



Echoes from the Past of a City

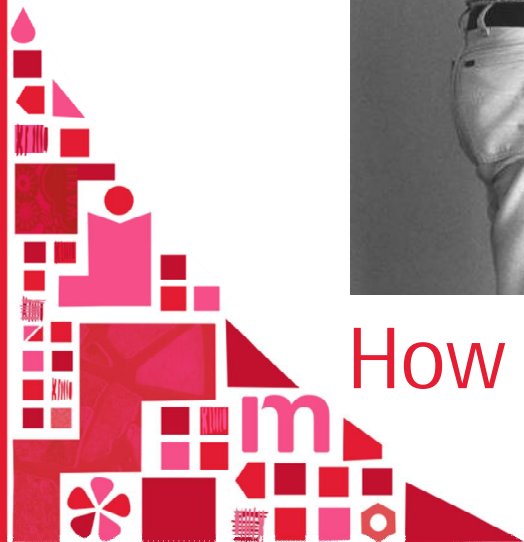
Bringing New Narratives into a Museum Exhibition on Music History

curator Jere Jäppinen, Helsinki City Museum

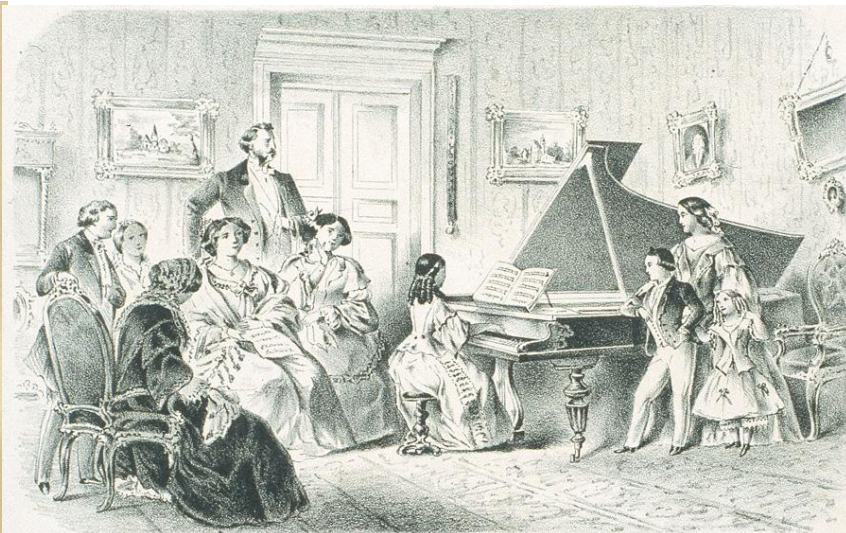




How to present music at a museum?



Music museum = old instruments?



- most music museums are based on a collection of historical and/or exotic musical instruments
- many music museums also have a "science centre", which presents the physical qualities of sound, often hands-on
- the exhibition concentrates strongly on objects
- the cultural and social context of music is seldom evoked

Music museum = tribute to a musician?



- many music museums are dedicated to one musician, often homes
- similar types of museums: halls of fame, museums of music institutions
- the exhibition concentrates strongly on one person
- his or her time and community are often overshadowed

An ideal music museum?



The best features of different types of music museums

Musical instrument museums

- the spell and historical value of genuine old objects

Science centres

- fun and educative hands-on approach

Musician museums

- evoking the memories and feelings of a fan visitor

The goal of our Music! exhibition

An entertaining hands-on exhibition that touches large audiences by offering knowledge, memories, experiences and insights about the role of music in people's lives in the past and present.



Ordinary people in the foreground

How to tell about music in a cultural historical museum?



Music at the Helsinki City Museum

Music is history

- music is presented as a part of cultural and social development

Music is local

- global phenomena are presented by examples from Helsinki

Music is urban

- music is seen as a part of urban culture and lifestyle

Music touches

- an ordinary music lover and amateur gets a prominent position

Music involves

- the public has an active role through the whole exhibition

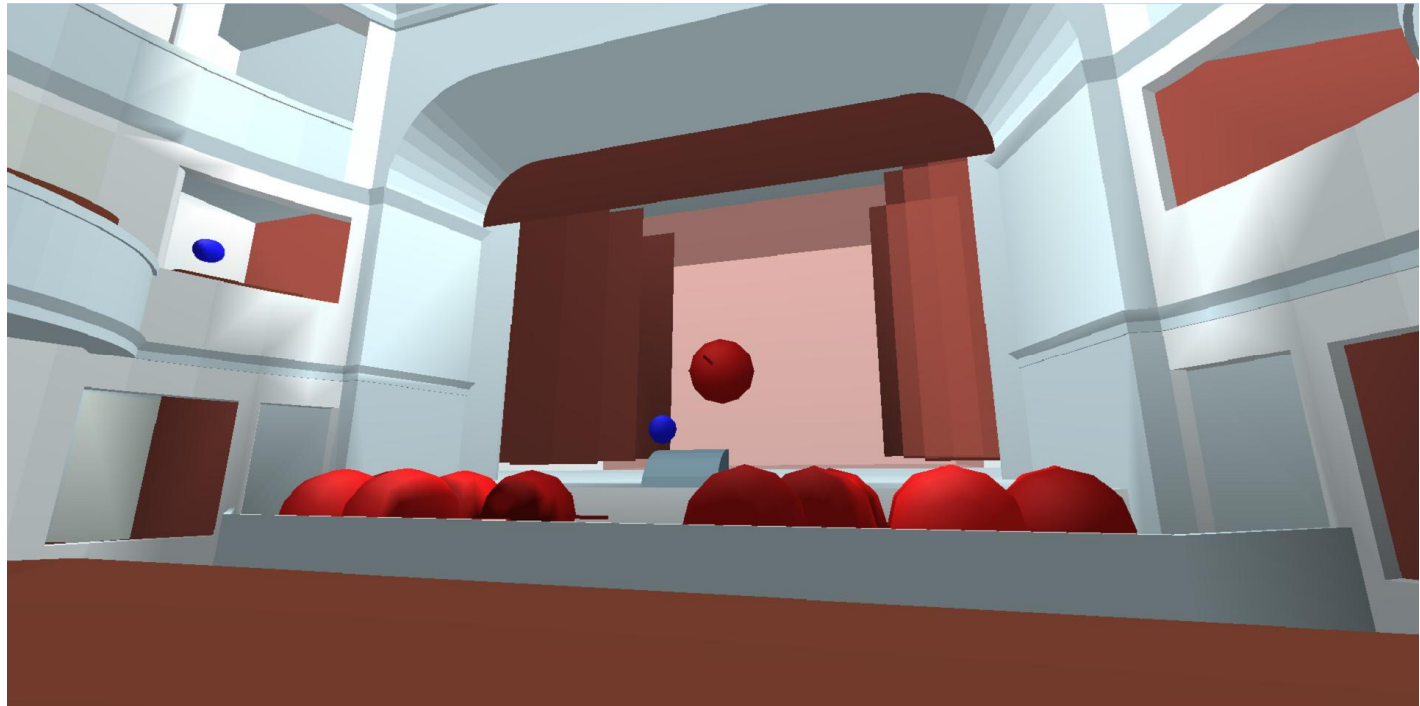


High and low are equal



- a strict borderline between classical and popular music is a recent thought but it still affects music history and attitudes
- for the large audience this difference is often insignificant
- in the Music! exhibition all music is equal and diversity prevails

Extensive co-operation with researchers



- new approaches and ideas to the exhibition from recent studies
- the exhibition inspired new research projects: acoustic reconstruction of historical music spaces in Helsinki and musical taste survey
- the exhibition book presents the scientific base of the exhibition

Musical milieus as a point of departure



- the exhibition is organised on musical "spaces" and a loose chronology
- musical milieus inspired also the visual aspect of the exhibition
- the objects are often just a part of the set design and visualise context



The audience makes a museum

The many possibilities of involvement



An exhibition with many voices



Several documentation projects
Rehearsal rooms past and present
Fans in action
North Helsinki music institute
Music lesson classics & memories
from music lessons
Best and worst music memories



An exhibition with many voices



The audience helped to collect objects and photos for the exhibition
Fan collectors' cupboards

Choir portraits and badges

A music salon for Helsinki people



- the salon of Aurora Karamzin is a concert hall during the exhibition
- everybody is invited to give a free Sunday matiné – huge success!
- in the evenings the hall is rented out for a reasonable price

Sing and dance at a museum



- hands-on is a central principle throughout the Music! exhibition
- choose music, open doors, browse books and scores, play games
- school song Singstar evokes the memories of the singing tests
- learn fashionable dances from the past in the historical dance school



Sing and dance at a museum



Involvement, active participation and co-operation are the leading principles of the exhibition events

Dance through the disco history

Time travels with music, dance and food (18th century, 1930s, 1970s)

Sing-along memories

Classical music rave

History of Christmas through songs



Plenty of programme for children and families



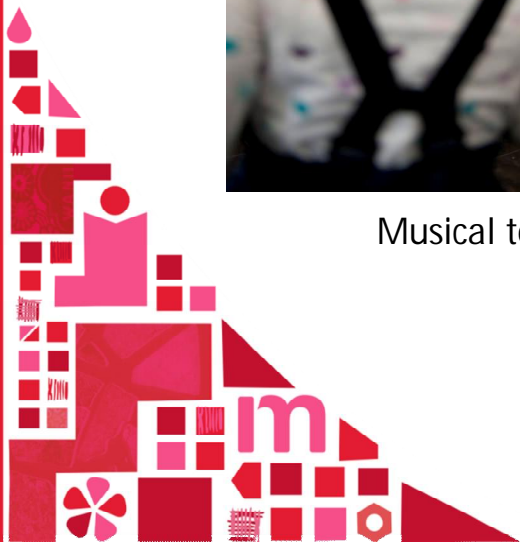
Musical town



Spell of musical instruments



Sibelius Story





"Everything in the exhibition was really fun and memorable."

Enthusiastic reception



Praise from the audience

- by now, over 50 000 visitors
- the exhibition was aimed at Finnish adults, but to our surprise children and tourists have loved it, too
- a lot of feedback through different channels
- the feedback is overwhelmingly positive

The best liked features

Hands-on activities and involvement, especially singing and dancing games

Listening to music, making own choices

Old objects and photos, memories

Abundance, diversity and comprehensiveness

Cosy, relaxed and informal atmosphere

Not quite perfect, though

- there could be more visibility in media and visitors
- the amount of text provokes mixed feedback – as always
- the sales of the book have been a disappointment
- as expected, we have had a few technical problems
- some visitors find touchscreens difficult
- the amount of light and sound annoys some people – as usual
- some complaints about the content of the exhibition, usually there is too little about someone's favourite music – as a whole, the exhibition seems to be pretty well in balance

Not too much popular culture and heavy rock.

Classical music was perhaps slightly overshadowed by popular music?





Thank you!

Further inquiries

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