Sound Archives and Creation

Intangible Cultural Heritage,
Museums and Innovation

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VILLE DE
GENÈVE

The case :

- Sound archives of traditional field recordings from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania
- Contemporary music creations based on the sound archives

Constantin Brăiloiu recording Romanian musicians. Around 1930.

Jeremy Young. Composition of *The Poetics of Time Space* based on the MEG 's sound archives . 2016.

Starting point : *Sound Chamber* (2014)

- Video installation by Ange Leccia, visual artist and Julien Perez, composer
- Series of visual and musical compositions which illustrate the qualities and colours of the sounds produced by the various musical instruments
- Applied research projet on archives and creation
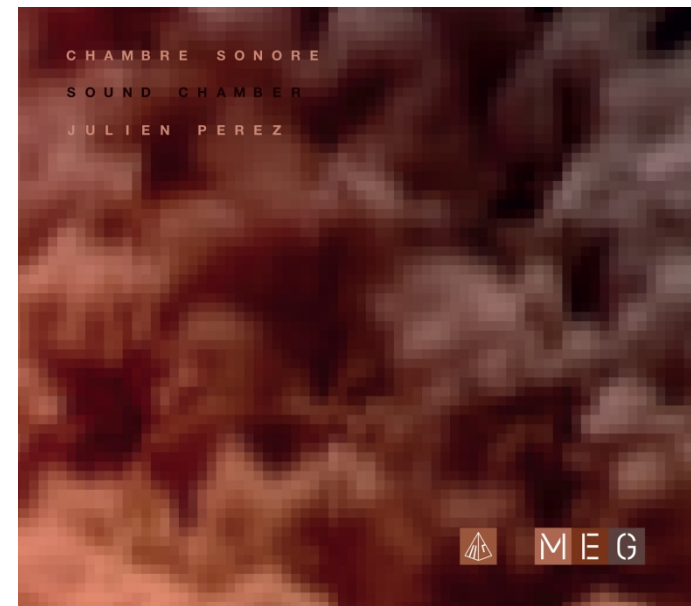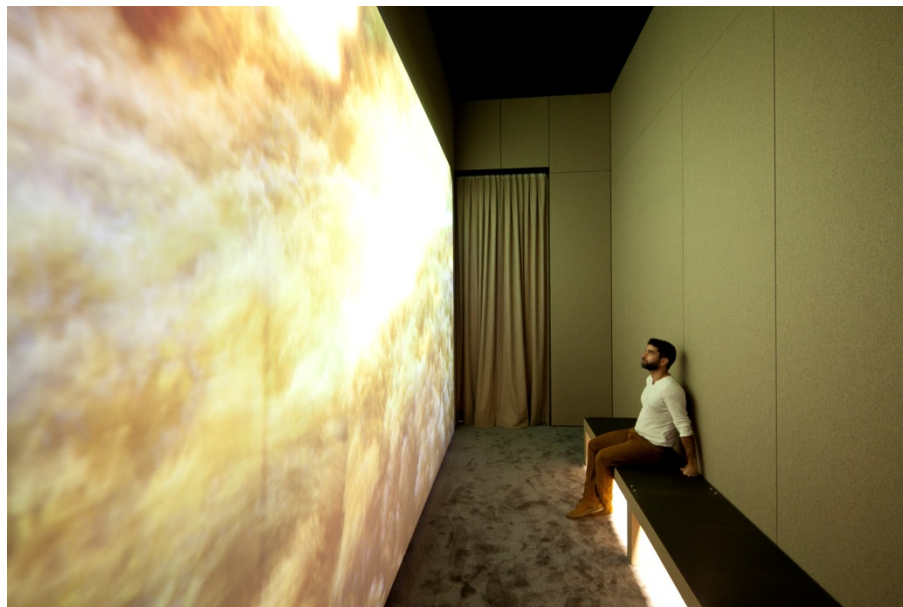
Practitioners involved :
- Traditional musicians but also everyone present during the recordings

Romania, surroundings of Bucarest. Group of Romanian musicians. 2008

Cooperation between practitioners and curator :
- Feedback after the recordings (during fieldwork)
- Working and meeting sessions in Geneva with the participants in the recordings

Laurent Aubert during a sound recording session, Kerala (South India). 1999.
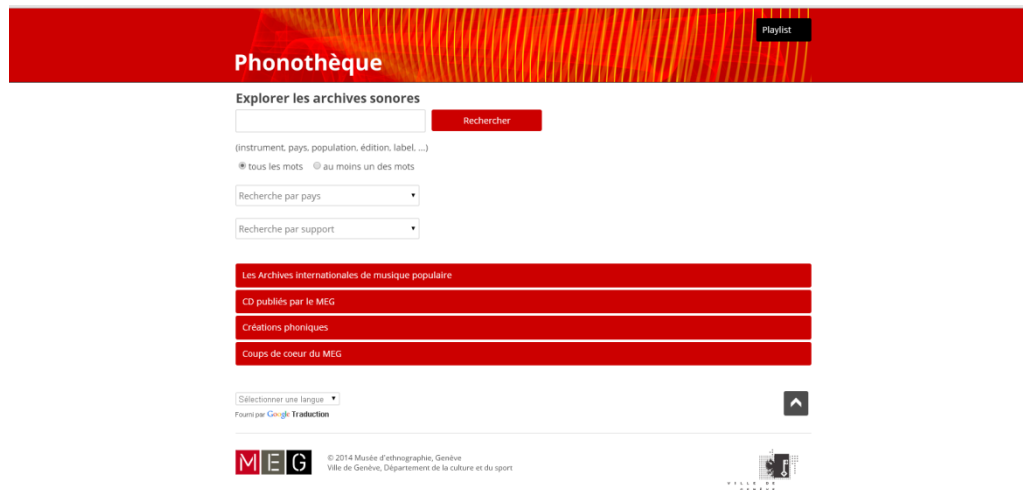

David A. Boxley and his son David R. Boxley, Tsimshian artists from Alaska, studying the MEG collections. 2018

Safegarding ICH :

- Digitization
- Metadata
- Phonograms preserved in a special air-conditioned room
- Free access to the music lounge (library)

Consultation interface of the 16,000 hours of sound recordings of the MEG archives.

Listening to sound archives in free access to the music lounge. 2014

Other actions for safegarding ICH :

- Documentation
- Initiation of a legal working group
- Acquisition policy
- Return of sound recordinds to the country of origin

Documentation of sound archives from the Gulf countries with the donor Paul Mattar. 2016

Brazil, State of Pará, Cateté. Kayapó Xikrin. Photo by A. Fontanet, 2013.

Surprising results linked to the creations based on sound archives :

Unanimous consent about the principle of the project AND discrepancy about procedures for executing it

- Reaction of the source communities
- Reaction of the general public
- Reaction of the artists involved in the project
- Reaction of the researchers and scholars

Live mix with LPs (duplicate) of traditional music preserved in the MEG's archives. 2018
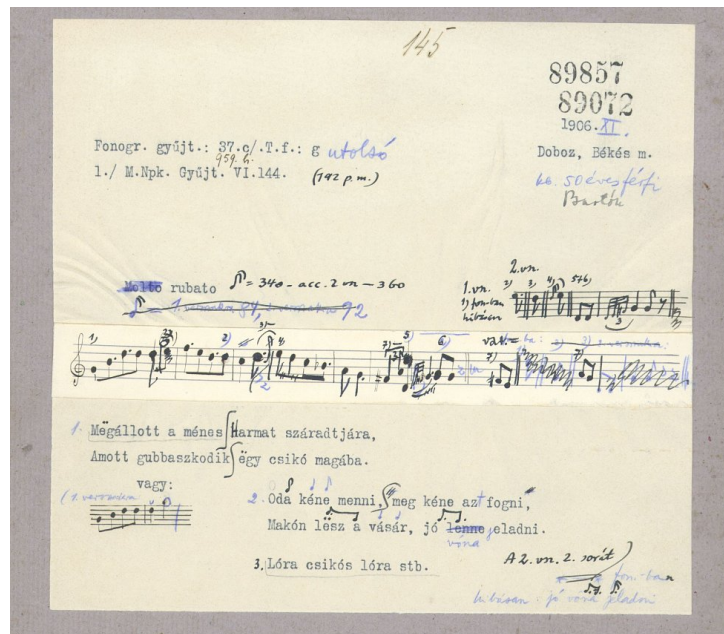
Reference to «Innovation» :

1. Methodology :

> relatively common practice in classical music
>
> rare in electronic music
>
> pragmatic way of bringing together : curators, source community, artists

2. Form :

> transformation of archival documents by different effects usually
>
> reserved for pop and electronic music
>
> deviation from the initial context of performance

Transcription by Béla Bartók of a traditional melody interpreted by a singer of Doboz, southwestern Hungary. 1906
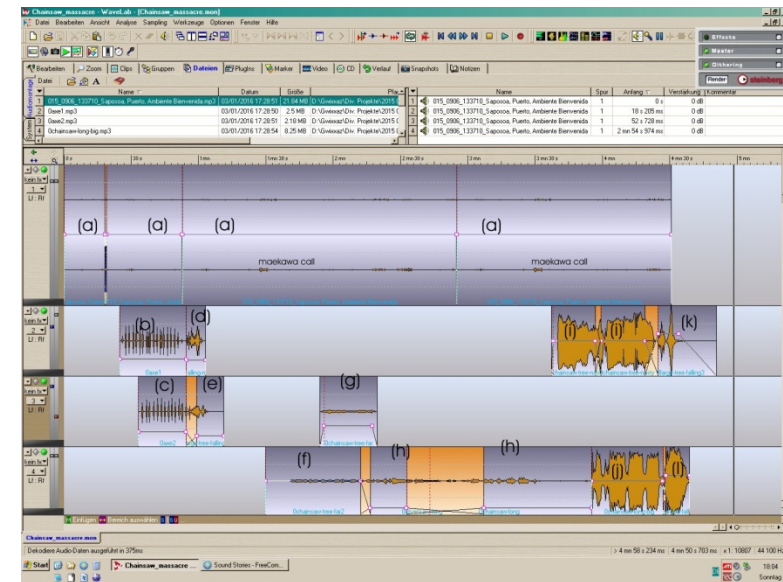
Cutting and assembling different sound sources with the WaveLab software for the *Amazonian Sound Stories* project presented at the MEG in 2016

Focus on ICH, museums and innovation in relation to technology and sensorial experiences

Sound Chamber = A sophisticated sound system providing diffusion inside a small room.

* The experience that is proposed is to apprehend by the sensitive a relatively complex notion – musical timbre.

* Focus on the heuristic value of the sensory experience, as a complement to the intellectualized data transmission.
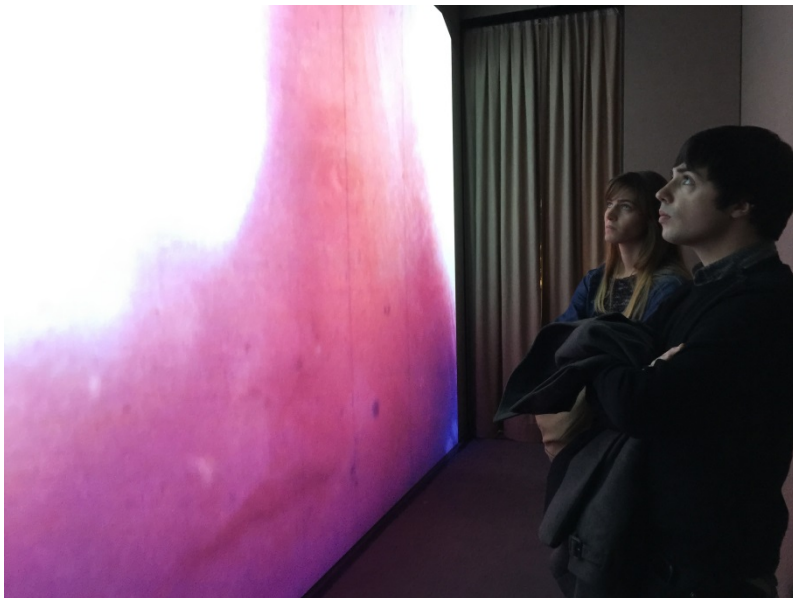
The composer Julien Perez in the Sound Chamber, MEG's permanent exhibition. 2014
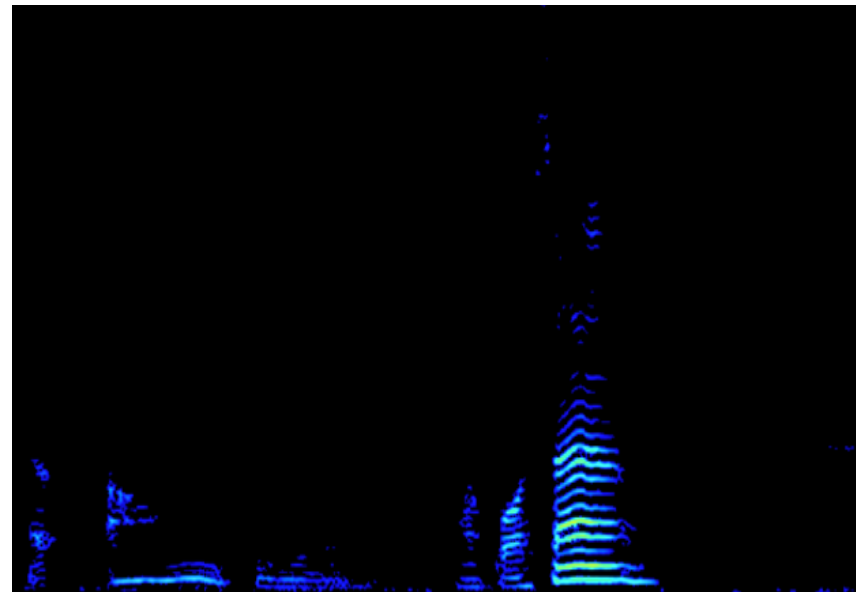
Visualization of the spectral composition of a sound with Audio Sculpt software. 2018

Motivations

* To explore the exhibition devices of music and the contribution of music in object-based museography .

* Innovative mediation proposal for the general public around a specialized collection.

* Source community participation at the starting point of a project; to allow them to reinvest their sound heritage; involve them in the heart of the project.

* To open a debate and reflection on the theme of creative appropriation (legal, ethical, and philosophical questions).

Listening device for sound archives in the permanent exhibition. 2014

Challenges

The main difficulty is to reconnect with people concerned by the archives : problem of geographical distance; problem of cultural distance.

To make an adjustment with the artists concerning the contents of the archived music.

To contact non-westerners musicians to participate to the creation project.

To really face the results of what we do: what would happen if one of the composition projects had real commercial success ?

How did the museum go about in tackling challenges?

The main difficulty is to reconnect with people concerned by the archives : problem of geographical distance; problem of cultural distance

- benefit from the passage in Geneva of people from the source countries or communities from which the archives come
- contact a network of ethnomusicologists and researchers who have contacts in source countries

To make an adjustment with the artists concerning the contents of the **archived music**

- pedagogy and several meetings with the artists

To contact non-westerners musicians to participate to the creation project

- try to expand my network in the middle of the electronic music scene, or musicians who are likely to be able to participate in the project of compo.

To really face the results of what we do: what would happen if one of the composition projects had real commercial success ?

- consultation with specialized organizations in the field of editorial law
- to identify a network of academics and archive centers that reflect on these questions
- setting up the research program entitled "Sound archives and creation", involving specialists and students

Positives results occured

- Contact and communication between people of different horizons, on a same topic for all to see

- The debate on the role and responsibility of a museum in the development of its ICH is open

- Fruitful tracks to develop the reflection on creative appropriation