn't the *Telling Sounds* project adhere to forming an 'enshrined' collection "withdrawn from circulation and framed as being housed in a special cabinet?" The cultural value is not only what the archive represents, collects or archives, 'in sum' it attains a cultural, symbolic significance in its own right. The archive withdraws (or should I say: rescues?) everyday objects from the biological circle of life and death, manufacture and decay. Research projects like *Telling Sounds* kiss their objects alive again.

To conclude: with the Viennese Phonogram Archive, one of Thomas Edison's dreams came true at the turn of the 20th century. He considered a record

37 Quoted from a message sent to the mailing list of IAML by Frank Ferko, "Sound Archives Metadata Librarian," *Archive of Recorded Sound*, Stanford University, 4 March 2019.

38 Symes, *Setting the Record Straight* 214.

library as a resource for scientific inquiry "one of the main cultural dividends of his invention."[39] The main goal of the British Institute of Recorded Sound (BIRS), now the British Library Sound Archive, was, as far as music was concerned, "to obtain copies of records as they are published and rescue as many of those […] irrespective of their current value"[40] and preserve them under conditions that would make them available for study within the institute. Despite the fact that library use remains relevant, institutions have recently put a great deal of material online, allowing users to study re-mediatized material from a distance. Times have changed radically—as have technologies and methodologies, to no lesser extent.

Returning to the two titles of this chapter: we, as researchers, may indeed all live in a material world—albeit a slightly different one than that described by legendary pop star Madonna in her international hit. Nonetheless, after we have decided how to scrutinize the different material artefacts needed for our research, we must profoundly address the immaterial information enshrined in those objects. Our 'Auswertung' is a type of valuation of one object as opposed to another. More specifically: valuating one source of intangible information over another, in cross-referenced contexts. It is only then that we hear what sounds from the past are actually able to tell us—now and in the future.

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39 Ibid. 231.

40 Fisher, "The British Institute of Recorded Sound" 24.

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