

## CURT SACHS AS A THEORIST FOR MUSIC MUSEOLOGY

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For organologists, Curt Sachs (1881–1959) remains one of the founders of their discipline, mainly due to his classification of musical instruments. The system that he established with Erich von Hornbostel in 1914 is “logical as well as universal”. “Hornbostel’s and Sachs’s scheme—writes Margaret J. Kartomi—has had the most use and the greatest effect of any classification of instruments” during the last century, even if “use of the scheme has mostly been limited to its upper one to three steps of division”. On the other hand, “its adoption in museums has been nowhere near as widespread as that of Dewey’s scheme in libraries”. Even if this universal system is strongly influenced by the evolutionary thinking in both the sciences and the humanities of the end of the 18th century and the 19th century, Kartomi reminds us that it served with great efficiency as a “conceptual framework for cross-cultural comparative purposes in their own writings and to remedy the still somewhat chaotic state of instrument collections in museums”.<sup>1</sup> Among many attempts to further develop or revise this scheme, the collective work done over the years by the Comité International des Musées et Collections d’Instruments de Musique (CIMCIM), a branch of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), had no real effective issue.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, the Hornbostel-Sachs scheme seems to retain its strong position: In 1993 it was discussed by Klaus-Peter Brenner in the context of evolutionary thinking and its role in organology,<sup>3</sup> and in 1994, Peter Simon published a new analysis of the scheme and a table for it.<sup>4</sup> Finally, in the field of music iconography, RIDIM’s Commission Mixte has recently unanimously confirmed its acceptance as the most useful classification for instruments.<sup>5</sup>

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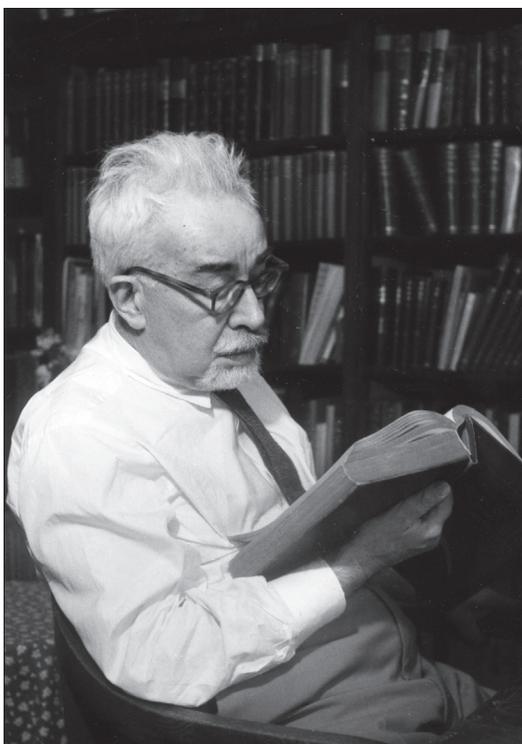
<sup>1</sup> Margaret J. Kartomi, *On concepts and classifications of musical instruments*. Chicago studies in ethnomusicology (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990) 171, 168.

<sup>2</sup> See Claudie Marcel-Dubois, “Rapport du groupe de travail ‘Problèmes de typologie et de classification en organologie musicale’”, *CIMCIM newsletter* 10 (1982) 22–23; 11 (1983) 40–52; 13 (1987) 23; 14 (1989) 10–11.

<sup>3</sup> Klaus-Peter Brenner, “Bemerkungen zum Entwicklungsgedanken in der Musikinstrumentenkunde”, *Georgia Augusta: Nachrichten aus der Universität Göttingen* 58 (May 1993) 9–24.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Simon, “Die Hornbostel/Sachs’s Systematik der Musikinstrumente: Merkmalarten und Merkmale—Eine Analyse und zahlenmässige Erfassung”, *Instrumentenbau-Zeitschrift* 5 (1994) 19–30.

<sup>5</sup> Antonio Baldassarre, “The actual situation of RIDIM”, *Musique–images–instruments* 7 (2005) 223–24.



Curt Sachs in his library, New York, the early 1950s.  
Photographer unknown, Coll. of Florence Gétreau. Courtesy  
of Gabrielle Forrest-Sachs.

Howard Mayer Brown notes that “through instruments Sachs became interested in the music of non-Western culture, and hence a pioneer ethnomusicologist”.<sup>6</sup> And just as in organology, he continues to hold his position also as one of the founders of ethnomusicology, as has been demonstrated by Kay Kaufman Shelemay in her collection of significant contributions to the field, *A century of ethnomusicological thought*, which includes a reprint of Curt Sachs’s 1957 article “The lore of non-Western music”.<sup>7</sup>

Considering Curt Sachs’s research in the field of dance, it would be interesting to update Suzanne Youngerman’s 1974 article “Curt Sachs and his heritage: A critical review of world history of the dance with a survey of recent studies that perpetuate his ideas”.<sup>8</sup> Sachs’s work also appears in Artur Simon’s collection of writings, *The Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv, 1900–2000: Collections of traditional music of the world*.<sup>9</sup> Far from attempting any summary here of Sachs’s prodigious understanding of the role of music

<sup>6</sup> Howard Mayer Brown, “Sachs, Curt”, *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980) vol. 16, 374.

<sup>7</sup> Kay Kaufman Shelemay, ed., *A century of ethnomusicological thought*. Garland library of readings in ethnomusicology 7 (New York: Garland, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> Suzanne Youngerman, “Curt Sachs and his heritage: A critical review of *World history of the dance* with a survey of recent studies that perpetuate his ideas”, *CORD news* 6/2 (July 1974) 6–19.

<sup>9</sup> Erich Moritz von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs, “Denkschrift über die Vereinigung der Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente mit dem Phonogrammarchiv beim Psychologischen Institut zu einem Staatlichen Museum der Tonkunst/Memorandum on the amalgamation of the Collection of Old Musical Instruments with the Phonogrammarchiv at the Psychological Institute into a Staatliches Museum der Tonkunst”, *Das Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv, 1900–2000: Sammlungen der traditionellen Musik der Welt/The Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv, 1900–2000: Collections of traditional music of the world*, ed. by Artur Simon (Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 2000) 109–15.

and other arts within world cultures and of his universally accepted publications, I would like to emphasize an aspect of his accomplishment neglected in the collection of articles published in his honor in 1965 by Gustave Reese and Rose Brandel: *The commonwealth of music*.<sup>10</sup> Sachs is indeed an enduring reference for organologists, ethnomusicologists, and choreologists, but he was also a precursor of music museology. As director of the Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik zu Berlin from 1919, he worked hard to reorganize this collection. Already in January 1920 he directed a report to the Minister für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung entitled “Denkschrift über die Zukunft der Staatlichen Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente zu Berlin-Charlottenburg”, offering in seven points an intellectual and practical program to modernize this public collection,<sup>11</sup> and offering also a sort of sketch for his memorandum published in 1934 (on which I will concentrate later). Although Sachs experienced great difficulties in obtaining funding and the go-ahead from his superiors, he did have the energy to produce in 1922 an important catalogue of the collection that remains a model in music museology.<sup>12</sup> This systematic catalogue is not only an important step in the development of methodology (in the lineage of Carl Engel,<sup>13</sup> Victor Mahillon,<sup>14</sup> Georg Kinsky,<sup>15</sup> and Julius von Schlosser,<sup>16</sup> among others); it also documents some 1800 instruments that were destroyed during the Second World War. Moreover, while immersed daily in this collection, Sachs was inspired to write his masterful books *Geist und Werden der Musikinstrumente* (1929) and *Handbuch der Musikinstrumentenkunde* (1930). In order to demonstrate to French musicologists the importance and aims of the Berlin Museum, in the fall of 1932 he published in Henry Prunières’s *Revue musicale* a short informative article entitled “A travers un musée d’instruments”, in which he gives a short historical introduction to the collection, focussing on what would be required for its further development:

The museum, coming out of its early youth, fond of anecdotes and rarities, concentrates its efforts on instrument families since the 16th century.... During the last years, the museum followed the way required by musicology, it stopped to confine itself to three or four centuries of modern civilization, but is trying to enlarge systematically its horizon far away from the narrow borders of the West.<sup>17</sup>

Distancing himself from the curiosities collected in the early days of the museum, Sachs indicates here that he has acquired in a systematic way “ensembles” of objects and

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<sup>10</sup> Gustave Reese and Rose Brandel, eds., *The commonwealth of music: In honor of Curt Sachs* (New York: Free Press; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965).

<sup>11</sup> Alfred Berner, “Die alte Musikinstrumenten-Sammlung in Berlin”, *Wege zur Musik* (Berlin: Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung Preussischer Kulturbesitz; PKB, 1984) 80–85.

<sup>12</sup> Curt Sachs, *Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente bei der Staatlichen Hochschule für Musik zu Berlin: Beschreibender Katalog* (Berlin: Julius Bard, 1922).

<sup>13</sup> Carl Engel, *A descriptive catalogue of musical instruments in the South Kensington Museum* (London, 1870).

<sup>14</sup> Victor-Charles Mahillon, *Catalogue descriptif et analytique du Musée Instrumental du Conservatoire Royal de Musique de Bruxelles* (Gent: Ad. Hoste; Bruxelles, Th. Lombaerts, 1880–1912).

<sup>15</sup> Georg Kinsky, *Musikhistorisches Museum von Wilhelm Heyer in Cöln* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1910–12).

<sup>16</sup> Julius von Schlosser, *Die Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente beschreibendes Verzeichnis* (Wien: Kunstverlag Anton Schroll & Co., 1920).

<sup>17</sup> “Le musée, au sortir de la prime jeunesse, toujours friande d’anecdote et de rareté, concentre ses efforts sur les familles d’instruments depuis le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle.... Ces dernières années, le musée a poursuivi le chemin prescrit par la musicologie, il cesse de se confiner en trois ou quatre siècles de civilisation moderne, mais il essaie d’élargir systématiquement son horizon au delà des bornes étroites de l’Occident.” Curt Sachs, “A travers un musée d’instruments”, *La revue musicale* 13/129 (September–October 1932) 35–39.

that, in keeping with the aims of musicology, he is gradually developing the collection so as to include non-Western instruments. If libraries have to preserve musical notations, he argues, an instruments museum has to “awaken the life of sound” (“réveiller la vie sonore”). Written in French (Sachs had been educated at the Lycée Français in Berlin in the 1890s) and published shortly before his emigration to Paris, this article stands out in a most special way.<sup>18</sup>

During the summer of 1932, André Schaeffner submitted to Curt Sachs his new classification of musical instruments (published in the same issue of *La revue musicale* as Sachs’s article).<sup>19</sup> The correspondence between the two scholars, preserved at the archives of the Musée de l’Homme in Paris,<sup>20</sup> shows that Sachs endorsed his system and that he sought to submit Schaeffner’s work to Hornbostel, indicating that the subject and reputation of the proposal’s author made this work worthy of a detailed examination (“Le sujet même et le poids de son auteur nous demandent un examen minutieux”). Schaeffner’s classification (which rejected the category of idiophones) was further developed and published in his seminal book *Origine des instruments de musique* (1936),<sup>21</sup> but, as pointed out by Margaret Kartomi, it was never translated into English and has had little impact outside France.<sup>22</sup> Georges Henri Rivière, the young associate director of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro, took the opportunity that this exchange provided to visit Curt Sachs in Berlin in September 1932, having already arranged for him to be invited to the Paris museum. On 20 June 1933 Sachs gave a lecture on comparative musicology at the Institut d’Ethnologie, and on 30 June another one on the history of the dance (related to his recent publication *Eine Weltgeschichte des Tanzes*) at the Musée Guimet. Sachs expressed his gratitude to Rivière at the end of July, saying that he had been happy in Paris and moved by the hospitality he had received. These preliminary contacts assumed great importance after Sachs was deprived by the National Socialist regime of all his academic positions (30 September 1933). Paul Rivet, director of the Musée d’Ethnographie, invited Sachs officially on 24 October “to collaborate in the classification of the musical instruments of our collections in collaboration with M. Schaeffner”.

Why was this invitation so targeted and so specific? For political reasons? Was Schaeffner—already a well-known musicologist, music critic, and skilled curator—a bit anxious to be obliged to work with such an immense personality as Curt Sachs? In 1929 Rivière had made Schaeffner responsible for creating a department of organology and for preparing a comparative exhibition room of musical instruments, and had invited him to participate under Marcel Griaule in the famous field study “Mission Dakar–Djibouti”, which took place in 1931.<sup>23</sup> Also in 1931, Schaeffner published his

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<sup>18</sup> Albrecht Schneider, “Musikwissenschaft in der Emigration: Zur Vertreibung von Gelehrten und zu den Auswirkungen auf das Fach”, *Musik in Exil: Folgen des Nazismus für die internationale Musikkultur*, ed. by Hanns-Werner Heister, Claudia Maurer Zenck, and Peter Petersen (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993) 186–211.

<sup>19</sup> André Schaeffner, “D’une nouvelle classification méthodique des instruments de musique”, *La revue musicale* 13/129 (September–October 1932) 215–31. A first version of the article was published one year earlier as “Projet d’une classification nouvelle des instruments de musique”, *Bulletin du Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro* 1 (January 1931) 21–25.

<sup>20</sup> Archives du Musée de l’Homme. Dossier “Curt Sachs”. Schaeffner’s first letter bears no date (July 1932 ?), Sachs’s first answer is dated 9 July 1932.

<sup>21</sup> André Schaeffner, *Origine des instruments de musique: Introduction ethnologique à l’histoire de la musique instrumentale* (Paris: Payot, 1936).

<sup>22</sup> Kartomi, *On concepts and classifications*, 176.

<sup>23</sup> Gilbert Rouget, “L’enseignement de l’ethnomusicologie en France”, *Revue de musicologie* 59/1 (1973) 26. See also

monograph on Stravinsky and an expanded French version of Hugo Riemann's *Musik-Lexikon*.

Having the benefit of financial support from the Universal Jewish Alliance and from the Rockefeller Foundation, Sachs took full advantage of his four-year stay at the Musée du Trocadéro, which turned to be more ambitious than originally planned. Sachs first prepared for the museum a temporary exhibition on religious dance which was based on the material included in his recent book on the history of the dance (1933) and published a short report about it in *Courrier d'art*. The catalogue of this exhibit has not been produced. A (translated) paragraph from the report gives an idea of the intellectual framework that had inspired Sachs:

Dance is the mother of all arts. Music and poetry act in time; sculpture and architecture in space; while dance lives in time and space together.... Dance is also part of daily life. But being free from practical aims, it has never lost its ecstatic and hence sacred character. In all periods and through all profanations, it gives and shall always offer something of the ardent desire of humanity for victory over gravity, transfiguration of body and soul, exaltation of creature to the level of creator, a reaching into the infinite, to God.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, Sachs was certainly at work on the French translation of his book on dance.<sup>25</sup> A report preserved in the archives of the Musée de l'Homme indicates that he also made transcriptions of some recordings at the Trocadéro sound archives and energetically sought to fill in its lacunae. What is more, he began a systematic work on African instruments in collaboration with André Schaeffner, worked on a monograph devoted to Ethiopian musical instruments, and on another one about Madagascar. The latter research, based on instruments preserved in Paris, was published in French as *Les instruments de Madagascar*.<sup>26</sup>

Sachs gave lectures at the Sorbonne and at the Institut d'Ethnologie during the time when Marcel Maus was professor there, and hence had an important influence on the scholarly and museological training of Claudie Marcel-Dubois, who in 1934 joined the department of musical ethnography at the Musée du Trocadéro, assuming responsibility for its sound archives. Maguy Andral, her collaborator from 1945 and successor from 1981, confided to me shortly before her death that Marcel-Dubois had received a truly "individual education" with Curt Sachs during the time when she was preparing her doctorate on Indian instruments. She acknowledged the important influence of Sachs:

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Denis Paulme-Schaeffner, "André Schaeffner 1895–1980", and "Bibliographie des écrits d'André Schaeffner", *Revue de musicologie* 68 (1982): *André Schaeffner*, 363–65; 401–08.

<sup>24</sup> "La danse est la mère des arts. Musique et poésie vont dans le temps ; c'est dans l'espace que jouent sculpture et architecture ; mais la danse vit, à la fois, dans le temps et dans l'espace [...]. La danse, elle aussi, se mêle à la vie quotidienne. Mais n'étant pas soumise à des buts pratiques, elle n'a jamais perdu son caractère extatique et par là sacré. Par tous les époques et à travers toutes les profanations, elle donne et donnera toujours un peu de ce qui est le désir ardent de l'humanité : la victoire sur la gravité, la transfiguration du corps en âme, l'exaltation de la créature à la hauteur du créateur, l'élargissement à l'infini, à Dieu." Curt Sachs, "La danse sacrée: A propos de l'exposition au Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro", *Courrier d'art* (1934) 159–62.

<sup>25</sup> *Histoire de la danse*, trans. by L. Kerr. *L'espèce humaine* 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

<sup>26</sup> *Les instruments de Madagascar*. Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie 28 (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1938). On the title page Sachs is presented as "ancien professeur à l'Université de Berlin, Ancien chargé de mission au musée d'ethnographie de Paris, Professeur à l'Université de New-York".

About 1933, pioneers in the field of comparative musicology had to leave Hitlerite Germany. Hornbostel went to the United States, Sachs stayed four years in France before becoming an American citizen. All these circumstances stimulated American and French ethnomusicological activities.... Sachs ... had a definitive influence on our work and specifically on an unexpected aspect for a specialist in comparative musicology, I mean the development of research on musical prehistory in Europe<sup>27</sup> and France.<sup>28</sup>

Marcel-Dubois refers to Curt Sachs in an article she published in 1936 in the *Revue de musicologie* entitled "Prolégomènes à une préhistoire musicale de l'Europe", where she outlines diachronic aspects of the early history of music in Europe, later developed in Sachs's *The rise of music in the ancient world, East and West* (1943).

Sachs also used this opportunity to be involved with the development of the Musée du Trocadéro, publishing in 1934 the first theoretical essay dealing with general issues of music museology: "La signification, la tâche et la technique muséographique des collections d'instruments de musique" (Meaning, task and techniques of musical instrument collections).<sup>29</sup> A true manifesto devoted to the aims of museums of musical instruments, restoration policies, principles for a museographic program, and technical aspects for a concrete realization, this very developed article has never been published in English, although it was translated.<sup>30</sup> The absence of an English-language version probably explains why the article has had a smaller impact than many of his other main works. As the basis of this article, Sachs drew on his extensive museum experience gained in Berlin. However, I wonder if he used for this essay also some written sources such as an article by Adolphe Le Doucet, Count of Pontécoulant, written in 1861 on the occasion of the founding of the Musée Instrumental at the Paris Conservatoire.<sup>31</sup> In five installments Count Pontécoulant, author of the famous *Organographie*,<sup>32</sup> provides a critical review of Antoine Clapisson's "organization plan" and proposes guidelines for the activities, acquisition policy, and exhibiting of this formerly private collection, which had been purchased by the French government.<sup>33</sup> Some of the ideas that Sachs would present in a more systematic and theoretical way were already discussed in this document. For example, Pontécoulant objects to exhibitions of irrelevant objects and souvenirs, deplores the absence of a section devoted to instrument makers, and says that the new Paris museum seems to be only a gallery filled by a traditional collector, the cabinet of an amateur. He criticizes Clapisson's plan for its lack of grandeur, rationality,

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<sup>27</sup> Curt Sachs, "Prolégomènes à une préhistoire musicale de l'Europe", *Revue de musicologie* 17/57 (1936) 22–26.

<sup>28</sup> "Vers 1933 les pionniers de l'école de musicologie comparée durent quitter l'Allemagne hitlérienne. Hornbostel partit aux Etats-Unis, Sachs résida quatre ans en France avant de devenir citoyen américain. Cet ensemble de circonstances stimula les activités ethnomusicologiques tant américaines que françaises.... Sachs ... eut une influence certaine sur nos travaux et entre autres sur un point assez inattendu pour un comparatiste à savoir le développement des recherches de ce qu'il appelait la préhistoire musicale d'Europe et France." Claudie Marcel-Dubois, cours d'ethnomusicologie, Institut d'ethnologie, 21 novembre 1961. Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Département musique et parole. Ms. dact. 15 p.

<sup>29</sup> Curt Sachs, "La signification, la tâche et la technique muséographique des collections d'instruments de musique", *Museion* 27–28 (1934) 5–36. The article was signed "Prof. Curt Sachs, Ancien Directeur du Musée instrumental de Berlin".

<sup>30</sup> My thanks to Laurence Libin for this information.

<sup>31</sup> Adolphe Le Doucet, comte de Pontécoulant, "Musée instrumental", *L'art musical* (11 April 1861) 145–47; (25 April 1861) 161–62; (2 May 1861) 169–70; and (16 May 1861) 187–88.

<sup>32</sup> Adolphe Le Doucet, comte de Pontécoulant, *Organographie: Essai sur la facture instrumentale. Art, industrie, commerce* (Paris: Castel, 1861).

<sup>33</sup> Florence Gétreau, *Aux origines du Musée de la Musique: Les collections du Conservatoire de Paris, 1793–1993* (Paris: Klincksieck; Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1996) 91–97.



Curt Sachs and his daughter Gabrielle, New York, the early 1940s.  
 Photographer unknown. Coll. of Florence Gétreau.  
 Courtesy of Gabrielle Forrest-Sachs.

and sophistication, as well as a failure to achieve its own aims. The introduction to Sachs's essay shows the same concerns:

We try to provide each collection, whatever its nature, with a purpose, one justifying and rewarding efforts and the funds raised for it. When we are thinking about a public collection, we first have to consider the type of public to whom we wish to speak; whether to all visitors, the ignorant as well as the initiated, or only to specialists, to artists, to scholars. When this question has been answered, one will consider the function of the museum: Does it aim to teach, or only to entertain, to initiate or to divert? In other words, do we address first intelligence or sensations, or both together? Do we preserve relics or documents?<sup>34</sup>

Sachs is aware that a museum's aims will continue to change, depending on who is asking the question, and he knows that a final consensus can probably never be achieved. But as aims change, so must form and methodology. Reminding us that many private

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<sup>34</sup> "Nous cherchons à donner un but à une collection quelle qu'elle soit, but qui la justifie et récompense les efforts et les frais qu'elle occasionne. Dès que l'on étend le problème à la collection publique, il faut se demander tout d'abord à quel genre de public on désire s'adresser ; sera-ce à tous les visiteurs, profanes et initiés, ou aux seuls spécialistes, aux artistes, aux savants ? Puis, une fois cette question résolue, on se demandera quelle doit être la fonction du musée : tendra-t-elle à instruire ou seulement à récréer, à initier ou à distraire ? En d'autres termes, fera-t-on appel à l'intelligence ou au sentiment, ou bien à tous les deux à la fois ? Conservera-t-on des reliques ou des documents ?" Sachs, "La signification", 5.

collections the world over were created by very different personalities (musicologists, makers, industrialists, publishers, amateurs) and then bought by governments and transformed into public institutions, he underlines that collection keepers must become progressively more professional (pp. 6–7). He also encourages general museums in possession of historical instruments—usually exhibited as moribund—to negotiate a deposit of the instruments in a specialized museum. In surveying the different kinds of museum visitors (musicologists, musicians, makers, artists, connoisseurs, inventors, the general public) (p. 8), Sachs immediately takes into account hearing and vision (p. 9): Provocatively enough, he says that “an inaudible instrument is a nonsense, quite like an invisible painting.” He describes the difficult aspects of conservation (environment, use, adaptation, transformations, denaturing), complaining that in America, even specialized museums leave instruments in exactly the condition they were in when acquired, without regard for restoration or sound, exhibiting, for example, keyboards under locked glass (p. 11). And in this connection, he provides for the first time theoretical guidelines for restoration (pp. 12–15), underlining how much uncertainty, doubt, and contradictory evidence are involved, and how much each instrument calls for an individual decision and for its own restorational procedure.

Quoting Viollet-le-Duc as a counter-example, and at the same time rejecting purists who mean to return to the original condition of a harpsichord altered by the restoration of its wood surface, he emphasizes the indestructible unity of the instrument as a “historical document” (p. 12)—a principle still discussed today in our music museums. Value, taste, skill, maker, and historical interest are all criteria to be taken in account in the scientific and artistic decisions of the curator. Generally speaking, but with exceptions depending on each individual collection, every transformation undergone by an instrument in keeping with its type (for example, the renewal of the surface of a harpsichord case) will be preserved, whereas those conflicting with its type (for example, a viola da gamba which has been adapted as a cello, or a lute adapted as a guitar) will be undone. Sachs distinguishes two situations where a restoration to a playable condition is for him indefensible: when the sounding part has been totally lost, or when restoration might destroy the instrument’s archeological value (p. 13). Three principles underlie decision-making in connection with restoration:

Vocal restoration [that is, of the sounding part] will follow exclusively and fully the relevant historical data: the restorer will avoid correcting the object.... Any attempt to adapt an instrument to modern requirements ... renders the purposes of the museum null and void.... Museums having several instruments of the same type will make an exception, in order to provide instruments for ensembles of early music. In doing this, they will select from among less remarkable items in the collection.<sup>35</sup>

As we outlined in the introduction to a recent reprint of this article in *Cahiers de musiques traditionnelles*,<sup>36</sup> Sachs’s ideas on restoration are for the most part outdated

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<sup>35</sup> “La restauration de la voix aura à suivre exclusivement et intégralement les données de l’époque en question : le restaurateur s’interdira rigoureusement de corriger l’objet [...] Mais tout essai tendant à adapter l’instrument aux exigences modernes [...] rend illusoire la raison d’être des musées [...]. Les musées disposant d’un certain nombre d’instruments du même type feront, à bon droit, une exception pour avoir des spécimens en état de fournir des voix dans un ensemble composé pour exécuter de la musique ancienne. Ils consacreront cet usage des exemplaires qui ne sont pas les plus remarquables.” Sachs, “La signification”, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Curt Sachs, “La signification, la tâche et la technique muséographique des collections d’instruments de musique”, pref. by Florence Gétreau. *Cahiers de musiques traditionnelles* 16 (2003): *Musiques à voir: La musique dans les musées de*

today, since policies, technology for assessment, documentation, and treatment methods have all changed considerably in the past decades, due to work by CIMCIM and other institutes concerned with conservation.<sup>37</sup>

In coming to the most neglected part of his essay, that having to do with the exhibition of instruments (pp. 15–31), Sachs focuses his argument on “the major idea” of an installation rather than the collection per se. Rejecting the old-fashioned gallery displays in which organization was types of instruments in a chronological order (influenced by 19th-century ideas of progress), he considers that the mechanisms of instruments will no longer attract our attention in the music museum, but rather their sound. Calling upon history to support his demonstration, Sachs considers that organology, as a subdiscipline of musicology, is also a segment of the history of civilizations. Therefore a music instrument museum ought to be of interest not only to amateurs, instrument makers, musicians, and musicologists, but to all scholars.

Later in this essay, Sachs draws attention to the museological debates of the prior decades—whether museums were to be divided between exhibition collections (*Schausammlungen*) and study collections (*Studiensammlungen*). He reports on the annual conference on museology, architecture, and art museum installation held by the International Office for Museums (the ancestor of ICOM) in that same year (1934) in Madrid.<sup>38</sup> Here, Paris curators had been particularly active, with Louis Hauteceur giving an important paper on museum architecture and proposing to divide collections into those for exhibition and those for study. Having been invented by Wilhelm von Bode, this concept was reaching Europe via American museums at the time, and there was concern for defining a “living museum”.<sup>39</sup> Also in 1934, Sachs reports, the famous Paris architect Auguste Perret was proposing a program to transform the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro,<sup>40</sup> a plan later rejected. It seems clear that when Sachs was writing his essay, he was concerned with this project<sup>41</sup> and was aware of this international debate over whether or not exhibited objects are a part of an ensemble, elements of an organism. Finally, with regard to historic, ethnographic, and regional museums, Sachs stresses that all themes were to be sustained by a narrative: The museum as an educational institution had to be a link between science and life.

Although Sachs in his essay did not adopt Rivière’s terminology of *unicum* and *typicum*, he considered that for the music museum—divided between an artistic and a scientific approach to the material—masterpieces and documents are part of this narration (p. 19). Developing the idea that music, before becoming an “art”, forms part of

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société, 11–41.

<sup>37</sup> Cary Karp, ed., *The conservation and technology of musical instruments: A bibliographic supplement to Art and archeology technical abstracts* 28 (Marina del Rey, Calif.: Getty Conservation Institute, in association with the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1992); Robert L. Barclay, ed., *The care of historic musical instruments* (Edinburgh: Museums & Galleries Commission, CIMCIM; Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, 1997).

<sup>38</sup> *Muséographie: Architecture et aménagement des musées d’art. Conférence internationale des études, Madrid, 1934*, issued under the auspices of the Société des Nations; Office international des musées; Institut international de coopération intellectuelle, 2 vol. [Paris, 1935].

<sup>39</sup> Nina Gorgus, *Le magicien des vitrines: Le muséologue Georges Henri Rivière* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l’Homme, 2003) 73–79, chapter “Les musées sur le plan international: Les débats muséologiques de l’entre-deux-guerres et leur influence sur Rivière”. German version appeared as *Der Zauberer der Vitrinen: Zur Museologie Georges Henri Rivière* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> Gorgus, *Le magicien des vitrines*, 316, note 26.

<sup>41</sup> In May 1935 he wrote to Georges Henri Rivière: “I will not stop thinking of the important decisions of these weeks, that will determine the future of our museum. And I hope that you will allow me to collaborate in its transformation”. Archives du Musée de l’Homme. Dossier “Curt Sachs”, letter from Curt Sachs to Georges Henri Rivière, 14 May 1935.

civilization as a whole, Sachs argued that prehistoric music instruments are ritual tools, charms, and spirits exclusive of any purely aesthetic conception. Taking into account his own theories about the evolution and migration of music instruments in *Geist und Werden der Musikinstrumente*, he proposed as a permanent exhibition an introductory room showing the “prehistory of music” following the chapters of his book (pp. 20–22) and, for modern times, groupings of related instruments with large historical European contexts like Renaissance, Baroque style, etc, so as to trace growing and diminishing trends in instrument making, taste, fashion—all as part of the “dynamic” of music.

It is also interesting that Sachs employed many terms to define the different sound-colors (*Klangfarben*) of each period, as part of his demonstration: sound-colors were in turn precise and transparent, multi-colored and distinct, rich and contrasted, opaque and dark, monochromatic, etc. His aim here was to avoid uniformity and boredom in the exhibition. While willing to integrate into the exhibition to demonstrate the technical aspects of instruments, he recommended music iconography to provide information (hence variation between two- and three-dimensional objects) to stimulate attention. Scenography had for him two purposes: to focus on exceptional pieces, and to make the visitors more comfortable. Technical aspects discussed by Sachs ranged from field of vision, contrasts in colors for rooms and backgrounds, design, labels, and the integration of live or recorded music. (Schaeffner using a phonograph in the exhibition rooms of the Musée du Trocadéro is given as example.)

After this long chapter on scenography, Sachs focuses on the question of systematic catalogues, giving a short summary of known and existing publications and expressing the wish that somebody would once and for all trace a sort of history of instrument catalogues, to reflect developments in criticism and its evolution towards the object-centeredness, its evolutions in terminology, descriptive language, and standards of expertise.

Finally, Sachs discusses the distinctive status of public music collections, considering that this class of museums, among all museums, will always suffer from a “minority problem”. He concludes his essay by recommending intuition and experience as guides to the museologist, and insisting on the leading role played by the “personality which clears the path to action”:

The future of instrument museums does not depend on their budgets and administrative organization, but on the training, energy, knowledge, mental horizon, and taste of their curators.<sup>42</sup>

Many of his propositions go far beyond “aesthetic” concepts of Western music, and of so-called art museums, reflecting instead the concerns of a “universalistic” musicologist with a forward-looking vision, active during a crucial moment in the evolution of the museum.

It is quite hard to know if Sachs’s guidelines were ever applied in realizing concrete projects. Schaeffner, who had direct contact with Sachs during these years, opened a real music section in the permanent exhibition of the Musée de l’Homme only in 1959; there is no evidence to suggest that he was ever influenced by Sachs in any intellectual or practical way. Probably Schaeffner did not approve of Sachs’s stratigraphic division of musical instruments, of their evolution and migration, as developed in *Geist und*

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<sup>42</sup> “L’avenir des musées instruments ne dépend ni du budget ni de l’organisation administrative, mais de la qualité de leurs conservateurs, de leur énergie, de leurs connaissances, de leur horizon et de leur goût.” Sachs, “La signification”.

Werden der Musikinstrumente,<sup>43</sup> and considered it difficult to relate instruments to chronology and social organization. John Henry van der Meer, the famous organologist and eminent curator of the music department in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, seems to have been the first to quote Sachs's essay<sup>44</sup> (being polyglot, he had easy access to it) in an article written on the occasion of that museum's new building in 1969; in so doing Van der Meer stimulated an intellectual debate about what should be done for the music section of the exhibition. Van der Meer organized in Nuremberg an international symposium on a similar subject (*Die Bedeutung, die optische und akustische Darbietung und die Aufgaben einer Musikinstrumentensammlung*). He remained one of the very few professionals to refer to Sachs's article.<sup>45</sup> Friedemann Hellwig, his collaborator, a renowned restorer and one of the presidents of CIMCIM, maintained this intellectual heritage in coordinating a CIMCIM meeting on the theme of musical exhibitions in Scandinavia in 1982, all reports of working groups being published in 1986 as a sort of manual.<sup>46</sup> During the past decade, many important new music museums have been opened; astonishingly, these have not stimulated any new attention to published writings on the theory of music museology. Even Sachs's vademecum continued to be quite neglected<sup>47</sup> until the annual meeting of the Société Française d'Ethnomusicologie, which was devoted in 2002 to *Musiques à voir: La musique dans les musées de société*. As a tribute to Curt Sachs and his founding principles, his text was reprinted to introduce the volume of proceedings,<sup>48</sup> giving it, we hope, a new life and impact. And "La signification, la tâche et la technique muséographique des collections d'instruments de musique" has recently been translated for the first time in German, by Veronika Gutmann, for the symposium *Klang–Gedanke–Instrument: Curt Sachs und die Musikwissenschaft heute*, held in September 2006 in the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung, Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Berlin.

<sup>43</sup> André Schaeffner, *Origine des instruments de musique* (Paris; La Haye: Mouton, 1968) 359–70.

<sup>44</sup> John Henry van der Meer, "Gedanken zur Darbietung einer Musikinstrumentensammlung," *Museums Kunde* 3 (1964) 152–64, see p. 164.

<sup>45</sup> *Studia musico-museologica: Bericht über das Symposium "Die Bedeutung, die optische und akustische Darbietung und die Aufgaben einer Musikinstrumentensammlung"* (Nürnberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum; Stockholm, Musikhistorischen Museum, 1969) 126 p. See p. 46. Also John Henry van der Meer, "The collection of historic musical instruments at the Germanic National Museum, Nuremberg," *CIMCIM newsletter* 6 (1978) 15–28.

<sup>46</sup> Friedemann Hellwig, "Basic concepts of musical instrument presentations," *CIMCIM newsletter* (1986): *Musical instrument exhibitions in Scandinavia: A study of the basic concepts, educational objectives, and conservational techniques of three recently installed exhibitions by the International Committee of Musical Instrument Collections (CIMCIM) of the International Council of Museums (ICOM)*, 41–47.

<sup>47</sup> No reference has been made in the following publications and events: Ingeborg Stein, "Konzeptionelle Konsequenzen eines Musikmuseums: 'Exponat Musik'/Conceptual consequences of a music museum: 'Exhibition item music'," *Information für die Museen in der DDR* 4 (1989) 4–31. Reprinted as "Exponat Musik: Konzeption und Realisation eine Musik-Museums/Exhibition item music: The conception and realisation of a music museum", *Beiträge zur musicalischen Quellenforschung. IV: Bad Kostritz. Forschungs- und Gedenkstätte Heinrich-Schütz-Haus* (1998) 123–47; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Theorizing heritage", *Ethnomusicology: Journal of the Society for Ethnomusicology* 39/3 (1995) 367–80; Journées d'étude, Paris, Cité de la Musique, *Muséologie et musique* (16 October 1997). Unpublished. Colloque international *Musica & museo*, organized by Mario Armellini and Lorenzo Bianchoni (Bologne: *Il Saggiatore musicale*, 2001) forthcoming publication.

<sup>48</sup> *Cahiers de musiques traditionnelles*. 16 (2003): *Musiques à voir, La musique dans les musées de société*, 11–41.

