**Review – ”The Archive that Writes Itself”**

The article ”The Archive that Writes Itself”, intended for the special issue of *STM-SJM* on “Musical Materiality and Digitization” takes its starting point in artistic and practice based research and the problem of distinguishing between data and result in such a context, as these, to a certain extent, amount to the same thing (a problem that actually needs to be addressed and theorized in all research). From this the question on how to document and archive such a practice is articulated and will become the main concern and focus of the text, not least in relation to the question of materiality and – as will later be clear – time or temporality (a concept not explicitly used, however). After a short discussion of the concepts of *data* and *materiality*, the author, thus, states – “With these two rudimentary definitions of *data* and *materiality* it is clear that the representation of the data that stems from the material practice needs to pertain a certain notion of the original materiality itself. The overarching question for this paper is if and how this can be achieved.”

After these introductory remarks follow five sections – “Documentation music”, “Documenting openness”, “The Personal archive”, “The Scene of writing”, “Writing the past” – dealing, in short, with contemporary catalogs and archives and different ways of documenting music (scores, digital recordings etc.), with the challenge of documenting open works (Eco), with Benjaminian perspectives on the archive (in relation to memory and time), with Derrida’s heavily discussed essay on the archive (and some prequel remarks from his book on Freud of 1978), which segues over into part five. The article then ends with a short concluding discussion. In all parts, the question of materiality in relation to musical practice comes back – even though it could have been developed further – as well as the question of time.

There is thus a main concern and problematic in the article. Still, the text comes forth as a bit fragmentized. Its composition could be strengthened both by a clearer articulation of its purpose and aim, and by stating, more explicitly, the research question to be pursued, which could then be repeated and nuanced as the text moves forward and function as the engine of the piece. Moreover, the initial observation about artistic research tends to be subdued or even lost as the discussions of Benjamin and Derrida begin, and the same goes for the early remarks about data and materiality.

The most pressing problem with the piece, however, relates to theory. First of all, the very starting point seems to be a distinction between a primary (“original”, p. 2) material performance or practice and its documentation or archivization, which will always then be secondary (ontologically) and in a way deformed or not complete. Such claims can certainly be made and argued for, but they need to be more developed than they are here. Moreover, they don’t sit very well with the analysis of Benjamin and especially not Derrida. Thus, for instance, when the dichotomy between a unique performance and its representation is addressed (p. 13; see also p. 12 et passim) this seem a bit misleading in relation to Derrida’s understanding of the external and internal etcetera as always interlaced.

Furthermore, the article needs to dig deeper into the notions of materiality and materialism. The introductory remarks, alluding briefly to Marx, seem a bit underdeveloped in relation to the extensive theoretical discussions on the concepts during the last decade – in everything from affect and actor-network theory to media history to new materialism (for a summary, see the recent issue of *October*, #155, 2016). Not least this is important in order to address the notion of digital recording and digital archives and the specific material and temporal affordances of those, which would shed light on the central question of the piece.

Without doubt, this question is extremely important to address, and, thus, this is a potentially important article. However, in order to be published, I would say that it is in need of several revisions, both in regard to composition, argumentative architecture, and theory.