

Why isn't it important to rehearse with composers?

For some people the creation of a piece of music does not happen when the composer finishes writing a score but when the score is performed; perhaps the French word "création" -standing for premiere- is apt here notwithstanding the paradoxical expression designating the rehearsal, namely "la répétition d'une première" by which "la création" becomes ironically a copy of an original, i.e. the rehearsal! (Cf. Derrida)

This brings us to another category of people who consider a piece of music as created when the score is written, and who regard the performance as a higher truth (an incarnation?) of the preexisting truth of the score. Here, the performance distances itself from the concept of creation and becomes closer to a translation, an interpretation or a realization of the score as Ravel would have put it.

In both cases the relationship between score/composer from one side, and the realization/performer from another side, is mutually existential: Without having experienced sound, composers would have never written scores; neither would their scores have sounded without having been performed. Likewise, without the scores of composers the need for and the professions of our respective classically-trained musicians, conductors, ensembles, orchestras, festivals, venues, radio stations, etc perhaps would have never existed.

This relationship, however, seems to have lost some of its essential balance nowadays when our respective contemporary music establishments have apparently forgotten the importance of its composers during performances: How many contemporary compositions are performed nowadays without rehearsing with the living composers of those pieces? Why do not musicians, conductors, ensembles and orchestras -who did not rehearse with the composer in question- insist in bringing him/her for the necessary number of rehearsals assuring thus the highest compatibility between the vision of the composer and the actual performance? Even with the best performers ever, composers often have something to add re refining the realization of "their" compositions! Why are some simpler expenses for covering the travel and hotel of composers re rehearsals more "problematic" to concert organizers than worrying about achieving better music making? If economy is hurdle, why should this affect the presence of composers instead of affecting some definitely-less-important administrative aspects which do not create, neither improve "music"? In the worst economic case, why not benefitting from technology and Internet through recording the rehearsals (even when done with tolerable amateur equipments) and sending them to the composer in question in order to get his/her feedback consequently improving the making of music which is supposedly the ultimate goal (yes?) of the whole music "business"?

Obviously these are only a few issues among many others within the common present habits of our respective establishments who put the composers' musical authority towards the end of the list of its occupations... We hope, however, that this article would encourage our contemporary music establishments to rethink their performance organizational priorities.