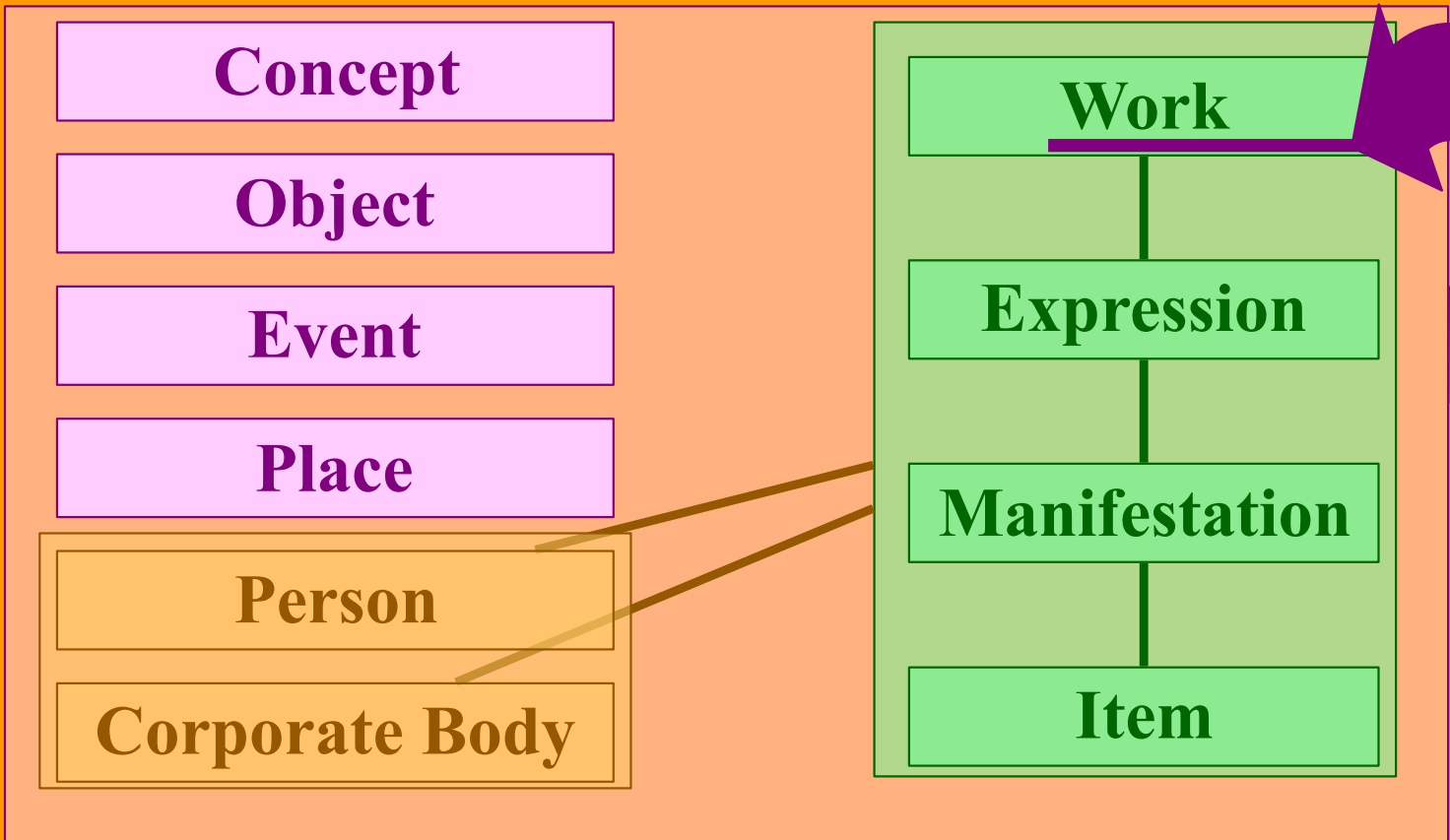


Music Information in the IFLA FRBR Model

**(or: Various ways of looking at ‘Musical
Works’)**

Patrick Le Bœuf

**(Paper presented at the IAML Annual
Conference, Warsaw, Poland, July 12, 2005)**



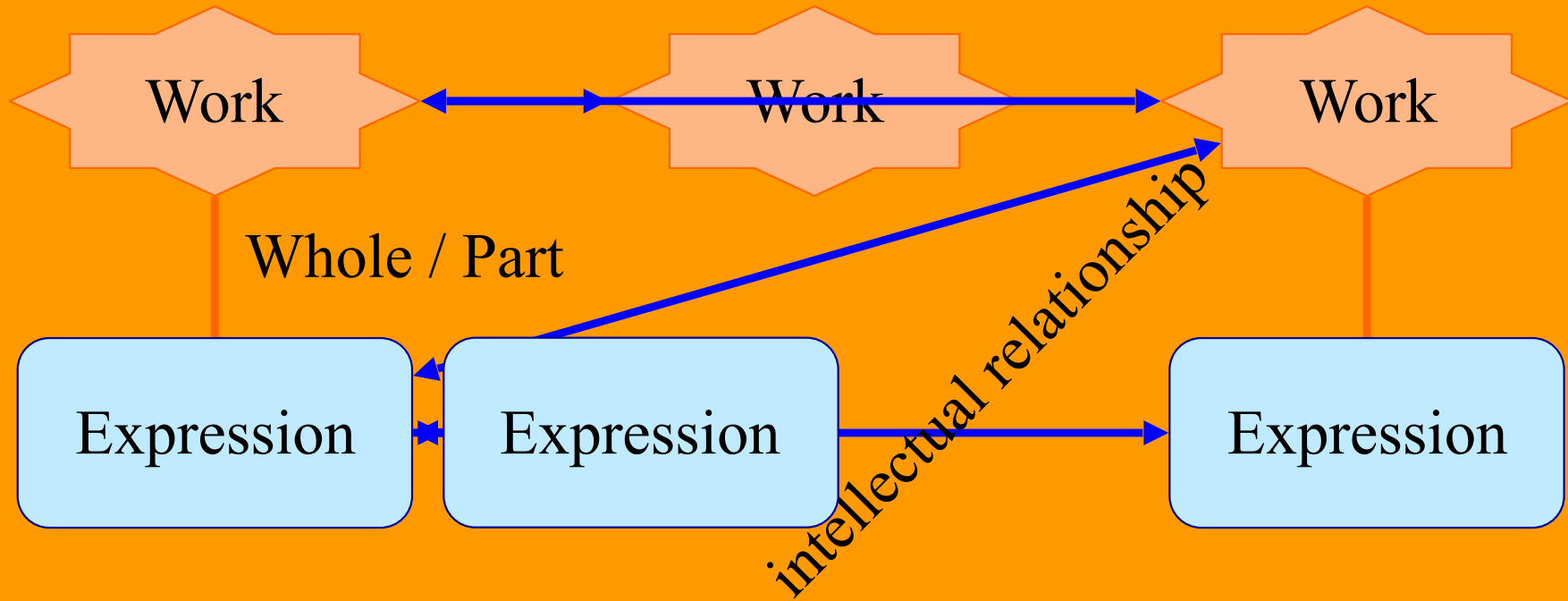
“Subject” relationships between Group 3 & Work

“Structural” relationships within Group 1

“Responsibility” relationships between Group 1 & Group 2

intellectual relationship

Whole / Part



intellectual relationship

**Is the whole stuff
really new??**



FRBR: A Novelty??...

❓ ... **Not really, even in a general context:**

❓ **1) By definition**

FRBR = based on ISBDs, GARR...

❓ **2) By virtue of (now forgotten) practices**

19th c. catalogues = perfect FRBR-compliant catalogues!

FRBR: A Novelty??...

[?] ... Even less so in music libraries:

[?] Music cataloguers know:

- **How to dig works out of publications**
- **How to differentiate a specific “state of the work” from the work’s “ideal state”**
- **How to help users be aware of that distinction**

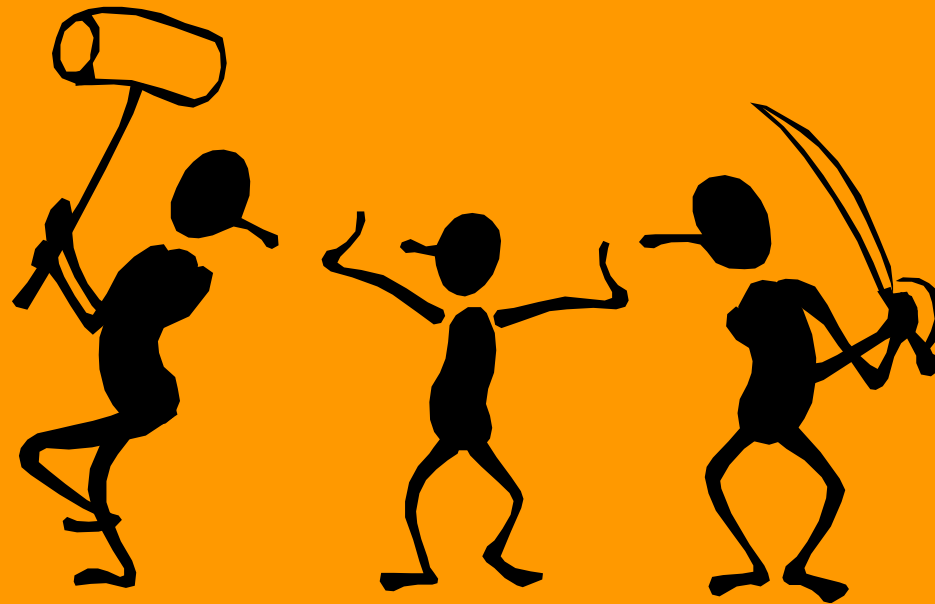
[?] Uniform titles for music = good prep for the FRBR approach!

Music cataloguers and FRBR

☐ Interested and skeptical at the same time:

- **Confirmation of their own intuitions**
- **But how to improve catalogues?**
- **Where is the crucial distinction between notation and performance?**

Work/Expression: a stormy relationship



Hovering above the text...

? Work definition in FRBR:

- **“a distinct intellectual or artistic creation”**
 - **so is an Expression, ain't it?**
- **an abstract notion to be grasped in “the commonality of content between and among expressions”**
 - **so it takes at least 2 Expressions to grasp 1 Work?**

? => **Not very helpful definitions**

Hovering above the text...

- [?] What do music philosophers say about “musical works”?**
- [?] Does it match the FRBR concepts?**
- [?] Does it match the underlying concepts of cataloguing pra**



The nature of musical works

? 5 logical possibilities:

- **Musical work = non-existent; just a name**
- **Musical work = a concrete particular**
- **Musical work = a universal**
- **Musical work = an abstract particular
& a type**
- **Musical work = just an abstract particular**



The nature of musical works

❓ Implicit position endorsed in FRBR:

Musical work = an abstract particular

❓ Position shared by Richard Smiraglia

- **“A work” = cultural sign**
- **“A work” = both mutable and immutable**
- **“A work” = “a signifying, concrete set of ideational conceptions that finds realization through semantic or symbolic expression” (Richard Smiraglia)**

The nature of musical works

[?] In current cataloguing practice:

[?] “Piano music. Selections”

“Don Giovanni. Selections; arr.”

} = Works?

[?] If they are “works”, then “works” should be viewed merely as “convenient names”, with no other reality

**[?] => Position implicitly endorsed in practice (?):
Musical work = non-existent, just a name**

The nature of musical works

? Scores and performances

- = instantiations of a work (= a class)?

Yes: Stephen Davies

- = realisations of a work (= an abstract instance)?

Yes: FRBR, Richard Smiraglia

- = referents of a work (= nothing but a name)?

Yes: Cataloguing practice, Patrick Wilson

The identity of a musical work

- ❓ What constitutes the identity of a work? What are “work-constitutive” or “work-identifying” features?**
- ❓ “A musical work is a performed sound structure as made normative in a musico-historical setting” (Stephen Davies)**
- ❓ But what is a “sound structure”??**

The identity of a musical work

[?] For instance, is instrumentation “ a crucial aspect of sound structure”?

[?] 4 major trends:

- **“Pure sonicism”**
- **“Timbral sonicism”**
- **“Instrumentalism”**
- **“Contextualism”**



The identity of a musical work

? FRBR:

- **“Medium of performance” = Work attribute**
- **“Medium of performance” = Expression attribute**
- **Transcription: different values for both attributes**
- **Transcription = Expression of the same Work**

? => **FRBR implicitly adheres to “Pure sonicism”**

The identity of a musical work

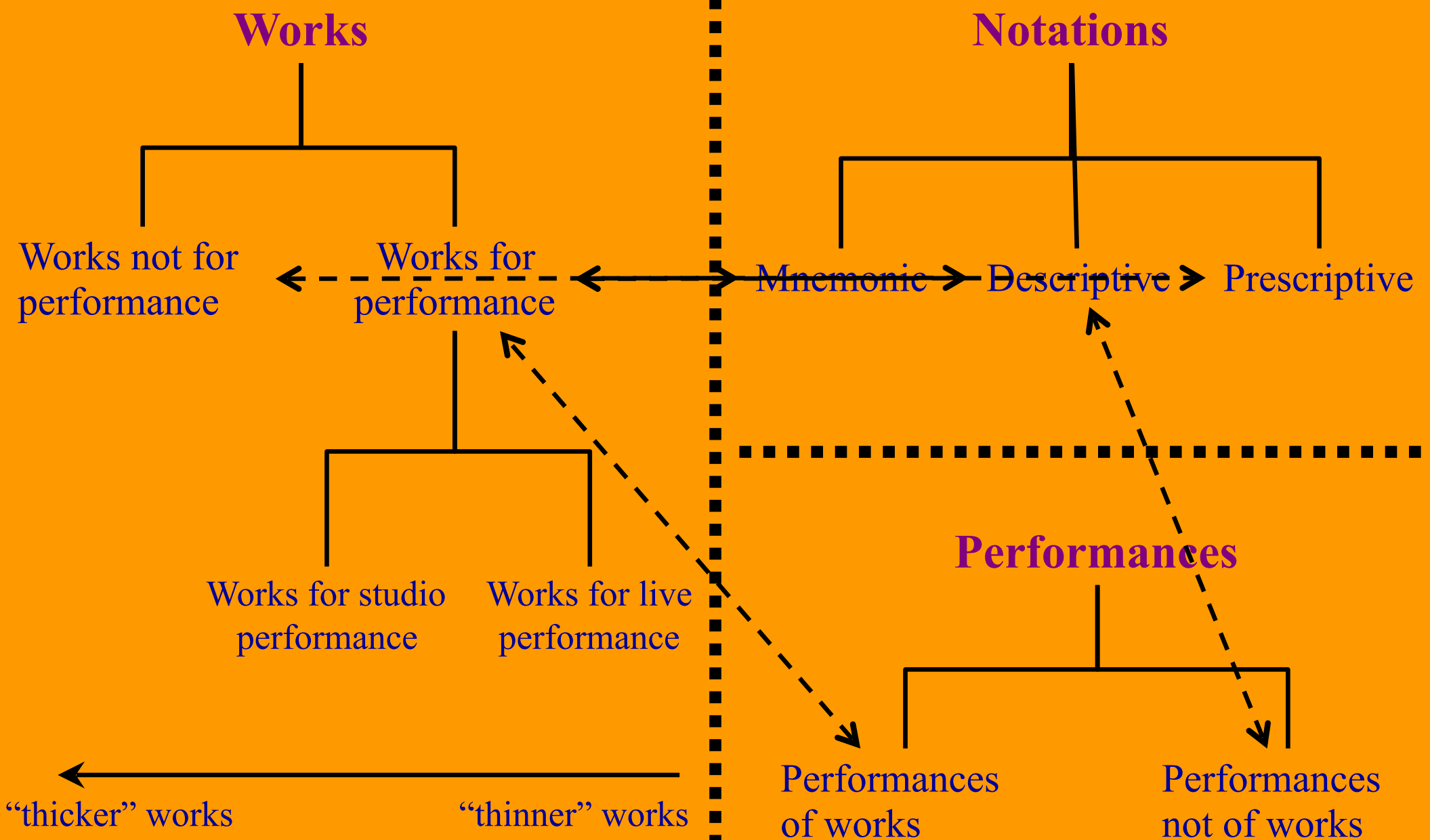
[?] Cataloguing practice:

- **Depends on institution:**
- **Generic titles as entry element: medium of performance always required**
- **Other cases: some institutions record medium of performance, others do not**

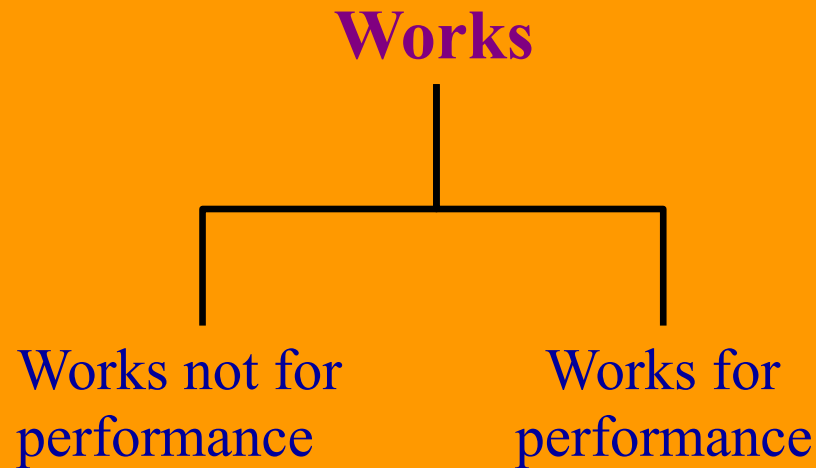
[?] => On the whole however: “Pure sonicism” as well

The identity of a musical work

- ❑ “Pure sonicism” = librarian world’s dominant ideology**
- ❑ It would be possible (although neither easy nor helpful) to shift for “Instrumentalism”**
- ❑ “Timbral sonicism” and “Contextualism” both difficult to endorse in library catalogues and probably unhelpful**

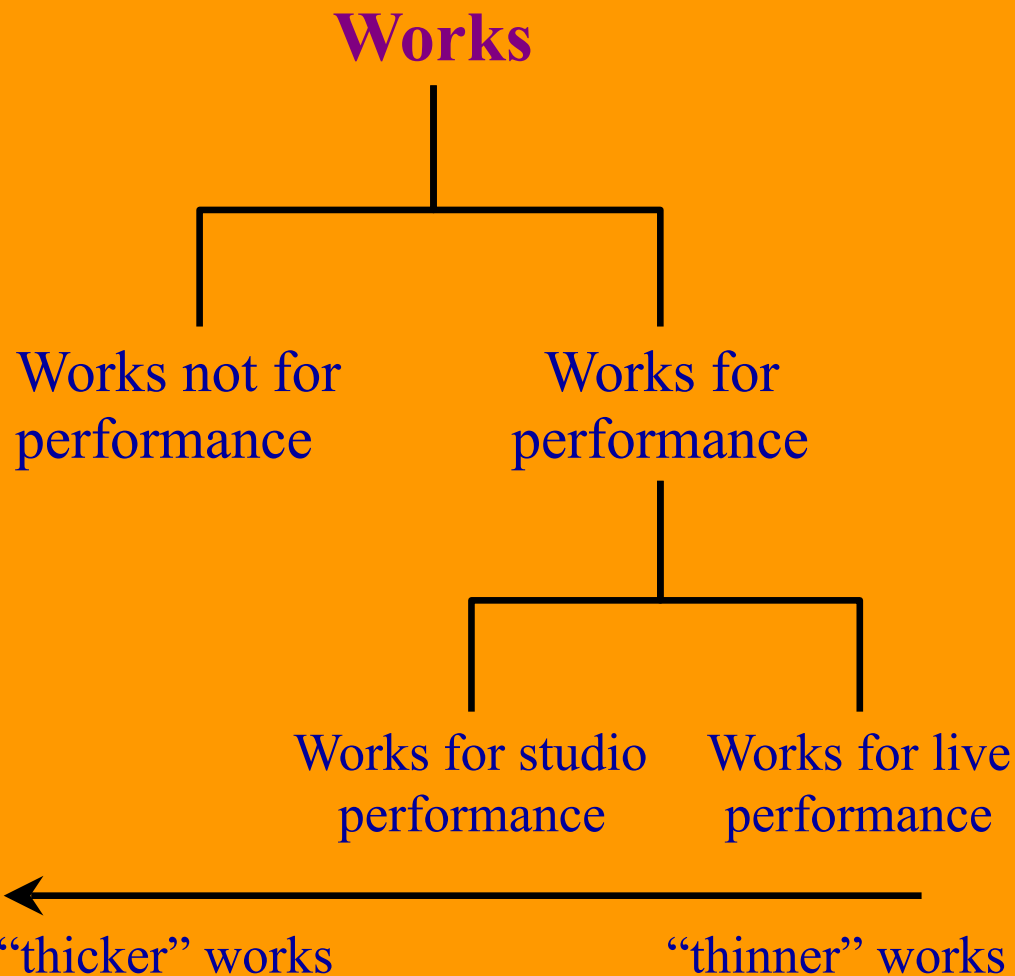


An ontology of musical works, performances and notations



- ?** For Davies, improvisations are not “works”
- ?** That view would ruin FRBR: in FRBR, there always is a Work

An ontology of musical works, performances and notations



? **“Thick” works = works for which it is difficult to distinguish between Work and Expression**

An ontology of musical works, performances and notations

- ❑ For Davies, “Work” = “authoritative text”?**
- ❑ => Work = nothing more than a peculiar Expression?**
- ❑ Cf. Patrick Wilson: uniform title = title of a “core text singled out for use in classification”**
- ❑ That view would require a different structure for FRBR**

An ontology of musical works, performances and notations

- ❑ Davies' distinctions between “mnemonic”, “descriptive”, and “prescriptive” notations are of no use for library catalogues**
- ❑ Davies does not address the (tricky) issue of vocal music:
Does a change in lyrics induce a change in the work identity?**

An ontology of musical works, performances and notations

- ❑ Davies distinguishes between “Performance” and “Recorded Performance”**
- ❑ Distinction most relevant for library catalogues: we deal with recorded performances, not with performances**
- ❑ Same concert + two recording devices = two distinct Expressions**

By way of conclusion



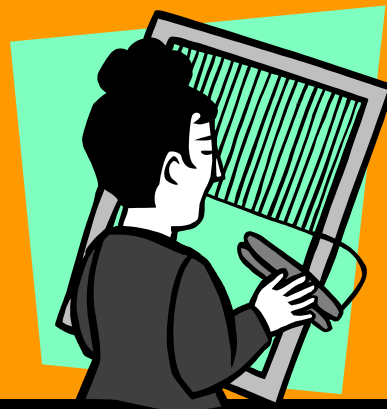
By way of conclusion

? What will “ontology-based”
library catalogues look like?



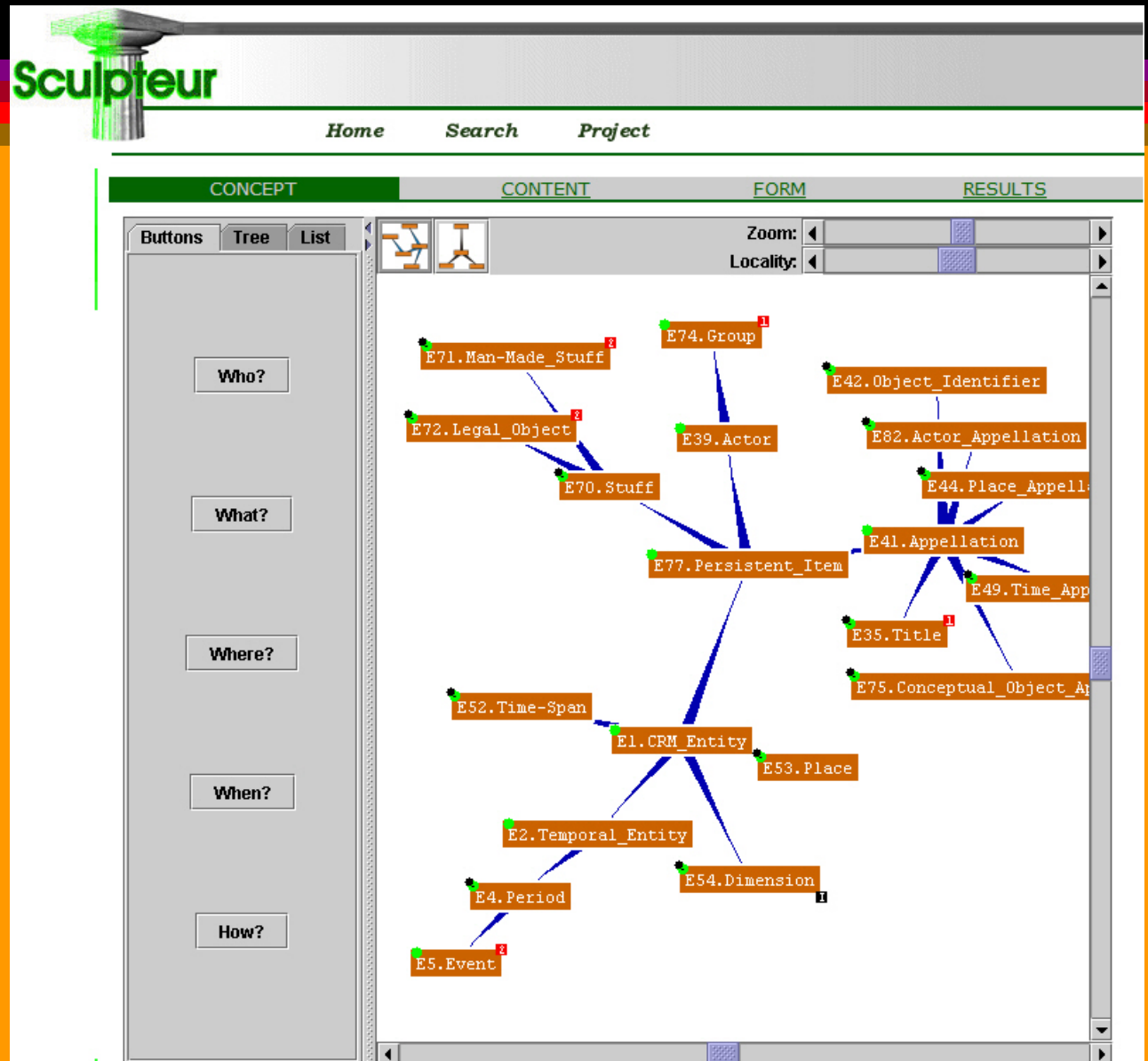
By way of conclusion

- ☐ Relationships are best represented in online catalogues as hot links**
- ☐ Formats should include them!**



By way of conclusion

? Graphical representations of relationships = a must for future catalogues??



By way of conclusion

? **Richard A. Sharpe**
(as quoted by Stephen Davies):
“Ontology is ideology”

? **So is cataloguing.**

