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Concerto Dinamico

*A research towards concert hall design for the 21st-century
classical music experience*

Classical Music
Noun [U]
UK/ ,klæs.ɪ.kəl 'mjuː.zɪk/
Music that is considered to be a part of a long, formal tradition and to have lasting value.
Cambridge Dictionary

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Figure 1. Concert for Max Richter's composition *Sleep* Source: Rolling Stone

1. Introduction

The distribution and experience of classical music has changed dramatically since the dawn of the genre. Beethoven's Ninth symphony was originally only to be listened to through attendance of the performance at the *Theater am Kärntnertor* in Vienna,¹ while today, music and media accessibility and distribution reached a new height with the introduction of the internet.

In the post-war period, classical music got a new interest through television. Austrian conductor Herbert von Karajan was known to be very fond of film, both featuring and directing them. Karajan followed the example of his contemporary Leonard Bernstein, who also televised his *53 Young People's Concerts* in the United States.² Bernstein's works for television explained classical music and included the viewers in its process, ultimately drawing the attention of a wider and younger public in the 1950's.³

Nowadays, concert halls are mostly populated by the elderly, who learned to enjoy classical music from either their parents or their contemporaries.⁴ However, research by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, streaming service Deezer and the British Phonographic Industry show that with the rise of streaming services, classical music has seen a new uprising.⁵ I count myself as part of the millennial uprising, as I started listening to classical music around my 18th. While I admit having an eclectic music taste, I personally highly adore the works of Beethoven, Grieg and Rimsky-Korsakov.

However, there are plentiful of recent classical developments, like the work of Anglo-German composer Max Richter, who redeveloped the evergreen *Four Seasons* of Antonio Vivaldi using electrical instruments, turning it into a Spotify hit. *Spring I* was listened to over 44 million times, Richter himself having 2.9 million monthly listeners on streaming service Spotify alone.⁶ Contemporary examples like this show that the distribution of classical music has become overwhelmingly flexible, whereas the concert buildings do not seem to reflect this development.

Thus, these contemporary additions to various classical subgenres seem to ask for a new environment for its composers, its conductors, its performers and most of all, its listeners. While naturally having a strict request for acoustic quality, I believe that the classical music scene could profit from a revitalised, modernistic interpretation of the music venue. Dynamism, multiplicity, and the multi-functional value of a music venue could combine into new chances for the popularity, experience, and prominence of the classical music scene, leading up to the main research question:

How can dynamic re-iteration of concert hall designs modernise the audience experience of the live contemporary classical music scene?

¹ Theodore Albrecht, "Picturing the Players in the Pit: The Orchestra of Vienna's Kärntnertor Theater, 1821-1822," *Music in Art* 34, 1, no. Music, Body, and Stage: The Iconography of Music Theater and Opera (2009).

² Georg Wubbolt, "Maestro for the Screen," (Germany: CMajorGlobal, 2014).

³ "Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic," 2021, accessed 17 november, 2021, <https://leonardbernstein.com/about/educator/young-peoples-concerts>.

⁴ Anthony Tommasini, "Classical Music Attracts Older Audiences. Good.," *The New York Times* (August 6 2020).

⁵ "Research Shows Huge Surge in Millennials and Gen Z-ers Streaming Classical Music," *ClassicFM*, 2020, <https://www.classicfm.com/music-news/surge-millennial-gen-z-streaming-classical-music/>.

⁶ Data taken from streaming app Spotify, as of 17th of November 2021.

2. Research framework

2.1 Key Terms, Concepts, Theories

Classical music, as its Cambridge dictionary definition states, is part of a long and formal cultural tradition. Classical music itself as well as its accompanying architecture, have been part of western European culture since the medieval era.⁷ Because of these century-long traditions in both the music and its architecture, I believe that precedence can offer important insights when looking towards a *new* iteration of classical music experience.

The formal, Western, classical music experience is one that is functionally roughly the same throughout the world. It follows a strong etiquette, combined with a certain choreography of the audience and the performers. A visit usually starts with a formal drink in the foyer, followed by the actual live performance, an optional small break in between two symphonies or concertos, to end off with a curtain call and ovation, all following said etiquette.⁸

While I stress the importance of preserving these traditions, I see chances for classical music in dynamism and flexibility: the latest generation of listeners have a different listening pattern.⁹ They experience music not per entire concerto, but in 3-minute intervals; they do not experience it physically at a concert hall, including the preparations, but instantly, wherever they carry their streaming device.^{10 11} I aim to research for a design that could act as a manifestation of the experience of this new generation of classical music.

In order to understand design for this specific experience, I will try to disassemble this spatial experience of new classical music into the exploration three consecutive subjects: Object, Movement, and Perception. These subjects translate to the episteme of typo-morphology, praxeology, and phenomenology respectively.

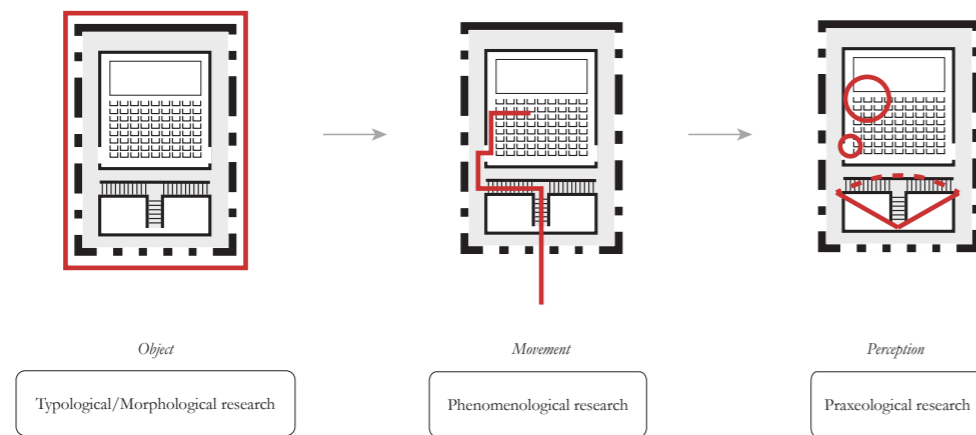


Figure 2. Research sequence diagram - Author's own work

⁷ Michael Forsyth, *Buildings for Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁸ Renée Vulto, "Beyond the Concert Hall - A comparative phenomenological investigation into the musical experience in different surroundings, looking at classical music in the traditional concert hall and alternative concert situations" (Master of Arts Utrecht University, 2017), 8.

⁹ Roy P Montecchio N, Pachet F, *The skipping behavior of users of music streaming services and its relation to musical structure.*, Beihang University (Beihang, 2020).

¹⁰ Robert Prey, *Platform pop: disentangling Spotify's intermediary role in the music industry*, University of Groningen (Groningen, 2019).

¹¹ George Knox Hannes Datta, Bart Bronnenberg, *Changing Their Tune: How Consumers' Adoption of Online Streaming Affects Music Consumption and Discovery*, Tilburg University (Tilburg, 2017).



Figure 3. Candlelight Classical Festival Amsterdam - Source: Secretamsterdam.com

Oggetto

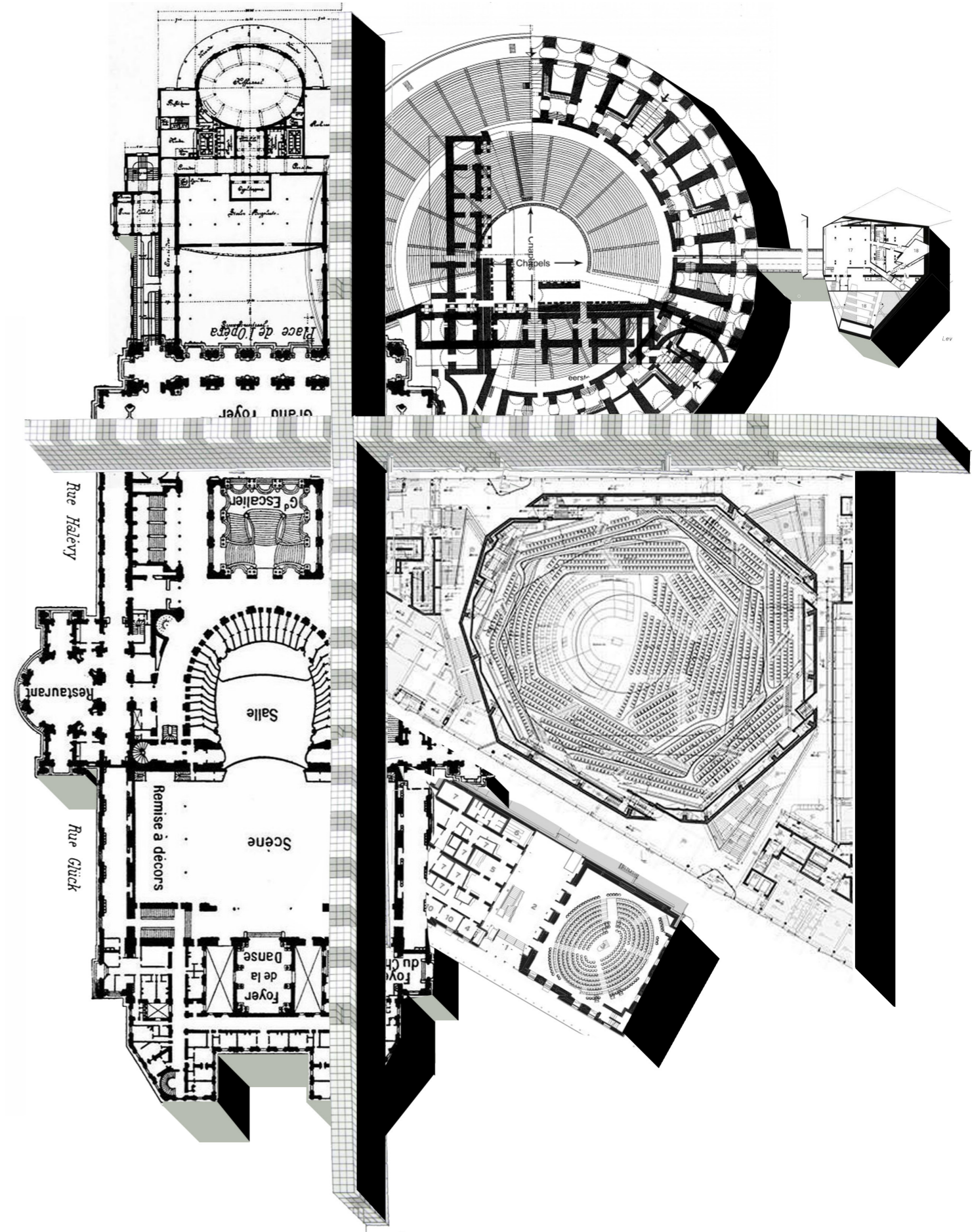
Typo-Morphology

How are archetypal concert halls organisationally and morphologically designed?

First, to form a fundamental architectural basis, the concert hall architecture precedents will first be analysed through the lens of typology and morphology. The lens consists of theories by authors of the Italian and French schools of typo-morphology, respectively Aldo Rossi and J.N.L. Durand. Rossi's theory is extremely relevant for his thoughts regarding the role of the design and its relationship the city, both physically and socially, as well as the notion of morphological type being the starting point before looking at built form.¹²

As a result of acoustic qualities, two arche-types have emerged in concert hall architecture history among the metaphorical forest of types: the *shoebox* and the *vineyard*.¹³ Since I am to explore an ambiguous definition of concerto experience, the *non-typical* concert hall will also be analysed to create a contrast with the *archetypal*, so to offer new insights into spatial organisation possibilities. Consequently, these three interpretations of the concert hall are then split onto two case studies each: one historical and one contemporary. This way, two different analysis comparisons can be made: within its type, and across multiple types, making up for a total of six case studies.

Shifting towards the spatial planning of the types, the catalogue-like studies of Durand are to provide a perspective onto the organisational, plan-focused typological studies. His *Précis des leçons d'architecture données à l'École polytechnique*, an epitome of systematic typological analysis, serves as an example for creating a catalogue of concert hall typologies.¹⁴ Here, focus lies upon the development and comparison of the spatial-organisational aspect. Music venue cataloguing is something we performed as group work in the P1-phase prior to the individual design. The conclusions providing ample insights towards reorganisation of spatial and organisational aspects.



¹² Jiae Han Jonghoon Im, "Typological Design Strategy of FOA's Architecture," *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, 2, no. 14 (2015).

¹³ Ben Kok, "Amare presentation on Acoustic performances" (3 september 2021 2021).

¹⁴ Leandro Madrazo, "Durand and the Science of Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education* 48, 1 (1994), Taylor & Francis, Ltd., Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Inc.



Figure 5. Berlin Philharmonic Main Hall - Author's own work

Movimento

Praxeology

What role does dynamic use play in archetypical concert hall design?

Secondly, for the next step towards the development of a new spatial experience for classical music, I aim to analyse the movement and traffic of the audience in the beforementioned case studies. This is to compare in two ways the progression of getting towards the performance hall between several precedents.

An example is the great central staircase of the Opéra Garnier, one of its key design features¹⁵, where patrons would flaunt their great gowns: finding their way to the hall was regarded as part of the experience. Architect Charles Garnier himself was trained at L'École des Beaux-Arts, an institution of which its architecture department laid heavy focus on the *marche*, the progression through spaces.¹⁶

The theory that I will apply on this subject is the often-used theory of Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, through his idea of Perceived Space, Conceived Space and Lived Space. I believe it appropriately covers the bridge between *physical* and *phenomenological* space. Again, applying the theory to the case studies is aimed at establishing a toolbox of methods to re-use in the new design.¹⁷

Percezione

Phenomenology

How can a concert hall and its performance be experienced dynamically?

Finally, to complete the process, the musical experience itself is analysed. Unlike the two previous epistemes, which analyse the architectural precedence, this subject focuses heavily on phenomenology. Therefore, mainly textual and theoretical conclusions will be combined with the typo-morphological and praxeological aspects into a new architectural spatial experience.

In musicologist Renée Vulto's nominated thesis *Beyond the Concert Hall* she applies various phenomenological theories, such as that of philosophers Heidegger and Husserl. She then applied these theories to analyse the experience of music in various spatial settings, varying from concert hall to open air concertos.¹⁸ While musicologically focused, it offers an extensive insight into the experience of music in specific physical environments and will show to be very relevant. This project will try to create a similar phenomenological analysis, although from a more architectural-physical point of view. Hence, I will use the theories of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, since his take on phenomenology covers the contextualised, both physical and associational.¹⁹ Vulto's conclusions, combined with Merleau-Ponty's theories, are to provide a musically phenomenological framework as input into the new spatial design.

¹⁵ Catherine Brisac Christine Flon, Frédérique de Cagny, André Chastel, et al, *Le Grand Atlas de l'Architecture Mondiale* (Encyclopedia Universalis France S.A., 1988).

¹⁶ Marian Moffett Michael Fazio, Lawrence Wodehouse, *Buildings Across Time: An Introduction to World Architecture* (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008).

¹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).

¹⁸ Vulto, "Beyond the Concert Hall - A comparative phenomenological investigation into the musical experience in different surroundings, looking at classical music in the traditional concert hall and alternative concert situations."

¹⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la Perception* [Phenomenology of Perception] (Routledge Classics, 2005).

2.2 Methodological Reflection

Previous paragraphs mainly established the theoretical framework, I shall now specify the methods used for each respective episteme. While I already explained the motivation for each chosen field of study, I will elaborate on the tools that relate to the subject. I aim to apply each tool in relation to its respective episteme theory.

The method for Typo-Morphology will be a combination of plan analysis and form studies. As was mentioned in the according paragraph, a precedential study is done to establish a classic architectural framework (axonometries, facades, plans, sections) from which to form a toolbox. What are the six typical case studies built from, what makes a typical concert hall? These graphical conclusions are then catalogued as a toolbox of plans and shapes (after Durand's example) from which to reassemble, combine and rearrange into new design.

For Praxeology, the method will consist mainly out of the development of a space-syntax model for the according case studies. This will be mainly a model for the analysis of physical use, descriptive analysis and sequential perspective drawings are applied to cover the representational and experiential aspect of this research, after Lefebvre's theories. These conclusions, as well as a comparative catalogue, can be used as a toolbox for the generation of new dynamic space sequences and spatial route configurations.

Finally, as the paragraph described, Phenomenology will be studied through what I mainly regard as qualitative research. Since research papers that describe phenomenology in music are mostly of non-architectural origin, research works of other disciplines are studied to generate theoretical input. These works are rarely of graphical nature, so conclusions rely heavily on textual interpretation. These conclusions will then be manifested through design-based research.

3. Preliminary conclusions and reflection

Based upon the theories that were described, I expect to conclude towards a design that is based upon both existing architectural precedents and more recent phenomenological findings. With a toolbox built up from various spatial organisations, space-syntax route analysis I aim to develop a new, less static spatial and aesthetic organisation. One where the user is less limited in their experience than the current classical concert hall.

At the moment of writing, I see a possible solution as a type of architectural *collage*, one on the three subjects. In combining the conclusions from the precedential typo-morphological toolbox – segments of floor plans, forms, etc. – with the newly found information on experiencing classical music, I hope to find a synthesis between the archetype and the modernistic possibilities. I imagine the project location within the Binckhorst framework on one of the prominent avenues, in clear sight, seeking to provide an antithesis to the established Amare in the The Hague city-centre.

If the new design is truly to accommodate classical music, then it must also have a lasting value. I believe the design can be part of a long metaphorical bloodline of concert hall architecture, paying respect to the traditions that were established before it, while still offering a new take on music experience. The media distribution of the 21st century has fundamentally changed the way people get to listen to (classical) music, and most importantly, this design should translate this new concept.

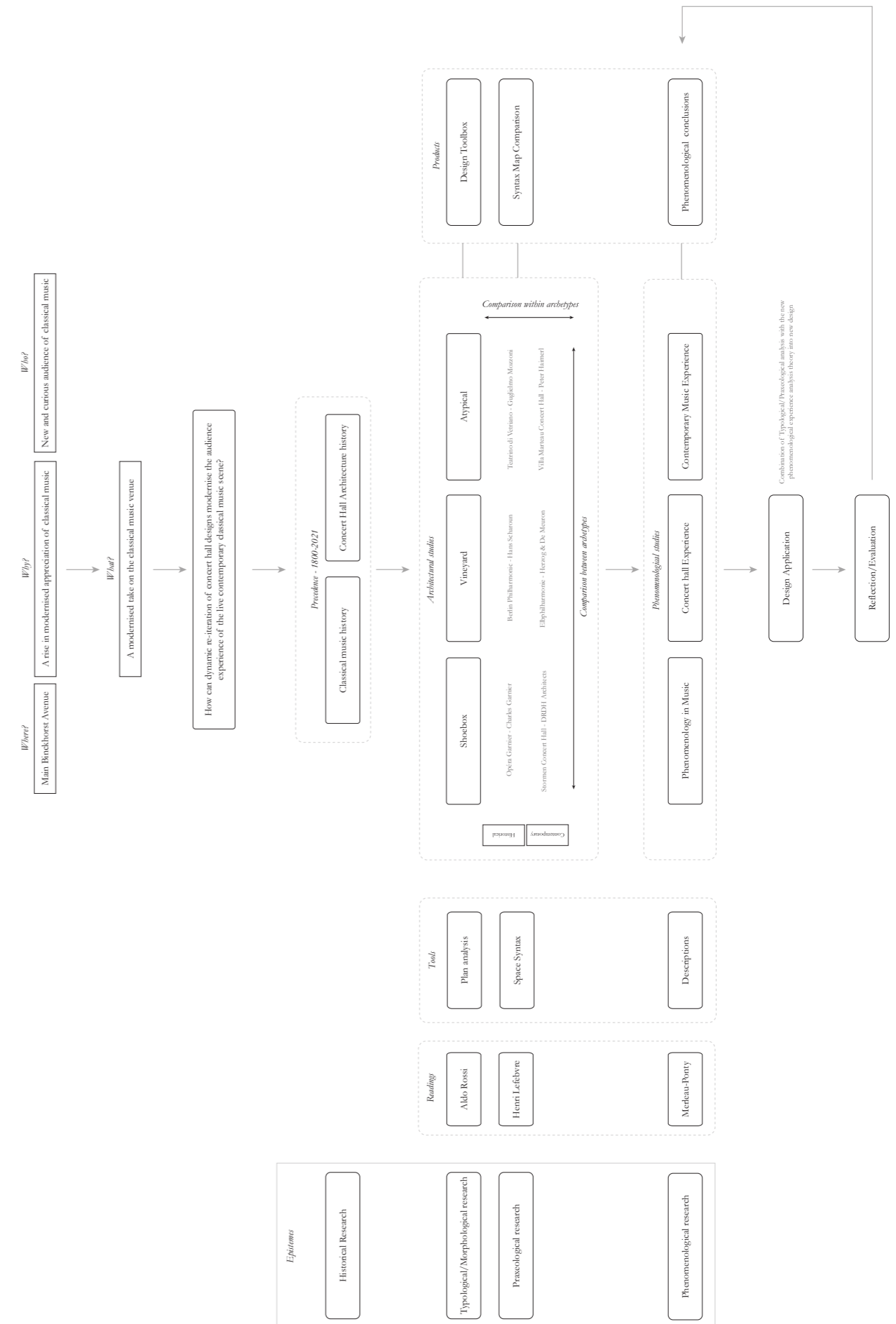


Figure 6. Main research diagram - Author's own work

5. Bibliography – literature used

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6. List of Figures

Figure 1. Photograph of Max Richter's Performance for Sleep in New York. Source: Rolling Stone Magazine. Retrieved from: <https://www.rollingstone.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/richter-with-beds-mr-sleep-0f8bc555-c687-4caf-96ab-2847b5732cd4.jpg>

Figure 2. Research sequence diagram Source: Own Work

Figure 3. Candlelight Classical Festival Amsterdam Source: Secretamsterdam.com Retrieved from: <https://offloadmedia.feverup.com/secretamsterdam.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/13184028/candlelight-concerts-2.jpg>

Figure 4. Typological Concert Hall Collage. Source: Own Work

Figure 5. Photograph of Berlin Philharmonie Main Hall. Source: Own Work

Figure 6. Main research diagram. Source: Own Work.

Figure 7. Photograph of Max Richter's Performance for Sleep. Source: Financial Times. Retrieved from: https://www.ft.com/__origami/service/image/v2/images/raw/http%3A%2F%2Fcom.ft.imagepublish.upp-prod-eu.s3.amazonaws.com%2Fcbd9513c-340a-11e7-99bd-13beb0903fa3?fit=scale-down&source=next&width=700.



Figure 7. Concert for Max Richter's composition *Sleep*. Source: Financial Times.