

Electronic music as music heritage

When the future becomes a valuable past

Mischa van Kan

Introduction

Through an ethnomusicological perspective, this article aims to investigate how the consideration of electroacoustic music at Elektronmusikstudion (EMS) in Stockholm as music heritage changes the relationship of sound artists and composers to the history of electroacoustic music. Rather than (re)writing the history of electroacoustic music connected to EMS in Stockholm, the article explores how this history is represented and reproduced through the institutionalized connotations of the heritage label.

The general history of electroacoustic music has been discussed widely (see, e.g., Holmes, 2020; Manning, 2013), as has its history as part of a specifically Swedish context, with EMS in Stockholm as a central site (see, e.g., Balkir, 2018; Broman, 2007; Groth, 2014). The aim of this article is thus not to write the history of electroacoustic music, but rather to investigate how specific attitudes towards this history have influenced its understanding among sound artists and composers.

The Swedish language differentiates between types of electronic music, in particular, a generalized *elektronisk musik* and a specified *elektronmusik*, the nuances of which are lost when the music is discussed in English.¹ Furthermore, with the popularization of electronic forms of music, such as techno and dance music, the term electronic music has acquired new meanings over time and can now refer to forms of popular music as well as those from the art music tradition. In this article, I will not pursue arguments about whether electronic music is a genre or a style of music; instead, I regard it primarily as a set of specific techniques used to create sounds. Despite the ambiguities that exist, I will use the term *electroacoustic music* in this article to refer to the music that is made in the tradition of the various studios around the world that have become famous as central sites for electroacoustic music, including the Studio für elektronische Musik at the WDR in Cologne, the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM) and later IRCAM in Paris and EMS in Stockholm. At times, I will use the more general term *electronic music* to indicate a broader context in which sound synthesis or the modification of recorded sound occurs. I want to underline that the borders between the two categories are not always as clear as these terms might suggest. Furthermore, these different ways of making music have led to the development of other forms of music, and some institutions have adjusted their own understanding of what they consider electronic music to be.

¹ The Swedish *elektronmusik*, for example, is closer to electroacoustic music, but does not necessarily distinguish the German tradition of *elektronische Musik* from *musique concrète*.

The specific site in focus of this article, EMS, was founded in 1964, but its prehistory dates back to the late 1950s (Groth, 2014, pp. 77–81, 88). As a part of Musikverket (the Swedish Performing Arts Agency, a state institution), EMS not only aims to ‘provide studios to professional composers and sound artists’ (Elektronmusikstudion, 2023), but it is also integrated into the wider organization of Musikverket that explicitly works to ‘preserve and bring to life theatre, dance and music heritage’ (Musikverket, 2022). The concept of heritage here indicates a specific understanding of the past. First, I want to underline that the concept is used differently in various academic disciplines that are relevant to music. In the following sections, I will clarify how I consider the concept of heritage within this article in relation to electroacoustic music in the case of EMS in Stockholm. After I clarify this academic position, I will discuss how attitudes have changed towards the past in relation to electroacoustic music and relate this to the theoretical and methodological implications of this for the following analysis. Here, I will first analyze what impact the institutional history of electroacoustic music at EMS has had in relation to *pointed-out heritage*, a term I will also clarify below. Accounts from sound artists and/or active composers at EMS will then illustrate different ways in which considering electroacoustic music as heritage influences sound artists/composers.

Studying heritage

Discussing electroacoustic music as music heritage connects this article to the academic discussion of heritage in general and music heritage in particular. Though the terms are the same, they are often defined differently depending on the specific discipline they are used in, be it musicology, ethnomusicology, popular music studies or heritage studies. This can create challenges in understanding the discourse, as the theoretical discussions from these different disciplines are not always in dialogue, especially if the term ‘music heritage’ is left undefined. This makes it hard to both compare discussions from different disciplines and to understand what the concept of heritage signifies and how researchers approach it.

Further complications arise, as terminology and disciplinary discussions are easily misunderstood or invested with different meanings when they are used outside of the context from which they arose. At the same time, cross-disciplinary perspectives are necessary to connect research from these different disciplines. In this article, I focus specifically on electronic music from the 1970s (when analogue synthesizers like those from Buchla and Moog were popular in the art music circles that were working with electroacoustic music) and its place as heritage in relation to the current electronic music context at EMS. Though the label ‘popular music’ is anything but apt for the experimental character of electroacoustic music, some of the research on heritage in relation to popular music provides interesting insights that can be applied to the study of electroacoustic music at EMS. Although this article uses ethnomusicological perspectives, it does not engage with traditional or non-Western musics that are often associated with the discipline of ethnomusicology.

The disciplinary distinctions in the discussion of heritage are also apparent on a methodological level, as there is a risk that qualitative approaches are used in relation to

only one area of music (such as popular music) and quantitative approaches on another (such as art music). In turn, understandings of heritage specific to individual disciplines could lead to blind spots where specific issues are not part of the discussion. I, for example, see a risk that researchers do not question why or how something has gained heritage status. Electroacoustic music, like other kinds of music, becomes heritage through a complex development in which various processes that defined electroacoustic music earlier are (re)activated. This is also why a critical perspective is important for dealing with heritage. Therefore, I have found that qualitative interviews, combined with a critical approach to electroacoustic music, are necessary to engage critically with the values connected to electroacoustic music history when it is related to heritage.

Methodology

To critically analyze how instruments within the electroacoustic music sphere change from representing the future to being a form of music heritage, this article will first use Dan Lundberg's model of cultural heritage to analyze how specific parts of electroacoustic music have become a valuable past. I conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews with two guest composers and two staff members of Musikverket who regularly visit the studio in their private time.² The aim of the interviews was to collect perspectives on how past practices of electroacoustic music have influenced people currently working within the field. Here, the focus was primarily to explore perspectives of how composers/sound artists working at EMS relate to electroacoustic music as a form of heritage rather than to find a specific consensus that can be generalized for all sound artists/composers visiting EMS. In fact, when I approached composers to ask if they were interested, most of them replied that they might not be 'typical' EMS guests. One guest composer and another visitor to the studio turned down my request for an interview because they needed all the time available to them in the studio. Most, however, responded positively and showed continuous interest in how the project evolved. I asked the interviewees about their practices of composing and playing electronic music, as well as how they reflected on the history of electroacoustic music and the idea of it as a form of music heritage.

The interest of the Musikverket employees in this topic became clear when I presented my ongoing research at a seminar at that agency on 21 March 2022. Many employees attended, some with substantial experience in traditional (folk) music and others with experience in electroacoustic music. Their knowledge and perspectives on music heritage and electroacoustic music at EMS have benefitted this project, and their expressed interest in the academic investigation of and perspectives on electroacoustic music also indicated a wider interest in the academic discussion on electronic music, which they shared with the interviewees.

² The interviews conducted for this article are archived at Musikverket, the Swedish Performing Arts Agency, after approval from the interviewees and are available for consultation there. The interviewees have had the opportunity to read the manuscript of this article and to approve and revise the quotes used.

The changing attitude towards the past

Per Olov Broman has argued that when electroacoustic music arose, journalists, composers and sound artists interested in electroacoustic music in Sweden proclaimed electroacoustic music as ‘music of the future’ (Broman, 2007, pp. 71–72). Though the various institutions agreed that electroacoustic music was the music of the future, many of the key figures disagreed about which music exactly should be considered electroacoustic music. Over the years, leading institutions, such as the Studio für elektronische Musik in Cologne, IRCAM in Paris and EMS in Stockholm, have championed a variety of styles of electroacoustic music that were often connected to specific composers or directors (see Broman, 2007, p. 86; Burlin, 2008, p. 373; Groth, 2014, p. 40; Balkir, 2018). More recently, however, the idea of electroacoustic music as the music of the future has come to incorporate the history of the music as well, rendering it intimately connected to the past.

The institutions mentioned above championed forms of electroacoustic music with differing aesthetic ideals, making it difficult to define electroacoustic music in the general sense in which it is used in this article. Though these differences dissolved, composers in Germany initially focused more on tone generation, whereas in France, recording technology was more central to electroacoustic music (see, e.g., Holmes, 2020, pp. 213, 232). Per Olov Broman argues that the idea of electroacoustic music as ‘music of the future’ had already started to lose its popularity by the 1970s (Broman, 2007, p. 73, 184); however, I would argue that the idea still prevailed within the electroacoustic music scene. The idea that something eventually changed becomes clear in Sanne Krogh Groth’s analysis of EMS; however, as she points out, by the end of the 2000s, images of old EMS interfaces evoked nostalgia in EMS circles (Groth, 2014, 34). Mats Lindström, the director of EMS, acknowledges that electroacoustic music is no longer connected only to the future. In response to the question of when he considers this new evaluation of the past of electroacoustic music to have taken shape, Lindström explains that, for him, a change had occurred by the end of the 1990s:

it came around the turn of the century, I would say. That’s when an interest in the older things arose ... There is a Swedish author called Teddy Hultberg who wrote about this ... he did some interviews with David Tudor ... in Düsseldorf in 1988 ... Then David Tudor kind of says to Hultberg ‘I think we ran a bit too fast’, in other words, we left yesterday’s technology before we even managed to research what potential it actually had (Lindström, 2021, my translation).³

In this account, Lindström refers to an interview that predates the turn of the century by more than a decade. Furthermore, he acknowledges that he threw away outdated objects, such as specially equipped computers, after he became director at EMS in 2004.

³ ‘den kom omkring sekelskiftet, skulle jag vilja säga. Då började det ju bli ett intresse för det här lite äldre. Jag vet, det finns en svensk författare som heter Teddy Hultberg som har skrivit en hel del om så här. ... han har gjort ett antal intervjuer med David Tudor ... i Düsseldorf 1988. ... då säger liksom David Tudor till Hultberg att “jag tror att vi sprang för snabbt,” alltså att vi övergav gårdagens teknik innan vi ens hunnit utforska vilken potential det egentligen hade.’

The exact point in time might not seem very clear here, but for this discussion, it is primarily the change itself that is significant. In contrast to previous beliefs that older technology was rendered obsolete, sound artists and composers now see the use of old technology as valuable. In this new situation, electroacoustic music can be considered as both music of the past and music of the future. It is this new understanding of electroacoustic music that I will analyze as a form of heritage.

The question of what it would mean for electroacoustic music to be considered heritage is twofold. First, it involves asking what is implied when electroacoustic music is seen through the lens of heritage. Second, we must consider what exactly constitutes this heritage. In this article, I discuss heritage specifically in relation to music; however, I do not see my role as a researcher as needing to determine whether electroacoustic music is indeed heritage. Instead, following ethnomusicological practice, I am more interested in how sound artists and composers think of electroacoustic music as heritage and how institutions have established a specific understanding of electroacoustic music. As several researchers have pointed out, the concept of heritage can be used to mean a variety of things, and most importantly, it can be used to achieve the specific goal that the person who uses the concept has in mind: ‘the language and discourse of heritage is used in many different ways and serves various interests’ (Cohen et al., 2015, p. 4). I regard music heritage as a classification that people assign to specific parts of musical culture, and I refer to music heritage or music as heritage to underline that some people regard particular forms of music and its culture as having a specific value.

To answer the question of what constitutes heritage, I will turn to Swedish museologist Stefan Bohman, who, like myself, considers the concept of heritage as a means of conceptualizing the ways in which objects can be seen as having symbolic value: ‘We then study what is used by others as something loaded with value’ (Bohman, 1997, p. 13, my translation). Those who invest meaning in an object can do this as a means of achieving specific objectives. Performance studies scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has characterized heritage – by specifically discussing intangible heritage – as ‘a mode of cultural production that gives the endangered or outmoded a second life as an exhibition of itself’ (2014, p. 166). This definition acknowledges that a heritage designation can offer a second chance to a culture (or cultural practice) that is seen as outmoded, thereby offering it the opportunity for survival. In the case of electronic music, this approach could revive a specific form of music or instruments, for example, old synthesizers. Moreover, she explains that heritage does not only concern specific objects that can be collected; instead, it should be seen as a system of knowledge and skills in which variants and versions of heritage exist and are transferred (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2014, pp. 163–165).⁴ This means that the ways in which composers and sound artists use studios for electroacoustic music are important aspects of electroacoustic music heritage.

⁴ As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes, the 1989 UNESCO general conference made a recommendation on safeguarding traditional culture and folklore which resulted in a report in May 2001. Here, the focus shifted to knowledge and skills, which meant a widening of the concept of cultural heritage.

If something can become heritage, it is important to consider how it happens. Bohman (1997, p. 12) suggests that heritage can either be discovered (like an unknown treasure found at an archaeological excavation) or pointed out (as in rituals or objects in everyday life to which the value of heritage is ascribed). Bohman also sees this as a distinction in the role of the involved institution that provides the heritage status: does it store heritage (as the former implies) or does it play an active part in producing heritage (which happens in the latter)? In this discussion of electroacoustic music as heritage, the second category is the most apt, as it is primarily the understanding of the music that is new rather than the music itself.

In line with Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's argument, I see the label of 'pointed out' being assigned to music heritage as a way of changing the values connected to specific objects or cultural expressions. In that sense, I also argue that the classification of heritage evokes reflection on what is pointed out as heritage, something I will return to below. Those who perform heritage music are not seen as passive, but rather as individuals who themselves can decide what they do and how they interact with the music culture or music heritage: 'But, all heritage interventions ... change the relationship of people to what they do. They change how people understand their culture and themselves' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2014, p. 169). Seeing electroacoustic music as music heritage is thus a way of understanding how the history of electroacoustic music influences the people working within it; this is what I will engage with further in this article.

What music can be heritage?

Now that I have defined what music heritage is, it is also necessary to consider what kinds of music can be considered a type of music heritage and how old it must be to embody this symbolic value. Cohen et al. (2015) stress that the understanding of what kinds of music could be regarded as heritage changed around the turn of the century, when popular music came to be embraced as heritage by established cultural institutions: 'Over recent years museums have also engaged with popular music heritage, as evidenced by a proliferation of exhibitions on particular popular music performers as well as popular music museums' (Cohen et al., 2015, p. 2). Electroacoustic music has also found its way into museums, as exemplified by an exhibition focusing on former EMS director Knut Wiggen (director from 1964 to 1975) and, as the (translated) title of the exhibition 'Musical Machines' highlights, the canonic machines used in the EMS studio have now taken on a prominent role in representing electroacoustic music (Groth, 2014, pp. 138-139).

Music journalist Simon Reynolds has argued that pop music culture has increasingly been looking backwards since the turn of the century: 'contemporary pop culture is addicted to its own past' (Reynolds, 2011, p. 403). Among the examples of this focus on the past, he lists popular forms of electronic music: 'In terms of mainstream pop music, many of the 2000s' most commercially prominent trends involved recycling ... eighties synth-pop-inspired femmes like La Roux, Little Boots and Lady Gaga' (Reynolds, 2011, p. xix). In a response to Reynolds, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett noted that, in this context, the present becomes past at an increasingly fast rate: 'As the retro clock speeds up, life

becomes heritage almost before it has a chance to be lived' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2014, p. 170). This observation is relevant to electroacoustic music, which was initially so new that it had no history, and then, once it found itself a history, it was quite a short one. However, I am not especially interested in discussing how an increasingly 'young' past becomes heritage, but rather how something that was once considered an indicator of the future or the present becomes seen as past, and how that affects the people working within this form of music.

The understanding of heritage as being applicable to a greater variety of music paved the way for initiatives to recognize electronic dance music as heritage. The non-profit organization 'Rave the Planet' from Berlin is an example of this, as it is actively working to get techno recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage (Rave the Planet, 2022). That, however, does not mean that all kinds of heritage are perceived as equal, as Sara Cohen points out in her study of popular music in Liverpool as heritage: 'Heritage ... is a highly political and ideological term that is used and defined in many different ways but commonly associated with a sense of ownership rather than just knowledge of the past' (Cohen, 2013, p. 581). It was primarily places that fit in with the dominant narratives and were deemed suitable for representing and exploiting the idea of popular music heritage in Liverpool that were at the centre of this particular recognition of heritage. This situation highlights the importance of investigating what is included and what is excluded when a category of music becomes heritage.

Ethnologist Sverker Hyltén-Cavallius has recognized that people can look at musical pasts in various ways, ways that he terms 'retrologies' (Hyltén-Cavallius, 2014, pp. 13–14). Heritage will always be fluid, but some aspects of history can take a central place in the story, and when they are repeated, they become more dominant. As the interest in the past that Reynolds identified increases and becomes more prominent in contemporary popular culture, representations of history become less fluid and more stabilized (Hyltén-Cavallius, 2014, p. 45). When a specific history of music becomes important to a wider group of people and is argued to be a form of heritage, it has to be validated in some way and, as Les Roberts and Sara Cohen argue, some types of music history are more validated than others (Roberts and Cohen, 2015, p. 223). The specific person who points out a musical form as heritage does this from a certain position. Roberts and Cohen have therefore argued that what these persons say and do is authorized by their position. They further argue that there is an authorized heritage discourse based on Western ideals that is conducted by socially powerful groups and backed up by official organizations (Cohen et al., 2015, p. 4). In addition to this kind of heritage, there is also a hidden type of heritage that is maintained by DIY (Do-It-Yourself) institutions that arose from private initiatives rather than institutional power (Reitsamer, 2020, p. 273). These grassroots organizations are self-authorized (Roberts and Cohen, 2015, p. 224) and are indicative of how specific parts of music history are obscured by a focus on the canonic idolization of the 'best' and the 'biggest' artists (Reitsamer, 2020, p. 287). Roberts and Cohen see the distinction between official authorization and self-authorization as a way of discussing the degree to which history (or memory, in their words) is authorized by an organization. This authority might stem

from prominent representatives or funding and collaborations with universities (Roberts and Cohen, 2015, p. 230).

Heritage model

To understand how electroacoustic music has become recognized as heritage in the specific case of EMS and to analyze which aspects of EMS's history have come to represent the past of electroacoustic music in Sweden, it is helpful to observe this process through a model of cultural heritage.

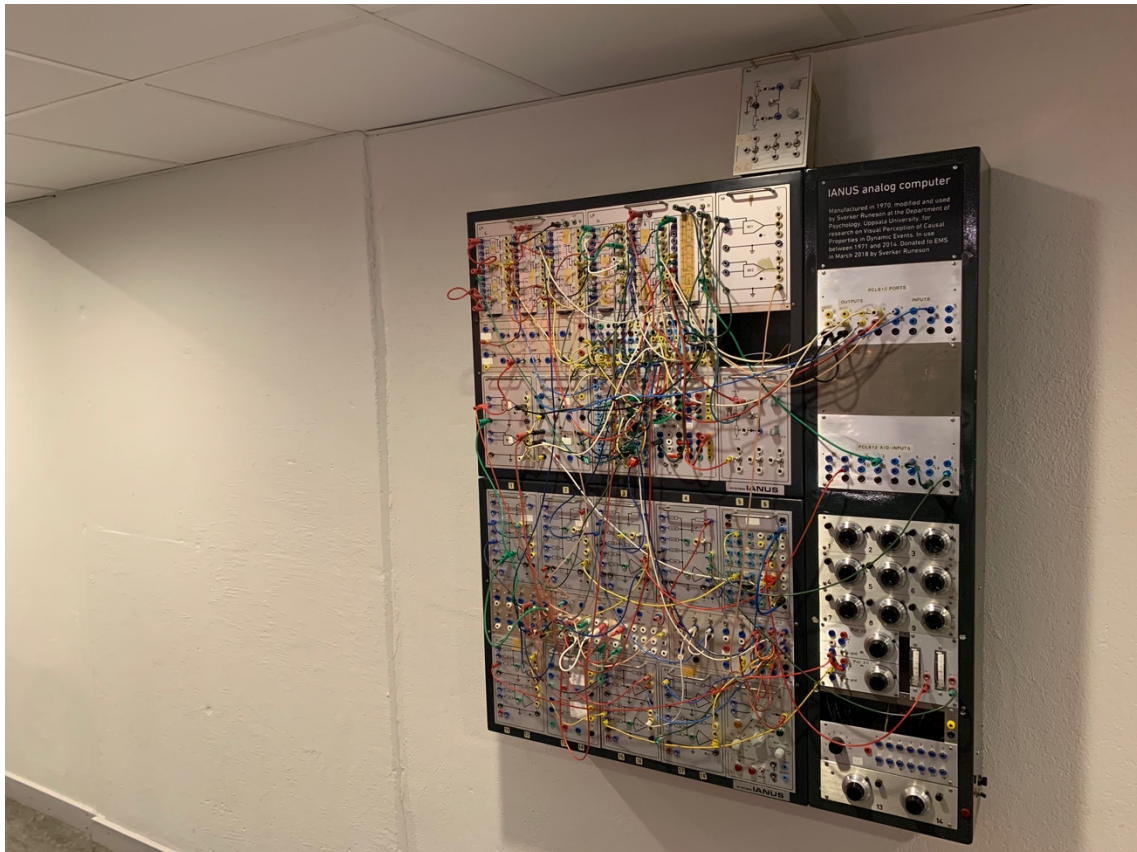


Figure 1. This picture shows the IANUS analogue computer that can be seen from the sitting area in the EMS kitchen. A plaque on the top right describes what the computer was used for and explains that it was made in 1970 and in use at Uppsala University between 1971 and 2014. The computer now functions as an objective representation that evokes a memory of the past (picture taken by the author 10 December 2021).

This specific view of heritage is not just part of Swedish academic discourse; it is even connected to the institutional organization to which EMS now belongs. EMS was somewhat typical of electroacoustic music studios in Europe, which often received financial support from national (radio) broadcasters (Holmes, 2020, p. 270). At the same time, the organization's collaboration with broadcasting corporations and the establishment of a studio occurred notably later than in many other Western countries (Broman, 2002, p. 548). Before EMS had its own studio (first at Radio Sweden and later

under its own management),⁵ the Stockholm-based association 'Fylkingen' was an important promoter of electroacoustic music. This association was founded in 1933 and consisted of artists working with contemporary music and art. Especially from the late 1950s onwards, Fylkingen actively worked to promote electroacoustic music and secure government support for it, and was therefore involved with EMS. After its time as a part of Sveriges Radio, followed by a period as an independent trust in 1969, in 1995, EMS became part of the governmental organization Rikskonserter, or Concerts Sweden in English, which was closed in 2011. Subsequently, EMS became an independent part of Musikverket (Swedish Performing Arts Agency), which (including its predecessors) constitutes a larger organization in which heritage researchers have held prominent positions. History also literally takes up space here, as the central room at EMS that houses a small kitchen and a coffee machine looks out on an old analogue computer mounted to the wall with a small plaque explaining its former use (see Fig. 1). Now no longer in use, it reminds visitors at EMS of the past, even outside of the studio rooms. Musikverket contains (among other departments) the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research (Visarkivet), of which ethnomusicologist Dan Lundberg (currently director general of Musikverket) was the director between 2001 and 2020, as well as the Swedish Museum of Performing Arts (Scenkonstmuseet), of which Bohman was the director between 2000 and 2008; both of these researchers have explored questions around heritage. With this amalgamation, EMS became part of an organization that – as discussed above – actively works with heritage.

Lundberg proposed a model based on Bohman's understanding of heritage to theorize the process through which music can become a form of cultural heritage. The actions of the people and institutions involved in this process influence which music is envisioned to be included in a culture's heritage. Here, the central actions are identified as part of – though not necessarily limited to – a linear model. He identifies four consecutive phases: Identification – Classification – Standardization – Symbolization (Lundberg, 2015, pp. 700–701). In the first phase, the music is identified and its characteristics, such as origin, instrumentation and playing technique, are determined. The second phase focuses on distinguishing different forms of the music and determining how they relate to each other. The third phase, standardization, considers the classifications and strengthens the distinguished boundaries, which are then reproduced by the cultural heritage institution. This phase can prompt musicians to react to the practices of the archive or institution that is the central site for these processes. Finally, in the phase of symbolization, the symbolic value of a type of music can change because of the earlier stages in the process of becoming heritage. Once the music is found, classified and standardized and becomes part of an institution that archives it, the music obtains a new symbolic value.

⁵ At the time the discussions began around setting up a studio for electroacoustic music, the national radio in Sweden was called 'AB Radiotjänst'. In 1957, it got its current name *Sveriges Radio*. In English it is sometimes referred to as *Radio Sweden* or *Swedish Radio*. In the following, I will use its Swedish name.

As Lundberg argues, the practice of archiving and preserving artefacts is intimately connected to the way in which the music – in Lundberg’s example, folk music – is understood, an understanding that can differ based on a range of variables: ‘Nevertheless, different understandings of the concept of folk music, from different time periods, persist, continuing to compete over its meaning’ (Lundberg, 2015, p. 683). What archives preserve – for example, scores, recorded music, texts or musical instruments – thus influences the way people understand the music. In the case of electroacoustic music, I argue that its understanding has been based to a great extent on technological possibilities and innovations. When new hardware became available, the general belief among those working with electroacoustic music was that older technologies quickly became obsolete. As new possibilities of electroacoustic music dawned, composers and technicians set out to explore how technological innovations could be relevant to their music, ridding themselves of older artefacts to make room for the latest tools. This understanding of electroacoustic music as dependent on state-of-the-art technology – a positivist approach to technology that presumes that newer technology is better and renders the old obsolete – has been a force within electroacoustic music that it is important to critically investigate, especially when electroacoustic music is considered a form of heritage and is thus imbued with new meanings.

In her discussion of heritage, ethnomusicologist Johanna Björkholm has argued that a person’s utterances regarding heritage have performative power and that using this power in the right ways can assign the status of heritage to something (Björkholm, 2011, p. 2). Björkholm argues that culture has the potential to become heritage and that the primary difference the heritage label signifies is an added value (Björkholm, 2011, p. 130). This has several implications, of which the most important is probably that the production of heritage is a way of exercising power and, as Björkholm underlines, this power is not just performed once, when something is acknowledged as heritage, but also when it is used as such: ‘Producing cultural heritage includes aspects of exercising power. This should not only be considered in the selection, but even in the continued use of the cultural heritage’ (Björkholm, 2011, p. 127, my translation). If Björkholm stresses power as an important factor in the selection processes and use of heritage, it is important to consider how instances where power comes into play reproduce and strengthen the expressions of power that took place before electroacoustic music was regarded as heritage. How does the interpretation of electroacoustic music as heritage reproduce the institutional power it held when it was ‘from the future’ once it is considered to be part of the past? This question needs to be considered in the analysis of how electroacoustic music has become music heritage that follows below.

The primary reason for considering cultural heritage as a process is to acknowledge that it is not a static entity but is instead actively shaped and reshaped by various actors and institutions. Furthermore, the case of electroacoustic music in Sweden shows how historical – or old – materials have been re-evaluated. Lundberg argues that the idea of ‘pastness’ is a way to add value to music: ‘Heritage organizations ensure that places and practices in danger of disappearing because they are no longer occupied or functioning

or valued will survive. It does this by adding value of pastness, exhibition, difference, and where possible indigeneity' (Lundberg, 2015, p. 370). In the case of electroacoustic music, it seems to have been the opposite: 'pastness' used to be a negative value rather than a positive one. Pastness signified that equipment used in electroacoustic music had become outdated and, therefore, further removed from the musical future it aspired to, potentially rendering it worthless (or close to it) by technological development.

Electroacoustic music as music heritage

To understand the specific forms of electronic music considered as heritage and the process through which this happened, it is crucial to recognize the institutional power involved. I argue that many of the processes associated with collecting cultural heritage for archives had already taken place in the realm of electroacoustic music at EMS prior to the music actually being considered heritage. This becomes clear if Lundberg's cultural heritage model is applied to electroacoustic music in Sweden. Although I will initially discuss these phases in a linear manner, I will later develop how the phases are dynamic and can be revisited later in the process.

Identification

Following Lundberg's model, the first phase is characterized by identification, which concerns the positioning of electroacoustic music as a specific kind of music. Those who wanted to work with electroacoustic music in Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s defined it primarily as a sub-genre of art music (Burlin, 2008, p. 345). This specific definition was part of a strategy to legitimize the new music. Electroacoustic music did not have an obvious history to which it was connected: 'There was, in the first place, simply no history of its own to look back onto. That is why electroacoustic music and *musique concrète* had to be legitimized in different ways.' (Burlin, 2008, p. 349, my translation and italicization). Furthermore, as music, it was closely related to new forms of science – or popular representations of them – like space science and computer science, which functioned as another level of legitimization. Such connections were made visually, for example, in the console of EMS's computer from the late 1960s, which was designated as providing a means to compose electroacoustic music: '[Knut] Wiggen ... explain[ed] that the primary reason for the console being this large was that it also had a "propaganda" function. People were presumably impressed to see a console that looked like something out of a NASA space center or a science fiction film' (Groth, 2014, p. 145). Moreover, it seems that these 'rocket-science' similarities not only influenced outsiders' impressions of electroacoustic music, but even the practices of those who were in the studio; as Toivo Burlin commented, 'only specific technicians were allowed to operate the equipment' (Burlin, 2008, p. 349, my translation). To this, I would like to add that this scientific exclusiveness of the EMS institution and the power to speak for it also functioned as a way of excluding specific people and avoiding unwanted associations with the music that might call into question the complexity of the music or its position as a form of art music.

Classification

Once the central composers involved in Fylkingen and EMS had more or less defined electroacoustic music, they started to distinguish between different styles within it. As Burlin pointed out, this soon led to an understanding of electroacoustic music as art music. This classification was established in the 1970s and involved distinctions between particular forms. The central figures working at EMS (who were often connected to Fylkingen) thus had considerable power in defining the classifications to which electroacoustic music had to adhere. In that sense, they could highlight specific composers and disregard others who did not follow the classifications set out by the leading figures of Fylkingen and EMS.

In the 1950s, central figures in Fylkingen did not regard *musique concrète* as an autonomous form of music (Groth, 2014, p. 63), and, following the perceived dichotomy between Cologne and Paris, leading composers like Bengt Hambraeus favoured the German side of the two (Groth, 2014, p. 64). The Gothenburg-based composer Rune Lindblad was not only geographically removed from the discussion and preferences in Stockholm; his music, which – like Pierre Schaeffer’s – was the result of experimentations with recorded sounds on wire and tape recorders, did not fit the classifications and methods that, within Fylkingen, were considered ideal for electroacoustic music:

Electroacoustic music had to be composed, devised before it was implemented, it could not be improvised on the spot. Electronic music that was composed through improvisational processes had a hard time obtaining status as good electroacoustic music. This fate affected, for example, Rune Lindblad’s productions (Burlin, 2008, pp. 373–374, my translation).

Here, it was not the aesthetics but rather the way in which the music was made that determined the classifications. The ways of creating electronic music that resembled art music – not least the connection that Cologne made to serialism (Groth, 2014, p. 52) – consequently made it easier to argue that electroacoustic music was to be regarded as a form of art music. This meant that composers such as Lindblad, who used other (for example, more experimental) methods, were marginalized. This classification of electronic music led to conflicts among composers about how the studio should be used. Knut Wiggen, the director of EMS at the time, was one of the individuals who had a position of power to determine the direction of electronic music in Sweden. The organization’s strong focus on research as the basis for electroacoustic music began to conflict with the composers’ views on the music.

There was also an opposition between the intellectual stance Wiggen took as director of the studio and the pragmatic approaches of the composers who worked in the studios (Groth, 2014, pp. 106–107). This eventually led to several composers leaving EMS (Groth, 2014, pp. 126–127). Many composers of electroacoustic music were members of Fylkingen, the association for experimental music and art mentioned above; however, Fylkingen’s internal organization is also of importance, as many of the artists organized themselves into different groups within Fylkingen. Sanne Krogh Groth pointed out that the so-called ‘Theory Group’ at Fylkingen held a dominant position within the

organization before a schism occurred inside the association in 1969. At EMS, Wiggen was the key proponent of research as central to electroacoustic music, which meant that it should be prioritized and was a prerequisite for artistic production (Groth, 2014, p. 136). This strong connection to research, I argue, was also an important way to establish what in the heritage model is regarded as classification. This defined EMS as an institution and set electroacoustic music up as being an advanced and radically new music.

Standardization

By defining a clear standard for electroacoustic music at EMS, the leading figures there made sure that the music they considered to be suitable would serve to represent electroacoustic music. An interesting example that deviated from the standard of electroacoustic music at EMS was Hans Edler's *Elektron Kukéso*, which was an LP record made at EMS containing popular music made on EMS's computer between 1969 and 1971 and issued in 1971. The record is interesting because Edler used an advanced form of sound synthesis that had been built to give the composer the opportunity to move away from the twelve tones that had previously defined the musical possibilities in art music. Though the distinctive sonorities of electroacoustic music formed an important part of the music on the album, the melodies and harmonies (in most tunes accompanied by song) followed the practices applied in popular music and used with, for example, keyboard instruments. Though productions like Edler's were not in any way prohibited at EMS and were not kept secret, the leading figures at EMS had other ways to make clear that these recordings were not representative of the 'standard' at EMS. In the liner notes of a 2004 reissue of Edler's record on CD, Knut Wiggen, director of EMS at the time of the original recording, is referred to as having been slightly scared of the attention that Edler's project attracted in the press, where it was perceived as rock music and thereby contrasted with the image of EMS as a site for 'serious composition': 'Reminded of this in 2001, Wiggen admits that he was indeed a bit worried at the time. Rock music had not yet gained the status it has today and was still considered a part of youth culture' (Apelqvist, 2004, p. 20).

Other musicians active at EMS during various periods commented at a seminar I held at Musikverket in 2022 that there were specific forms of electronic music that should be kept under the radar: 'We closed the door when we were working with popular music.'⁶ Though the music that was created at EMS's studios was in no way limited to the electroacoustic music that could be regarded as art music – as the examples above have shown – they were clearly marked as deviating from the standard, or the music that the EMS management regarded as the most important music. This bears a strong resemblance to what Georgina Born found in her research on IRCAM in Paris, where the institutional discourse was different from the practice of many users.

⁶ This is a quote from one of the participants in the seminar held 21 March 2022, who used to work at EMS. The quote relates primarily to the period of the 1960s to the 1980s. The participant explained that, although tolerance increased in the 1990s, popular music was still not uncontroversial. For a somewhat similar perspective, see also Ola Stockfelt's discussion of EMS (2005, p. 353).

She noted that the staff members at IRCAM made sure that none (or at least not too much) of the ‘wrong’ music would become associated with the institution. They did so by hiding parts of their varied music productions, both consciously and unconsciously. Those who worked with popular music described it as a leisure activity and the consumption of the music that did not fit in at IRCAM took place mainly elsewhere. If any of the ‘wrong’ forms of electronic music became connected to IRCAM, it happened at ‘marginal’ events (Born, 1997, pp. 484–488).

In institutions of electroacoustic music where there is a lot at stake, for example prestige or government funding, the typical form of music associated with the institution can influence these stakes. As Born also pointed out, institutions for contemporary music might start as being experimental and open; however, their environmental norms can transform as they aim to guard and protect their own values:

The history of the French state’s support for musical modernism thus exemplifies the wider phenomenon whereby a publicly funded project in contemporary art or music, conceived by its proponents as radical and progressive, may rather easily be transformed into a formalist, elitist, and privileged institutional enclave of cultural production, and one that defends itself, and indeed defines itself, against the philistine predations of the ‘mass’ public (Born, 1997, p. 483).

This distinction from ‘mass’ or popular culture is partly true for EMS as well, as is shown by Wiggen’s concern about the possible associations to rock music that Edler’s record project could bring to EMS. Even though electronic music that did not meet the standards established by the leading figures at EMS was not prohibited or thwarted, EMS’ director Wiggen preferred to keep those outside of the authorized narrative of the institution. Those working at EMS knew clearly what could be shared with the outside world and what should be kept within closed doors, quite literally, as they closed the door when working with popular music, as mentioned above.

Symbolization

A question that follows when electronic music is standardized is: What exactly does it mean when the particular form of electroacoustic music becomes heritage? The discussion of electroacoustic music as heritage might seem to focus on the music and its characteristics, but upon closer inspection, the aspects of electroacoustic music that have become central to representing the past are notably different from, for example, folk music in contexts where it is recognized as music heritage. The latter has a stronger focus on specific musicians, repertoire or playing technique, whereas the former centres on technological equipment, as argued above. From that observation follows the question: What materials of electroacoustic music end up in heritage institutions? In her inventory of composer-based collections, musicologist Laura Zattra notes that electroacoustic music results in ‘heterogeneous documentation’ (Zattra, 2021, p. 87). Her focus on composer practices also shows the complexity of the roles of software and digital technology as historical materials, since the music is highly dependent on complex technology. In addition to the heterogeneous character of the material, this also means that it can become inaccessible or even be lost.

If the steps in the heritage model discussed above primarily determine what constitutes electroacoustic music, they become relevant again as the symbolic value of the music changes. When the category of heritage is used to describe electroacoustic music, the past is rendered valuable, which marks a change in previous attitudes towards the past. Mats Lindström, the current director of EMS, endorses this understanding of the past as something that was left behind and that most of those who worked with electroacoustic music only had an interest in the newest technologies:

EMS's old engineer, and engineers I'd guess, they didn't give a shit about yesterday's technology ... the new was automatically better, it always gets better, so to say. That attitude generally prevailed within electroacoustic music (Lindström, 2021, my translation).⁷

One of the modular synths currently used at EMS, the Buchla 200, is a good example that illustrates this changing attitude. As with the other revolutionary synthesizer from the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Moog Modular Synthesizer, the Buchla was voltage controlled and combined different modules that together formed the synthesizer. In contrast to the Moog, however, the Buchla did not feature a keyboard to control the instrument, but instead used touch-sensitive plates. When the Buchla was purchased by EMS in 1974, it was a cutting-edge piece of equipment and an example of ultra-modern technology in electroacoustic music. It was praised, for example, for its sequencing features (Holmes, 2020, p. 461). Its ultra-modernity, however, wore off and the synthesizer became outdated. Furthermore, some of its electronic components broke and the Buchla was no longer at the centre of the composers' attention, resulting in the machine taking up space but holding little value. Suddenly, however, its pastness transformed it from being something of low value into something positive. Though the Buchla was still a broken synthesizer, it suddenly became interesting and therefore worth repairing. One of the interviewed composers argued that now the Buchla is even one of the primary reasons people travel from afar to visit EMS: 'I was thinking that EMS is mostly known for this modular stuff, globally I would say, maybe in Sweden it could be known for other stuff ... I have friends - mostly online friends - who know EMS for the Buchla and Serge modulars' (Sirén, 2022, p. 2).

Interestingly, the aspect of the past that receives the most attention is not a particular musical repertoire or specific practices, but rather the instruments that were used to make electroacoustic music. As Reitsamer (among others) has pointed out, focusing on privileged objects from institutions - such as the modular Buchla synthesizer at EMS - involves a risk, since such a focus might lead to a reproduction of (previously) existing norms (Reitsamer, 2020, pp. 275, 279-280). Such norms include, for example, those established in the classification and standardization processes discussed above. In the case of EMS, this can be seen as part of legitimizing electroacoustic music through a technological focus and a close link to research. To return to Björkholm, power is also

⁷ 'EMS gamla ingenjör, och ingenjörer skulle jag tro, de sket fullständigt i gårdagens teknologi. ... det nya är bättre automatiskt va, det blir alltid bättre så att säga. Och den attityden fanns nog generellt inom elektronmusiken.'

exercised in the continued use of the Buchla. When the Buchla becomes a central attraction of EMS, the focus on the Buchla can reproduce the choices of those who were in power (i.e., to purchase the particular instrument). In this way, the standard of electroacoustic music (following the heritage model) from the time of purchase is reproduced as the Buchla attains a new symbolic value representing the specific electroacoustic music that is identified, classified and standardized. Therefore, it is important to investigate how the new symbolic value of electroacoustic music manifests itself and influences the way composers and sound artists relate to electronic music.

What does the symbolic value of music heritage mean for composers and sound artists at EMS?

To understand how the symbolization of electroacoustic music impacts the musicians who work or have worked at EMS, I conducted qualitative interviews with four people who are composers/sound artists and/or employees at Musikverket. Among them were two guest composers (Rahel Kraft and Joonas Sirén) and two employees who were also active as composers (Pär Johansson and Aina Myrstener). To avoid uncritically reproducing the male dominance that used to prevail at EMS, I ensured that two of the four interviewees were women. The interviews with the guest composers were conducted in English and the employees were interviewed in Swedish. I wanted to discuss their work and thoughts on electronic music, among other things. The discussion here was not necessarily focused only on the composers' or sound artists' own practices of creating music, which Henrik Frisk (2017, p. 52) refers to as an internal archive, but included how they related to electronic music more broadly, encompassing a great variety of composers, musicians and sound artists. I discussed with them how they consider electronic music to be a type of heritage.

Guest composer Rahel Kraft answered that she had not thought of electronic music explicitly as heritage: 'Maybe I can say I am not so aware of it, it is not something that is very conscious ... at certain points, some things are sticking out, or we are suddenly aware of it, that this is important' (Kraft, 2021, p. 8). She reflected that she has had little use of the term heritage, but that sometimes, specific parts of the messy history of electronic music stick out and then people become aware of the relevance of the historic aspects of electronic music.

Even if few people actually use the concept of (music) heritage in speaking about electronic music, the implications of the concept and the actions connected to it resonated with the interviewees. In different ways, they acknowledged that some aspects of music and its culture have symbolic value and are important to preserve. For example, as an employee at Musikverket who also uses EMS studios for her music projects noted:

If you work with something you might end up being more passionate about ... saving these things and making them accessible to people. It's obvious that you become more

involved in a way. But if the actual concept changes it, I just never thought of it so much in the first place, but have seen it as self-evident (Myrstener, 2022, p. 2, my translation).⁸

This is in line with the research by Roberts and Cohen, who found that few members of pop music audiences thought of heritage as a relevant concept for describing either popular music or their private relationship to music over the years (Roberts and Cohen, 2015, p. 234), even if it clearly connects to the symbolic value of specific parts of a music and its culture.

Relating to the question of what music heritage does, in the interviews I asked some of the composers/sound artists and employees at EMS to reflect on what music heritage could be in relation to electronic music. Kraft further commented that her presence at the studio made her reflect on her activities as a sound artist: 'I actually reflected on that yesterday, because being here and working with the Buchla also made me reflect: why am I here? How did I end up here?' (Kraft, 2021, p. 1). Using the old synthesizer is thus a way in which reflections on electroacoustic music and a sound artist's own work can be evoked.

The idea that aspects of the history of electronic music have special symbolic value – implying that this kind of music can be seen as music heritage – is not only relevant to the representations of electroacoustic music history at EMS. Many of the composers/sound artists working at EMS have encountered (popular) music archives in their careers, offering the potential to activate thoughts about the history of electroacoustic music and the importance of archives. For this reason, Sara Cohen et al. describe music archives as a form of mobilization (Cohen et al., 2015, p. 4). In one interview, the effects of (other) archives on historical thinking regarding electronic music became obvious as the sound artist reflected on her practice in the studio alongside critical reflection on the history of the music she was working with:

I studied sound arts and I think this had a big change in reflecting on myself and on my practice because the first work that I had to do was to work on an archive. Ah, I forgot what it was called; it was an archive of female sound artists ... This was really good for me as I realized, actually, there are many, many women out there who did great and amazing stuff ... But then, when I came into this archive, I realized I missed all these names, all this music, I was not aware that so many women worked with electronic music (Kraft, 2021, p. 6).

The account above shows how earlier encounters with music heritage that originated from self-authorized archives (specifically, Her Noise Archive) were meaningful to the sound artist. This is in line with the point that Reitsamer makes, that archives serve to counter the marginalization of female musicians and make their work visible (Reitsamer, 2020, pp. 275–276, 282). Such initiatives are identified by the sound artist as being very important and provide a way of seeing that even if female musicians are not central to

⁸ 'Jobbar man med någonting så blir det kanske mer att man brinner mer för att ... bevara de här sakerna, och att de ska tillgängliggöras för människor. Det är såklart att man blir mer involverad i det på något sätt. Men om själva begreppet har förändrats, jag hade nog aldrig tänkt så mycket på det över huvud taget, utan sett det som självklart.'

the canon of electroacoustic music, this does not mean that they were not an important part of the development of electroacoustic music. This earlier encounter with an archive that contained collections of various female musicians is thus brought to life by another archive that promotes reflection on aspects of electronic music history. In turn, these reflections can be valuable for artistic practices, as they ‘trigger activities that points [sic] ahead and bridges [sic] the gap between past, present and future’ (Frisk, 2017, p. 54).

Working with the Buchla 200 in Studio 4 at EMS illustrates how the heritage of electronic music not only consists of very tangible instruments but also includes intangible aspects. Kraft further points out how working with the Buchla made her think of how disciplinary boundaries in music education influence the amount of attention that specific music and specific sound artists receive:

When I was reading the manual of the Buchla, on the first page there are – I mean there are several manuals – but one manual is like recommendations on what to listen to and there are three jazz musicians on it, it’s like Herbie, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and John McLaughlin and what was striking for me is that in my education, especially in my jazz education, this relationship to synths, I mean not only synths but to electronic music, is not, or was not part of it and still isn’t, and I was thinking: how strange is that? ... why is this knowledge not taught or not included in an education like I encountered? (Kraft, 2021, p. 8).

This comment from the sound artist affirms Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s definition of intangible heritage discussed above, but it also challenges and reconfigures the position of electroacoustic music in relation to other kinds of music. The sound artist’s reflection on learning that artists canonized as jazz musicians had worked with the Buchla is followed by surprise at the absence of these activities in jazz education. It also underlines that, because jazz and electroacoustic music are perceived to be different kinds of music, musical activities that take place in the borderland of the two tend to be obscured by the institutionalization of music in music education. I would argue that this was also the case in electroacoustic music institutions and is strongly connected to issues surrounding the classification and standardization of electroacoustic music. As Danielle Sofer has pointed out, this is related to the conception of electronic music as electroacoustic music (Sofer, 2020, p. 237). Following the heritage model, the standardization of electroacoustic music thus ensured that it was distinguished from other categories of music, such as jazz and/or popular music. Following George E. Lewis, Sofer argued that the division between electroacoustic music and popular music (including jazz) was also informed by gender and race (see also Lewis, 2008). As electronic music was connected to art music through electroacoustic music, it followed the canon of white male composers, whereas African American interactions with electronic music fit the understanding of African Americans as making popular music (Sofer, 2020, p. 244). Such canonic or standardized understandings of popular music and electroacoustic music obscure connections between musicians recognized within jazz (as well as artists known for making popular music) and artists within electroacoustic music.

This account also shows the power of heritage institutions to renegotiate earlier events in the heritage process. Here, the sound artist challenges the standardization that took

place in defining electroacoustic music before it was regarded as heritage. In this way, she questions the boundaries between electroacoustic music and other kinds of music. This also shows, in line with Björkholm (2011), that the processes in the heritage model, such as the identification of what electroacoustic music is and the classification of different forms, can also be questioned. Some of the questions that the account raises are as follows: Could electroacoustic music be something other than music that is closely connected to art music as it was defined in the classification phase? Are there any forms of electroacoustic music made by musicians like Herbie Hancock, who are generally associated with jazz? Is the standard form of electroacoustic music really the only possible standard?

A sound artist can also decide to actively move away from the sounds that are privileged by the processes in the heritage model discussed above and instead look for less idealized aesthetics than the 1970s synthesizers, such as the Buchla 200, as outlined by Joonas Sirén:

It has been since the late nineties that people have been striving to be as close as possible to analogue waves, synthesizers. Most of the synthesizers people are making nowadays, even if they are not actually analogue, they are virtually analogue and trying to get this pure – maybe pure is not right, but warm [tone, MvK] – people are really striving towards those warm analogue tones. But I somehow feel that the opposite sometimes is interesting, going to like late eighties or early nineties super-digital frequency modulation (Sirén, 2022, p. 1).

The sound artist interviewed here consciously moved away from the sounds of analogue synthesizers, which have become somewhat emblematic of electroacoustic music in the heritage process. Moreover, he decided to work with a different kind of instrument as a reaction against established norms and objectification, which Björkholm sees as a possible reaction to the heritage process (Björkholm, 2011, p. 144). In the quote above, the sound artist shows awareness of the standardization of electroacoustic music heritage by referring to analogue sounds as ‘pure’, but then immediately reflects on these norms as not being neutral, understanding the word as reproducing the dominant values in electroacoustic music by describing the sound as pure and opposing it to impure or adulterated sounds. The sound artist’s decision to work with sounds that are not symbolic of electroacoustic music and his doing this at an important institution for electroacoustic music like EMS means that the symbolic value connected to electroacoustic music can be challenged. Electronic music (in a wider sense) might be identified as a different kind of music and/or culture; it could also be classified in a different way, leading to a new standard that then alters its symbolic value once more.

The accounts from these interviews show that the composers and sound artists do reflect on electronic music and its past and that their practices are informed and influenced by the symbolic value that electronic music takes on when considered as having a valuable past. At the same time, the research done for this article and the article itself can be seen as a proposition for the interviewees and the readers to think of electroacoustic music as heritage. Giving scholarly attention to electronic music and specifically investigating it as a form of music heritage lends it additional symbolic value.

It potentially legitimizes electronic music by paying it academic attention – now in a different academic field – in a way similar to how space science and computer science did earlier on.

Music heritage in electronic music is, to a significant extent, ascribed to old synthesizers. Following Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, these outmoded instruments get a new life, but importantly, the devotees of electroacoustic music prefer not to put them into a museum but rather want them to be used, thereby highlighting the intangible aspects of electroacoustic music as musical heritage. Seeing these instruments as a type of music heritage, however, is an important way to legitimize paying for their maintenance and continuing to make them accessible to composers/sound artists. As EMS member of staff, librarian and composer Pär Johansson expressed, describing electroacoustic music as the future of music was an important part of legitimizing it: ‘I don’t know, who thought it was music of the future? Maybe those who worked with it, primarily when they wanted funding. That’s something to take into account too ... But in a way, technically, it was. This was unexplored territory and they saw potential in it’ (Johansson, 2022, p. 4, my translation).⁹ As with other forms of art music, electroacoustic music needed financial support to establish and sustain studios where the music could be made. Now, however, the support and the necessity of the support are no longer solely legitimized by relating the music to the future; connections to the past are also important.

The sound artists/composers and employees at EMS are also intellectuals, as Georgina Born characterized the people working at IRCAM (Born, 1997, pp. 498–499, footnote 2). Many of them have an education that has trained them to critically engage with electroacoustic music, and the interviewees showed great interest in the questions posed. As the interviewees’ accounts show, the symbolic value involved in seeing electroacoustic music as music heritage leads to reflections. These inform both the practices of artists in electronic music and their understanding of its history, which in turn creates the potential to challenge current and previous configurations of electronic music as heritage. This means that the stages of the heritage model (identification, classification, standardization and symbolization) can be renegotiated and redefined.

Conclusion

Now that electronic music at EMS no longer solely represents the future of music and has instead become integrated into Musikverket, an organization partially engaged in cultural heritage, it is apt to investigate how seeing electroacoustic music in relation to heritage has influenced the way composers/sound artists understand it. Previous research on music heritage has found that an increased interest in the history of a music and initiatives taken to preserve it can canonize specific forms of music. Bringing out the

⁹ ‘Men, jag vet inte, vem tyckte att det var framtidens musik? Kanske de som höll på med det, framför allt när man ville ha anslag [MvK: Ah]. Det får man ju också räkna med ... Och på sätt och vis, om man ser rent tekniskt, så var det ju ändå så. Här var det ett utforskat område och man såg redan då att här finns det en potential.’

past aspects of electroacoustic music thus bears the risk of reproducing the carefully modelled understanding of electronic music as belonging to the future, but it also provides opportunities to remodel our understanding of its past into a more complex, less linear and more inclusive understanding of electronic music. Applying an ethnomusicological model of heritage to EMS has also shown that the institutionalization of EMS as an organization for music of the future also impacts the function of EMS as a site for heritage. The institutionalization of electroacoustic music in Sweden and at EMS in particular have, to a great extent, identified, classified and standardized electroacoustic music in a Swedish context. In that sense, when electroacoustic music becomes a heritage form, this new status can reproduce selection processes that predate its heritage status.

At the same time, the symbolic value of the heritage status that is now associated with electroacoustic music can invite sound artists/composers working in EMS's studios to reflect on electronic music and its past. EMS is part of a larger heritage organization, where ideas of preserving music history and making it available have become a more integrated part of everyday life, even if the interviewed employees do not deem the actual concept of heritage to be central to their relationship to the history of the music. This revised positioning makes it possible to expand the range of connections that electronic music possesses to include other kinds of music, as well as to question the gender imbalance that exists in many of the standardized forms of electronic music.

As one of the accounts has shown, the inclusion of the music's past as part of its relevance can allow a sound artist/composer to make deviant choices and to reject standardized forms of electroacoustic music previously championed as central to the heritage of electroacoustic music (such as modular synths like EMS's Buchla 200). Instead, one of the interviewed sound artists actively decided to explore other interests, providing another example of how the symbolizing power of heritage influences the understanding of electronic music – it can challenge the classifications and standardizations of electroacoustic music. However, it is also the case that heritage status brings about the risk of elevating previously privileged forms of electronic music. EMS, as a place that owns many historical artefacts, promotes reflection and thereby a more complex understanding of electronic music that can form a more inclusive understanding of it as music and as common ground for various sound artists and composers.

This project, which investigates electronic music as cultural heritage, is itself part of the symbolization phase of electroacoustic music in the heritage process. Though its relation to electronic music is different from the earlier associations that electroacoustic music had with research in the 1950s and 1960s, devoting scholarly attention to the topic is part of justifying the existence of specific forms of electroacoustic music. As the EMS studio conducts its activities within a cultural heritage institution, for example, by providing sound artists and composers with access to a Buchla 200 synthesizer, it adds the symbolic value of music heritage to electroacoustic music. This enables the devotees of electroacoustic music to maintain old synthesizers, keep them available to (other) artists and explore new and creative ways of using them. When composers/sound artists use the equipment, they also maintain the intangible aspects of electronic music

heritage. Here, a critical approach to electroacoustic music as heritage also enables sound artists and composers to find new ways of engaging with old synthesizers, rather than reproduce a standardized understanding of them and electronic music more generally.

In this sense, understanding electronic music as heritage can help move the academic focus from the tangible objects of electroacoustic music to the intangible aspects of electroacoustic music heritage. As the accounts from the interviews show, EMS, as a site of music heritage, creates a space for reflection where the old institution for electroacoustic music is not only preserved, but also the norms of electronic music can be challenged and redefined. This also enables sound artists/composers to find and legitimize new ways of exploring old synthesizers or to explore alternative ways of making electronic music.

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Abstract

In the past, many institutions of electroacoustic music positioned electroacoustic music as being the ‘music of the future’; in the first two decades of the 21st century, however, a focus on electroacoustic music’s past has grown, in particular with the aim to preserve this past. If pastness could once make electroacoustic music obsolete, it can now be valuable for electroacoustic music. Therefore, this article investigates how the view of electroacoustic music as music heritage has influenced the present understanding of this kind of music at Elektronmusikstudion (EMS) in Stockholm, Sweden. By analyzing the stages through which electroacoustic music at EMS has become heritage and by conducting and analysing qualitative interviews with composers/sound artists working at EMS, this article explores electroacoustic music as heritage. Furthermore, it investigates the possible effects this understanding of electroacoustic music has on artists’ practices and reflections. The main conclusion is that the institutional history of electroacoustic music influences how it is regarded as music heritage. Furthermore, understanding electroacoustic music as heritage allows various people involved at EMS to reflect on its past, and it becomes clear that this past can influence artistic choices. At the same time, these reflections contribute to creating a many-faceted history of electronic music rather than maintaining a history with a single grand narrative.

Keywords: Electronic music, electroacoustic music, music heritage, analogue synthesizers, music archives, Elektronmusikstudion, heritage model, Buchla

The author

Mischa van Kan is a senior lecturer in musicology at Linnaeus University in Växjö, Sweden. Van Kan’s research interests include jazz, electronic music, and popular music, with a focus on the interactions between music cultures, media, and technology. More specifically, his work analyzes border crossings in local and transnational music scenes with a focus on Sweden and the Nordic countries. As part of the project ‘Historically informed design of sound synthesis: a multidisciplinary, structured approach to the digitization and exploration of electronic music heritage’ funded by the Swedish Research Council, he has investigated electronic music as music heritage at EMS, Stockholm.