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The archive, disciplinarity and renewal: the DOMUS perspective

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In its recent *Consensus Study on the State of the Humanities in South Africa*, the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) found that 'there is a crisis in the Humanities' and that 'the Humanities within institutions of higher learning are in a state of intellectual stagnation and, singular innovations notwithstanding, have remained in this moribund condition for more than 15 years.' Describing the history, context and challenges facing the Documentation Centre for Music (DOMUS) at Stellenbosch University, I will argue that university music departments in South Africa are not exempt from this condition, and posit the potential of the archive to invigorate music as a university discipline within the specific conditions of South African academe and musical practice. Founded in 2005, DOMUS represents an integrated archival, research and curating initiative located within the oldest university music department in South Africa. It was created in order to promote music in South Africa and Africa by collecting, preserving, ordering and cataloguing the music and documentary collections of composers, performing artists, musicologists and music institutions. Since inception it has grown in size and scope from 20 (mostly Western art music) collections in 2005 to 49 collections of increasing diversity. Its remit has been obliged to develop rapidly to embrace a notion of 'music' that now includes art music, indigenous African orally composed and notated music, popular music and jazz, from various historical periods and different communities. Partly shaped by what has come its way, DOMUS finds itself under pressure from a broad range of musical constituencies who increasingly recognize it as one of the most stable and accessible music archives in South Africa. My paper will attempt to show how the archive, specifically DOMUS, could become an essential pivot between maintaining the intellectual integrity of music as an academic discipline on the one hand, and stimulating radical disciplinary reform within the context of the crisis outlined by the ASSAf study.

CV:

Stephanus Muller founded and continues to head the Documentation Centre for Music at Stellenbosch University, where is an associate professor in musicology. He has a large cohort of graduate students working on topics like musical composition and complexity theory, contemporary performance practice, the life and music of Taliep Petersen, the art song in Africa, music and militarization and Boeremusiek. He has published on South African music and specifically on the composers Arnold van Wyk and Stefans Grové. Currently he is working on a collaborative book project on the EOAN opera company and a collection of the correspondence between Arnold van Wyk and Anton Hartman (as co-editor with Stephanie Vos). Both books are connected to the archival projects and collections of DOMUS.