

Working Group on the Indexing of Music Performances

Report

Rupert Ridgewell (British Library / Royal College of Music)

July 2005

1. Background

The challenge of collecting, cataloguing and organising collections of concert programmes was the subject of a special symposium presented by the Research Libraries Professional Branch at the IAML conference in Cambridge in 1980. The symposium included speakers from four institutions in Germany, France and the USA: Joachim Jaenecke (Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz), Simone Wallon (Bibliothèque nationale de France), Ruth Watanabe (Sibley Music Library, Rochester, N.Y.), and Susan Sommer (New York Public Library).¹

One of the key strands to emerge from the symposium was the somewhat divergent ways in which different libraries organise their collections. Joachim Jaenecke and Simone Wallon described systems that are essentially based on venues. Individual programmes are placed by location and then by date, with undated programmes placed at the end of each group. Susan Sommer, on the other hand, described a more flexible, but ultimately rather serendipitous, method of filing miscellaneous programmes at the New York Public Library. Here, the emphasis is placed on performers rather than locations: each programme is filed either by the names of major performers, or by any other element that seems most important to the librarian at the time of sorting. Both systems focus on one aspect of a programme to the exclusion of others and both represent pragmatic solutions to an insoluble problem. As Sommer noted:

Ideally all the facets of information on a program – names of performers, repertoire, sponsors, place and date, special circumstances such as premieres, program notes – should be cross-indexed, giving the researcher instant access to the various aspects of this multi-faceted information source. But a simple glance at the number of programs potentially extant (hundreds of thousands? millions?) set against the comparatively limited physical and financial resources of our libraries shows the impossibility of such a dream. Instead we must settle for compromise. The ways in which different libraries and archives have decided to do this reflect their collections, their histories, their users' requirements, and their philosophies.

The fundamental issue of finding resources to catalogue programmes to an adequate level of detail remains as relevant for many libraries today as it was in 1980, although in other respects the context has changed. With the advent of computer technology, it is now possible to manage and access data in ways that were hardly envisaged in 1980. Also, the needs of users have arguably become more sophisticated since 1980, as concert-related material has been the subject of an increasingly diverse range of scholarly approaches.

¹ The symposium was entitled 'Programmes Collections and their Organisation'. See Joachim Jaenecke, Simone Wallon, Ruth Wannabe and Susan Sommer, 'IAML Research Libraries Branch: symposium on concert programmes', *Fontes Artis Musicae* 28 (1981), 67-81.

2. The needs of users

Music historians are increasingly recognising the value of concert programmes as artefacts worth studying in their own right and as primary source materials for charting the emergence of repertoires and the development of musical taste over a period of time. Recent studies of London and Viennese concert life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for example, have explored the institutional and social context of the concert and the reception of particular composers, such as Mozart and Beethoven.² The comparative study of concert programmes from different institutions is another area that has gained ground in recent years, while concert programmes have also been examined as sources for iconography and organology and as emblems of ideology.³ Programmes are equally valued for their descriptive content, for evidence of musical taste or opinion, or for evidence of a composer's intentions.⁴

Access requirements are likewise diverse: some users may find it most useful to view material for a wide range of musical institutions arranged chronologically, while others may require information about the incidental content of programmes (such as the presence of illustrations, annotations, descriptive notes, lists of orchestral personnel, etc.). Researchers examining patterns of concert life often require information about which ensembles were active in a particular town, which venues were used for performances, what repertoire was performed, and which sets of programmes are complete.

The challenge for music libraries today is twofold: to help users locate material relevant to their study and to unlock the rich vein of information held by programmes and related material. Nothing less than the indexing of full performance details would adequately fulfill both requirements completely.

3. Progress since 2002

At the IAML meeting at Berkeley in 2002 (following informal discussions at Perigeux in 2001), a special session was devoted to the indexing of historical performance information with a demonstration of the International Performance Index (IPI), a project developed by David Day at Brigham Young University (BYU). The database would provide a flexible platform for indexing information garnered from programmes, posters, reviews and other sources of concert data and it was on the basis of this project that the Working Group on the Indexing of

² Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Mary Sue Morrow, *Concert Life in Haydn's Vienna: Aspects of a Developing Musical and Social Institution 'Sociology of Music 7'* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1988).

³ William Weber, 'Miscellany vs. Homogeneity: Concert Programmes at the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music in the 1880s', in *Music and British Culture, 1785-1914: Essays in Honour of Cyril Ehrlich*, ed. Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 299-320; Pamela L. Poulin, 'Anton Stadler's basset clarinet: Recent discoveries in Riga', *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 22 (1996), 110-27; Jann Pasler, 'Concert programs and their narratives as emblems of ideology', *International Journal of Musicology* 2 (1993), 249-308.

⁴ Christina Bashford, 'Not Just 'G.': Towards a History of the Programme Note', in *George Grove, Music and Victorian Culture*, ed. Michael Musgrave (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Robert Pascall, 'Brahms's first symphony slow movement: the initial performing version', *Musical Times*, 122 (October 1981), 664-67.

Musical Performances was established under the auspices of the Bibliography Commission. The aims and objectives ratified by the IAML Council in 2002 were as follows:

1. Build a network and a coalition of related projects and other organizations and scholars indexing performance information
2. Develop (through survey and collaboration) a data structure and online database for indexing performance information found in a variety of primary source documents.
3. Develop and present to council an organizational plan for the ongoing and sustained operation of the project.

The IPI was one of three main strands of presentation and discussion in the first sessions of the newly formed Working Group in Tallinn in 2003, the others being the census of collections undertaken by the WG (see below) and the emerging project to document programme collections in the UK and Ireland. It was clear, however, that the IPI was intended to provide the data structure and online database for the emerging IAML project, thus fulfilling the second principal objective outlined in the group's aims and objectives. At the Oslo conference in 2004, however, it became clear that the intended collaboration with BYU on the development of the IPI would no longer be possible: BYU had now limited the scope of the database to documenting institutional performance ephemera and had thus withdrawn from direct collaboration. This change was reflected in the project's new title: the *Brigham Young University Performance Index*.⁵

The other two strands of discussion in Tallinn continued to bear fruit in 2004 and 2005. The UK/Ireland project was able to report progress in two areas: the completion and publication of an initial census of UK and Ireland collections;⁶ and the formal establishment of a research project to document collections of concert programmes and make the data freely available online, funded for three years. The working group has also stimulated related activity in two other national branches: in Germany, Ann Barbara Kersting-Meuleman (Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt) initiated a survey of national holdings; and in Denmark discussions were underway in 2005 to undertake a census along similar lines to the UK/Ireland project. The WG census of international holdings had also been completed and the results posted online, thanks to the work of student researchers at BYU under the guidance of David Day.⁷

4. Future directions

It should be noted that most of the projects currently aligned to the group are documenting concert ephemera collections at collection level, not at item or performance level. In general, this approach is regarded as an important (and realisable) step forward in terms of making collections available to users and an essential initial goal that may in due course facilitate more detailed indexing projects.

One future goal might be to create an online international register of concert ephemera collections, perhaps as an extension to the UK and Ireland database currently in development. This is already an international database in terms of the range of material it covers. The two principal UK collections – at the Royal

⁵ http://web.lib.byu.edu/byupi/pi_index.html

⁶ Rupert Ridgewell, *Concert Programmes in the UK and Ireland* (London: MLT and IAML(UK&Irl), 2003)

⁷ <http://music.lib.byu.edu/IAML2003Census/Music%20Dept%20Survey/>

College of Music and the British Library – hold programme material from over 30 different countries, including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, West Indies, the UK, and the USA.

Extended to cover collections in other IAML countries, this resource would become a major international research tool for researchers working in the field of performance history and for librarians wishing to evaluate incoming material. It would also complement other IAML projects that incidentally cover material relevant to the study of performance history (RISM covers pre-1800 libretti and word books, while RIPM provides access to performance announcements and reviews in music journals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). The role of the working group would be, *inter alia*, to agree guidelines for describing collections, monitor the project's development, and encourage the participation of national branches.

A more limited, but equally worthwhile, project would be an international register of concert venues. The history of concert venues has hardly been documented in any systematic way and is poorly served by existing reference tools in musicology. An international register of concert venues might seek to document the following information: venue name (including changes of name), seating capacities, architectural history, iconography and ownership history, and it could also link to holdings of relevant archival material.

Appendix. WG Census of holdings (2003): summary of results

The Working Group undertook a census of institutions holding concert ephemera collections to use as a basis for understanding and documenting the diversity of national practices. The census was compiled by Rebecca Arnott, John Spilker and Annie Erickson under the guidance of David Day at BYU in the summer of 2003. Responses were forthcoming from 46 institutions in 14 countries worldwide. The following represents a summary of the results arranged by country (the full results for each institution have been posted online).

Canada

The National Library and Archives of Canada has a collection numbering some 85,000 programmes of musical performances in Canada and performances outside of Canada which feature Canadian performers from 1850 to the present. In addition the music archives include programmes relating to particular musicians. The Library maintains an Inmagic database which is available in-house only. This records full details of the programme, or a summary list of the repertoire performed when the list is too long (over 15 works). The work titles are not authority controlled. The library reports an intention to undertake an inventory of holdings across the country. The library is also investigating the feasibility of making performance materials generally subject to legal deposit.

Estonia

The National Library of Estonia collects programmes of concerts given in Estonia via Legal Deposit. The holdings go back to 1962. The collections are accessible via card catalogues and are being indexed, the information being held in a ProCite database (which is not available online).

France

The Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique maintains a collection of periodical publications from the main Parisian concert halls, but does not collect programmes from these venues.

Germany

The Deutsches Musikarchiv Berlin does not collect concert programmes, but there is some relevant material in the Information centre of the Komponistenverband of the former DDR. The Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung acquires programmes of the Berliner Philharmoniker by deposit. The programmes are accessible via a card index only. A project to document holdings is currently being undertaken by Ann Barbara Kersting-Meulemann (Frankfurt), to be disseminated in CD-ROM format in due course.

Italy

The Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia holds programmes for various musical events in Rome from the mid-19th century to the present day. The library is starting a new database of the Accademia's concerts since 1895, bringing together several existing databases. Information about the programme collections is to be made available via an online catalogue.

The Archivio Luigi Nono collects programmes of concerts with music by Nono from 1950 to the present. The catalogue is held in a FileMakerPro database.

The Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Milano holds programmes for the Teatro alla Scala and of the Conservatorio dating back to the nineteenth century. Descriptions are available via opac.sbn.it.

The Conservatorio Statale di Musica "A. Pedrollo", in Vicenza, was founded in 1972 and holds programmes for local musical events (plus some other cities) from ca.1950 to 1990. The library plans to index the programmes at item level.

Lithuania

The National Library of Lithuania has a small collection of programmes catalogued at collection level.

New Zealand

Auckland City Libraries holds programmes of various musical events in Auckland from 1848 to the present. The library has item level descriptions available online. The records include a summary description of programme information and list names of conductors, soloists, etc.

The Alexander Turnbull Library (National Library of New Zealand) holds programmes within papers of individuals or organisations and in the Ephemera Collection, where they are arranged by size, date and (to some degree) by orchestra or musical group. The library has provided a handlist of ensembles and venues represented in the collection, dating back to 1850. Collections are described on the online database <http://tapuhi.natlib.govt.nz>, where a few music programme collections are described at collection and item level. The database provides for the parent – child hierarchy.

Russia

Russian State Library has extensive holdings of 20th century events in Moscow and Leningrad, plus some material from other main cities in the former USSR. There is no online catalogue and no descriptions at item or collection level.

The Taneyev Library holds collections of programmes covering concert life in Moscow from 1950. The programmes are arranged chronologically and within a subject heading system developed by the library. There is no catalogue.

Serbia and Montenegro

The University of Arts Faculty of Music Library holds books and music journals including concert information, but no original programmes. One of the most valued sources is the music journal *Gusle*, published between 1911 and 1914, as a journal of the Union of Serbian Choral Societies. Its contents are based almost exclusively on programme information. There is an index of works performed by choral societies.

Sweden

The Statens Musikbibliothek (Music Library of Sweden) holds programmes of various musical events in Stockholm from 1856 to 1953, as well as posters and other materials. The library maintains a list of theatres and concert venues and sends out a biannual questionnaire to these institutions. The respondent did not state whether this information is collated and made publicly available.

UK

A census of UK and Ireland collections was published by IAML(UK & Irl) in 2003. A project is currently underway to list collections at collection level. This will be made available as an online database in due course. Rupert Ridgewell reported on progress with the project at IAML conferences in Tallinn (2003), Oslo (2004) and Warsaw (2005).

USA

Twenty-five institutions responded to the census questionnaire in the USA, of which three reported no holdings of relevant material.

The Cleveland Institute of Music maintains an index to the programme notes and performances of the Cleveland Orchestra, based on the programmes held by the library. The index is available online at www.cim.edu/libProgNotes.php and currently covers the period 1960 to 2003. Fields include composer(s), title of the composition, conductor, soloists, performing ensembles, program annotator, page number of program notes, arranger(s), text author(s), notes.

Two institutions reported collections that are international in scope: the University at Buffalo (State University of New York); and Northwestern University. The Buffalo collections are particularly strong, with rich holdings of US, Canadian, British, German and French programmes, amongst others, but the collections are not yet catalogued. A partial list of holdings is available online at: <http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/music/programs.html>.

Four institutions reported holding collections of material relating to concerts given by orchestras and ensembles throughout the US. These are: Indiana University (also has seasonal programmes for European opera houses); Washington University; New York Public Library (mostly uncatalogued); and the Curtis Institute of Music. There were responses from six university libraries that hold material relating to local or regional events, including university concerts and performances given by local ensembles: University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign; Yale University (may also have important material 'hidden' in archival collections); Eastman School of Music; Michigan State University; Ohio State University; California State University.

The remaining responses came from university libraries that hold programmes only for events given on campus and/or by university ensembles: Cornell

University; Bowling Green State University; New England Conservatory (online catalogue of performances since 1983); Oberlin Conservatory; University of Miami; Appalachian State University; University of Iowa; and University of Cincinnati. In addition, two libraries reported collections of specialised material: the University of California-Irvine has a major dance collection; and the University of Miami maintains a collection of playbills for Broadway shows.