



InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Proposal for a Survey of the record-keeping practices of composers

Overview

It is proposed that a survey of composers be conducted to collect data on their record-keeping practices and the use of digital records in their discipline. Specifically, it is hoped to gather data relating to:

- The kinds of digital records they produce
- Their assumptions about future access to these records
- The nature and variety of digital music systems used by composers.

Rationale

The archival and musicological literatures already contain many articles on music and digital technologies. A great many of these set forth solutions - theoretical, hypothetical, or, occasionally, practical - to assumed problems. But we do not know whether these problems are perceived as such by those who deal with them at first hand - the composers. We have almost no hard data on what composers actually do with digital technology. We do not know what types of hardware and software configurations are most frequently used, what commercially-available systems are favored, nor do we have data on personally-developed systems or metadata that would permit us to categorize such systems. Perhaps more important, we do not know how composers use the documents they create, what their expectations are regarding the future viability of these documents, or what steps they take to ensure accessibility (except for those few instances that are the subjects of case studies).

The questionnaire will be designed to gather data in these areas:

1. The nature of the hardware and software used
2. The kind of documents produced
3. The contexts in which the documents are created and used (eg., historical record of the creative process, documentation of performance, the score itself)
4. The composer's intent re the disposition of the documents
5. The composer's view of the role of the document(s) (i.e., which constitute the "score," which are necessary to ensure the integrity of the work, which may be discarded).

This survey should also serve to locate the music-related case studies within the current landscape. The case studies are chosen because they present interesting and productive areas for study, not because they are representative

of the discipline. This survey will help to provide a larger context for the case studies than their purely local environments. It should also be interesting to see how composers themselves view the problems surrounding the identity of interactive and experiential works. Even if their opinions are not directly meaningful in archival terms, they will shed light on the composers' archival priorities (such as they may be).

Methodology

This project will be conducted by Michael Longton of the University of Victoria and research assistant Vincent Schillaci-Ventura.

The questionnaire must, of course, use a vocabulary that composers understand, and since the issues of interest to InterPARES 2 are foreign to many musicians, a degree of indirection will be necessary. We plan to use a web-based form with access by password. We will send out a large number of emails - with links - to composers in several countries inviting them to participate, and including the password. The results will be collated and summarized. This is not a case study, and the data will accordingly be left in a relatively raw state. It's purpose is to provide grist for other mills.

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