**Eparm Forum 2016, 20-22 April,**

**Discussion on *Sources and Archive by Federica Riva***

An informed access to sources and reference literature by musician-researchers and efficient services delivered by libraries are necessary requirements for the development of artistic research. The session deals with two topics: the role of bibliographic research in the training of musicians-researchers taking into account recent experiments developed in Italian conservatoires; the impact of digitization on the development of libraries and their services, with specific reference to libraries preserving historic heritage.

Bibliographic research and documentation underpin research in all fields of science and humanities, therefore also artistic research in music. In a very traditional way research may be defined “a systematic enquiry which is reported in a form which allows the research methods and the outcomes to be accessible by others” (Allison at al. 1996). Research may also be seen “as a funny business. It has many of the characteristics of a journey. There are definite points of departure and arrival and in between a sequence of activities to keep you occupied” (Moore, 1990).

As a matter of fact, an artist needs to manage traditional research methods and techniques as soon as he choose to open his research process to the spoken/written language, either as he explores the literature, either as he speaks or write about his artwork.

In the scientific field any research starts with a literature review, which is also the first step for a dissertation. The researcher review the literature to different purposes: to explore his topic thoroughly, to help him in identifying a research problem and in developing his hypothesis or research questions, to demonstrate a thorough knowledge in the field. The literature review is quite a formal process. It can be described in few steps:

*Step 1*. Identify relevance types of information to search among primary sources, in a print-based or digital format (books, journals, research reports, theses, conference proceedings, newspapers and magazines). People themselves are one of the most important early sources of information. Secondary sources - as directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias – changed in recent time from print-based publication to large databases storing an impressive amount of information. Internet, which is the easiest accessible source of information in a great part of the world, requires a specific ability in evaluating information published in a variety of formats, including social networks. *Step 2*. Identify an opening search strategy by choosing best terms to describe the research topic, deciding to broaden or narrow the search strategy. *Step 3*. Plan the search and its output (a bibliography, a critical review, …) *Step 4*. Search systematically the sources of information *Step 5*. Choose a citation system.

Through this process any music student learns abilities which are helpful not only for his/her artistic work but also for his/her life as citizen of the information society: how and why a search strategy on paper publications differs from electronic publications; how to evaluate information retrieved from general or scientific websites; in which cases information stored on paper is still relevant.

In particular, it is essential that musicians dealing with the historic heritage have a comprehensive overview on sources of information, considering paper and electronic publications for their content not for their format. This basic ability give them the right perspective to approach music sources and to appreciate the difference between the orginal source and an amount of different electronic images that may be disseminated in Internet.

This observation lead us also to state that to learn the use of reference works and research tools it is much more complex now than in the past. Therefore there is a need to define a specific teaching space to let music students acquire skills, which are in great part complementary to those they learn in their artistic training.

For a librarian the basic question is not IF but WHEN the training in bibliographic research should enter the European music curricula, i.e. in the first or second cycle. How can students afford the Doctorate level without any basic training delivered in the first two cycles?

If we have a close look on how music students gain skills in music bibliography at European level, we have to admit we are far from this goal. The working group on Accreditation of the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and documentation Centres (IAML) discussed this topic and collected some experiences among librarians of different European countries. The most common experience is that training to research is limited to one or few guided library tours, where students get acquainted to the library as a resource in general. Library tours can be guided by the staff, or in cooperation with music teachers.

It seems therefore that the Italian experience is at present unique. Starting from the information needs of musicians involved in early music, the Italian reform introduced annual courses in music bibliography and cataloguing at the first and second cycle (from 20 to 30 hours each). In some Conservatories courses are mandatory, in many cases are optional. The Italian experiment developed in each Conservatory independently. Different approaches lead to a richness of experiences, which now form the basis for a national standard. Abilities taught include also search strategies in reference tools, form of citations, how to create and write a bibliography, music cataloguing.

In the second part of this presentation I propose you to share some basic ideas about libraries, in the hope that a common discussion will be helpful to improve a mutual understanding and to overcome big differences that exist between Nord and South European countries.

It is a common experience among musicians and researchers that in Nord European countries libraries have a prominent role in the society. Therefore also Conservatory libraries had already in the past resources sufficient to deliver basic and advanced services to music users (loan, copy services), which enabled them to guarantee access to their collections. Nord European countries have thus efficient, mostly modern conservatory libraries, well equipped with trained staff.

On the other hand, it is a common experience that libraries in South European countries, and Italy among them, are not efficient. They preserve a large part of the music heritage, often related to glorious periods of the history of music, which were often themselves generated by the teaching activity of Conservatoires. The case of the Conservatorio di musica di Napoli is probably the most famous one. (and more could be quoted: Italy has 20 relevant music libraries). Few researcher seems to notice that difficulties in managing conservatory libraries in South Europe are rooted in societies where libraries never had in general such a prominent role, they had in Nord Europe. A better understanding of the context, suggest the need to be aware of common features of music libraries in Europe; and the need to develop a better balanced music library system within the European music education system.

Where updating the collections is an efficient practice, the shift from paper to digital and electronic publications proved to be a normal experience. Therefore digitization is often praised for its impact on dissemination of unknown or less known music repertoire, and for its impact on preservation of paper sources, as music manuscripts, old prints and librettos, as far as written music concerns.

Digitization may also be seen as an essential but expensive process that aims to facilitate the worldwide dissemination of the content of sources (text), reducing the need to access the original source which store the text. This is particularly true as far as performed music concernes: in fact, a digital copy is often sufficient for performing purposes, where the performance is the actual fruition of music. This process is very different from what occurs in visual arts, where the accessibility in Internet of digitized images of painting or sculptures proved to be a great help in improving the number of museums visitors.

As a consequence, a reduced need to access a music source may have a negative impact on the on-site services of a music library.

The attitude of faculty members is decisive in the allocation of available resources to libraries in view to ensure that students can access to library resources. It is important that the community of artistic researchers, students and faculty members observes and shares issues related to music libraries.

Research could largely benefit from a renewed cooperation between librarians and musicians to be developed at two levels: the organization and governance of Conservatories on one side, as far as libraries efficiency concerns.