



EXPERT MEETINGS 2017

'FUNCTIONING HERITAGE'

THE FUTURE OF MUSICAL HERITAGE

12 & 13 October • Museum Speelklok, Utrecht

LECTURES PROGRAMME & ABSTRACTS

1. Marian van Dijk 12-Oct, 11:20
Safeguarding musical instruments; the relevance of intangible cultural heritage.
2. Giovanni Paolo di Stefano 12-Oct, 12:00
"Does it sound right?"
Re-use and restoration of early musical instruments at the Rijksmuseum.
3. Hans Piena 12-Oct, 14:00
A child can do it: Reconnecting tangible and intangible heritage.
4. Clara von Waldthausen 13-Oct, 11:00
Functionality, Replacement & Authenticity: the implications of replacement for the authenticity of the object, and the role of academic conservation training.
5. Wim Diepenhorst 13-Oct, 11:45
Closing churches: a blessing in disguise for 'sounding' heritage?
6. Marieke Lefeber-Morsman 13-Oct, 14:00
18th-century bell playing clocks, their function and value.

1. Marian van Dijk

Safeguarding musical instruments; the relevance of intangible cultural heritage.

The depots of museums are full to the brim – only a small percentage of the total amount of treasures is shown to the public – and Western Europe is filled with historical buildings that lost their original function. Moreover, times are changing rapidly: what we create today, will be heritage tomorrow. Hence, our choices on preserving and restoring heritage will have to be very well-motivated. What do we want to pass on to next generations, and how?

The relevance of heritage to contemporary society plays an increasing role in this choice-making process. As a result, a community who claims relevance does sometimes participate or interfere in the process of restoration. Is this a good development? Or should decisions be left to professionals in the heritage field?

Musical instruments are a combination of both tangible and intangible heritage. That is why the ongoing discussions on the Unesco World Heritage List of Intangible Cultural Heritage are very interesting. For Unesco, the people are the focus point. Intangible Cultural Heritage represents the identity of a community and, as such, is an important means to create mutual understanding between communities. Individually, intangible heritage aids people in understanding their personal identity. It is recreated constantly and hence must be regarded as a dynamic concept.

Musical instruments derive their value from the people who use them. Letting the instruments play is therefore vital to the future of musical heritage. If a musical instrument is demonstrated only as a piece of furniture, it becomes difficult to understand why preservation of musical heritage is so important. As scientists, curators, restorers, and musicians, we have a solemn duty to let these historical instruments function. If the sounding part is not restored, and kept alive by a community, the instruments lose their relevance to contemporary society.

2. Giovanni Paolo di Stefano

"Does it sound right?"

Re-use and restoration of early musical instruments at the Rijksmuseum.

As is well known, museums collect musical instruments because of their cultural significance, in that they document the music of different ages and traditions, as well as being exquisite examples of decorative arts. Historical musical instruments, now preserved in museums, were generally made to be played. In this respect, they are very different from fine-art objects such as paintings, sculptures, and other decorative artifacts, because despite their decontextualized display, the visual purpose of the above-mentioned artworks does not differ too much from their original use: being admired.

Musical instruments curators and conservators constantly struggle with ethical and conservation issues, connected with the musical use of instruments that are preserved in museums. Bringing an early music instrument back to its functional state may allow to both re-enact the original intent of its maker, and to better understand musical repertoires in their historical context. On the other hand, the use of original instruments and their restoration to a playable state might cause irreversible changes of the instruments themselves, as well as the loss of important documentary information. As is known, the alternatives to functional restorations are either restorative conservation interventions or the making of facsimiles.

This lecture will focus on the re-use, conservation, restoration and reconstruction of three historical instruments (a 1640 Ioannes Ruckers virginal, a 1808 Erard Frères piano and an early 19th-century Dietrich Nikolaus Winkel mechanical organ) which are part of the Rijksmuseum's collection in Amsterdam.

3. Hans Piena

A child can do it: Reconnecting tangible and intangible.

For more than 100 years, the Holland Open Air Museum has focused on the most representative aspects of (historic) daily life in the Netherlands. It has specialized in the study and preservation of the ways people lived, worked, and celebrated, by studying, collecting, documenting, and presenting both their tangible and intangible aspects hand in hand. In fact, a division between the two did not exist for the first 70 years of the museum's existence.

In the 1970's, a distinction was made between tangible and intangible heritage. The separation was institutionalized by creating organisations, devoted solely to the study and preservation of intangible heritage. This split is not a fruitful approach for a good understanding of our heritage: purely tangible heritage on one side, and purely intangible heritage on the other, does not exist. Tangible heritage can be appreciated mainly through the intangible meaning and value we attribute to it. Intangible heritage, vice versa, can only be expressed through tangible aspects like geographical space, the acting community and the objects involved.

In the Holland Open Air Museum, there has always been an integrated approach to heritage. Objects were never shown as a separate entity. Moreover, over the years, they have demonstrated many crafts, and offered a range of workshops to their visitors. Children have an important role to play therein. How often do we not hear mothers yell in supermarkets: "Don't touch anything!"? This only underlines the need for tactile experiences, with which children learn more easily. In the Dutch Open Air Museum, they use this to keep alive many crafts. Children can experience how to bake bread, plough the fields, harvest potatoes, make ropes, knit socks, weave cloth and forge iron nails. While learning to master the tools involved and making the product, they reconnect tangible and intangible, the way they are meant to.

4. Clara von Waldthausen

Functionality, Replacement & Authenticity: the implications of replacement for the authenticity of the object, and the role of academic conservation training.

For an object of cultural importance, conservation choices are not straightforward. These objects have many values, that the conservator must weigh carefully when thinking about his role in preserving the object, and in deciding on the object's conservation treatment. With objects that were produced to perform a function, such as a chair, or that have moving parts, such as a clock or a book, conservation choices may - or may not - be made in favour of guaranteeing its function over time. How can ethics and modern conservation strategies preserve authenticity and yet meet the manifold needs for such objects?

Through a number of conservation case studies that illustrate authenticity, and question the aspects (or values) of the object that are most important to be preserved, this lecture illustrates the importance of conservation training in an academic setting. The role of conservation programs in ensuring knowledge transfer and providing future conservators with sufficient tools and knowledge is discussed, and the materiality of the object, which is crucial in preserving our cultural heritage in an age of digitization, is highlighted.

5. Wim Diepenhorst

Closing churches: a blessing in disguise for 'sounding' heritage?

Although many problems arise when a church closes its doors, and its belongings, like the organ and bells, are left behind, there are indisputably some advantages, especially for the future of the organ. In many of these churches, the organ is still used every week and mostly not as a concert-instrument. It differs from the carillon, in that it does not have a public function, and does not suffer from the automatic exposure to the elements.

There are a number of difficulties with regard to playing the organ, if a church is still in use. It is sometimes difficult to find ways to lure the public into the church. This has been recognized by multiple institutions. Moreover, in the protestant north of the Netherlands, doors always remain closed during the week. Sometimes the (often not professional) main organist considers the instrument as private property, and will not allow others to play., the repertoire is too narrow-minded because of the religious context of the building etc.

The closing of churches forces us to think about an alternative function and use of the organ, its repertoire, the education of professional and amateur organists in this new situation etc. In the same way, there is much to be learned from the 'new uses' of for instance the carillon and other parts of our cultural heritage.

6. Marieke Lefebber-Morsman

18th-century bell playing clocks, their function and value.

Part of the value of mechanical musical instruments lies in the repertoire they carry. It is audio material from the past, which, aside from its intrinsic historic value, also tells us something about the musical taste of past generations. Years ago, I became interested in the many Dutch song titles, that were often programmed on the posh bell playing clocks, like 'Waarom verlaat je mij' (Why do you leave me), 'Kees mijn vrijer' (Kees my courter), and 'Boerenballet' (Farmers ballet). What genre did these songs belong in, and who were listening to them? Did the rich nobility, owners of these posh clocks, know the (sometimes dirty) songs in other ways? These questions became the basis of my PhD research to the musical repertoire of the 18th-century posh bell playing clocks in the Netherlands.

The research corpus was built partly from the collection of bell playing clocks in Museum Speelklok, partly from a collection of recordings made by Melgert Spaander. This clockwork restorer had been making audio recordings of all the clocks he had restored over the years, first on cassette tapes, and later CDs. Because the clocks in the research corpus were all restored to the point where they could play again, and with a lot of attention for playing 'authentically', they were eligible as a basis for my research to their repertoire.

By combining this corpus with the database of the Nederlandse Liederenbank (Dutch Song Database), I could identify a sizeable part of the melodies in the research corpus. They are love songs, heroic songs about battles, songs about farmers, drinking songs, and even 'naughty' songs about sex, adultery and pubic hairs.

Bell playing clocks were very expensive, and their owners consequently very rich. They often performed important regent's functions in their cities. They knew the melodies their clocks played, which often were ordered specifically, from their music lessons, but they are not the melodies we would expect when speaking of this noblemen elite. What did they like about them? And why is it strange, if it even is, that they would listen to these melodies (and probably know them by heart)?