CALL FOR PAPERS

Conference title:
Beyond the Object and Back, the Role of Collections in Music Museums

London (Royal College of Music Museum - Horniman Museum and Gardens)

6-10 September 2020 - Deadline for submissions: 10 February 2020

The same collections often prove capable of telling profoundly different stories. Musical instrument collections have been deployed to support everything from evolutionist narratives to those of decolonization, from systematic organology to those highlighting context, at times prioritising conservation, academic research, display or playability. While some collections reflect individual tastes and interests, others represent collective ideas and the trends, methodologies and cultural priorities of their times. As such, they are powerful mirrors of those times - and indicate the nature of the relationship between music and society itself.

Today, changing attitudes towards audiences and the cultural and social role of museums, the balance between tangible and intangible heritage and the availability of digital technologies are among the many drivers that influence the way museums collect or dispose of objects, choose what to display or preserve, and decide how to deal with the objects that cannot be displayed. Cultural and political agendas, public interest and preconceptions have often played a major role in defining what should and shouldn't be represented. In some cases, the relevance of collections in museums has even been questioned altogether, while the centrality of objects in displays has been reconsidered, and storage space is an increasing challenge.

This conference aims to present critical perspectives on the ways that music collections represent - or struggle to represent - the ambitions and purposes of the institutions that manage them, throughout history and today. How are music collections responding to changes in the identity of museums? What are the implications for the care and conservation of collections? What is driving, or hindering these changes? In what ways can historical collections still be used to represent current ideas?

Papers are invited in the following formats:
- Full papers 20 min.
- Lightning papers 10 min.
- Panel discussions up to 60 min.

As part of the programme, one session will address the topics above with specific reference to the collecting and playing of historical keyboard instruments and one will specifically address conservation.

A session will be reserved for short communications (7 min), aimed at presenting current projects and updates in the field of music museums, not necessarily related to the theme of the conference.

Please send abstracts of max. 300 words for full papers, or 200 for lightning papers and communications, with clear specification of your full name, institution, address and a brief bio (max 100 words) to the CIMCIM Secretary Marie Martens at Marie.Martens@natmus.dk by the 10th February 2020. Acceptance of papers will be confirmed by the end of February. Accepted abstracts will be published on the conference website soon thereafter. A longer version of the texts and images will be requested by the end of July to be published in the digital proceedings of the conference.

Papers should be presented at the Conference in person by the author (or one of multiple named authors). Further info and a call for travel grant applis are available at http://cimcim.icom.museum

The organising committee
Marie Martens (Musikmuseet / The Danish Music Museum, Copenhagen)
Arnold Myers (University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh)
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Jen Schnitker (The Metropolitan Museum, New York)
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