Musical Exploration: The Tasks of Research Bibliography

JAN LA RUE

The research bibliographer is the explorer and map-maker of music. He attempts to meet the growing pressures for more and better musical geography. Like all explorers, he finds motivation in subduing the unknown. Compared with medical bibliography, for which the total periodical literature is compiled monthly in a few hours by IBM machines, the state of music bibliography can best be described as pre-Columbian. The situation is depressing, but the sense of opportunity is exhilarating. Explorations have begun, but major continents remain to be discovered. Meanwhile much of the known area must be re-explored in order to prepare more reliable guides.

It surprises many people to hear that most of the United States has never been precisely mapped. The charts for musicology show even greater areas of wilderness. Students are rightly awed by the impressive scope of the European atlas, Robert Eitner’s *Quellen-Lexikon*, but on closer acquaintance they discover that this great fact-storehouse often furnishes only the roughest of raw material. The case of Eitner typifies a general need for renovation, updating, and reorganization of existing material, the first main category of responsibility for research bibliographers. Three sub-headings of primary concern are biography, authentication, and dating.

The “Great Man” theory of historical interpretation has seriously infected music history, causing neglect of basic research on lesser figures. Many archives contain valuable records waiting for bibliographical keys to be fashioned. Documents are found too often in unexpected places, or to put it more functionally, in places where they are lost to all normal use. Who, for example, would look for an

Mr. La Rue is Professor of Music, Graduate School of Arts and Science, New York University.
autograph letter of Alois Schmittbauer in the viola part of his printed symphonies preserved in the Paris Conservatoire? In this uncataloged letter of a minor composer, however, there is fascinating evidence of a German’s view of the “Paris style” in the late eighteenth century.

For musical biography, Vienna stands at the crossroads, but her treasures are largely unexplored. Consider, for example, the case of Count Zinzendorf’s diary (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek). This indefatigable man-about-town recorded daily everything from operatic premieres to the local weather. The latter observations enabled O. E. Deutsch to prove that Mozart was not buried in a snowstorm. Only small sections of this biographical goldmine have been assayed. An index, even a summary outline, would yield vital documentation on first performances, casts of singers, visits of noted musicians to Vienna, current preferences of the musical public, and many other questions. Most important of all, however, are the discoveries that cannot be foreseen. It is the constant experience of source investigators that they uncover unsuspected veins of ore in apparently unproductive fields.

Again in Vienna, few researchers have used the valuable manuscript biographies (in some cases autobiographies) of eighteenth-century composers in the archives of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. Equally unexplored is the vast Portheim slip-catalog (Stadtbibliothek), with its detailed references on all phases of Viennese life. But we need not range so far in time and space to show the needs of biographical research: are we doing all we could and should to discover and preserve the essential biography of American music?

Another subject needing attention is that of identification and authentication. In all periods before 1800 the compilation of more accurate union thematic catalogs, title collations, concordances between sources, and other forms of comparative bibliography will reveal widespread confusion in attributions. The author’s union catalog for symphonies has shown that about five per cent of the sources contain misattributions, a figure of critical importance in its effect on style studies. To appreciate the impact of these misattributions, one must translate the five per cent into the working situation: it means that of twenty works examined, one at least may be falsely attributed. The consequent farce in stylistic conclusions must be brought to an end as soon as possible. There are enough bad jokes of this sort already in print.

Equally important as a result of comparative bibliography are the
thousands of anonymous works that will spring back to life under their proper designations. There is no more exciting work in musicology than the resuscitation of these musical mummies. Yet the task is massive. Researchers must divide and conquer these monoliths by coordinated planning. Projects now under way, such as the chanson index of the Bibliothèque Nationale, have amply demonstrated the values of systematic attack. Every library serving musicological studies should embark upon a similar project.

The third problem of renovation includes dating and other forms of chronology, the very backbone of historical and stylistic interpretation. This area requires constant checking and vigilance to combat errors old and new. An attitude of outright suspicion must be adopted toward all facts. In one of the finest handbooks printed in 1959, a prominent paragraph affecting two composers slipped a hundred-year mistake past the proofreaders. The book was in print eight months before anyone reported the slip to the publisher. Here one must combat inertia as well as error. Beyond such matters of detailed guard-duty, however, the general improvement of chronology depends upon fundamental advances in dating techniques. These improvements thus lead to the second main category of bibliographical tasks, the advancement of the bibliographical frontier.

In a musical world packed with urgent bibliographical needs, one hesitates to declare one more important than another. We must march on all fronts, but certainly not least in the direction of the new. Notwithstanding the importance of maintenance and renovation, proportionate energy must be devoted to the discovery of hitherto unknown sources, to the development of new research techniques, and to the exploration of tangential materials containing facts of musicological significance.

The appearance of new musical sources seems likely to continue for many years. The current (in process) International Inventory of Musical Sources, comprehensive as it is, can only account for known sources to which catalogers can be assigned. There are many private collections, notably in Spain and Italy, whose owners have no librarians to report their holdings, yet hesitate to admit an outside cataloger. The material in these collections is often outstanding. To give but two small examples, in the summer of 1958 this writer found the only known copy of a Michael Haydn serenade in a family storage wardrobe near Bolzano. Earlier in Rome he had been permitted to view a famous private collection for exactly one hour, long enough to find
that it contained many unique items. These experiences have been duplicated by many researchers, but the systematic exploitation of the rediscoveries lies still in the future.

In compiling sources for the Haydn Society, H. C. Robbins Landon called new attention to the enormous musical treasure in the Austro-German monasteries and churches. Let no one conclude, however, that this material has been exhausted. One might think that everything concerning Mozart in Salzburg would long ago have been discovered. Yet within the last two years autograph material was uncovered right in the cathedral itself. The search in monasteries and churches thus far has chiefly concerned Haydn and Mozart, mainly in the German-speaking areas. There are similar collections all over central Europe. The expropriation of church properties has resulted in a centralization of manuscripts that to some extent simplifies the task of the researcher. But tiny, obscure churches offer endless possibilities of unique material. Apart from the eighteenth century, many monastery archives contain great piles of graduals and antiphoners from earlier centuries. While these catch the eye of the visitor because of their bulk, there are other items from early periods, equally important if less conspicuous.

Castles spell romance for bibliographers as well as movie directors. The sources in German castles have by no means been exhaustively explored. For example, the considerable archives of Schloss Rheda near Bielefeld contain works of the Mannheim School not listed in Riemann’s thematic indices. Though Riemann’s minions ranged far and wide over Europe, they missed the material on their doorstep. It is not necessary to look merely at Europe for such cases. In the summer of 1958, by a skillful informational campaign Donald McCorkle induced the citizens of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to inspect their attics for old books and manuscripts. A number of eighteenth and early nineteenth century items were uncovered. These now rest somewhat more safely in the archives of the Moravian Music Foundation.

A less spectacular but rewarding opportunity for discovery lies in the re-examination of supposedly known materials. Incomplete cataloging of earlier generations often conceals multiple compositions under a single entry. Wrong attributions may mask important works under obscure names. Often musical items with texts and illustrations have been classed as literature or art. In the recent past, critical re-inspection of this sort led Otto Combosi to the Capirola lute-book in
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the Newberry Library in Chicago, and the systematic curiosity of Thurston Dart uncovered William Byrd autographs at Harvard. Manfred Bukofzer's discovery of lost sources used as binding material raises delicate and controversial questions, placing in conflict our attitudes toward books. Is a book more important as an object or as a source? The decision in such cases should contribute to the advancement of knowledge. Sources exist to be studied, not hoarded.

A second major frontier concerns technology. Our knowledge of many technical aspects of music manuscripts and prints leaves practically everything to be desired. The only comprehensive guide to watermark dates, Edward Heawood's Watermarks, contains not a single reference to music manuscripts. While many of Heawood's watermarks are similar, obviously a comparable guide is needed in the special area of music paper. Research on handwriting has recently been adapted to problems in musical autographs by Ingmar Bengtsson and Ruben Danielson. In their valuable study, Handstilar och Notpikturer, they employ principles of analysis that can be used in any period. More general studies of musical calligraphy will enable us to date sources more precisely. Nothing has yet appeared to aid us in comparing and analyzing music inks, yet the composition of an ink may furnish decisive corollary evidence to indicate authenticity or forgery.

New methods of precise analysis are gradually developing to establish chronology in the field of music printing, from movable types and engraving to lithography and other more recent methods. The dating of engraving punches, for example, a possibility elaborated by D. W. Krummel in Philadelphia Music Engraving and Publishing, 1800–1820, opens whole new avenues of chronological and bibliographical exploration. Less happy is the vista of potential errors that it also lays before us: we must be much more suspicious of imprint data than previously seemed necessary. To settle these questions there is a vast, important, and rather tedious field of investigation ahead.

Related to engraving is the question of plate numbers. The invaluable lists of Deutsch in Music Publishers' Numbers merely whet our anxiety in this area, since his "Selection of 40 Dated Lists" centers on the Austro-German sector. Future research should make use of the comprehensive files of Inger Christensen, now indispensable for cataloging at the New York Public Library. A collation of her material with similar files in the Library of Congress, a task she had already begun at the time of her death, should furnish a nearly definitive
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chronology. The comprehensive studies of Richard Wolfe on early American imprints have similarly begun to yield wide-ranging refinements in technique and precision in documentation for Americana.

Plate numbers lead inevitably to studies of publishers' catalogs. A pioneer work, Cari Johansson's *French Music Publishers' Catalogues of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*, has established new possibilities for dating and identification by a critical compilation combined with facsimile reproductions. The monographs of Alexander Weinmann on Austrian publishers, particularly his *Vollständiges Verlagsverzeichnis Artaria & Comp.*, have developed a system of tabular collation of publications, plate numbers, and dating by newspaper announcements, publishers' catalogs, and other independent evidence. The extensions of these methods to other countries and different periods challenge anyone interested in the advance of musicology.

The farthest frontier in music bibliography lies hidden in nonmusical materials. The very existence of J. B. Coover's *Music Lexicography* reminds us that the inclusion and definition of musical terms in nonmusical dictionaries may reveal significant collateral evidence of musical practices. A similar tangential relationship exists with scholarly journals of other disciplines, both ancient and modern. Many important musical articles lie buried in these nonmusical locations; but despite considerable planning, action on a comprehensive index to this material still lies ahead.

The German periodicals of the eighteenth century, musical and otherwise, contain endless discerning commentary, precise reporting on musical institutions, and similar primary evidence. Bits and pieces of this vital material appear from time to time, but only an index will reveal its full value. Typical of the situation is Robert Sondheimer's *Die Theorie der Sinfonie . . . des 18. Jahrhunderts*, which extracts nuggets of criticism on many composers. This book has no index of its own, so we benefit only partly from Sondheimer's painstaking research. A similar frustration greets us in France. For certain French newspapers there exists a little-known fichier in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Why has this never been published?

Letters, diaries, and memoirs often reveal the soundest clues to the facts and attitudes of earlier periods. These materials have scarcely been touched, but they furnish evidence in surprising ways. To take one illustration, for years the Haydn researchers have been puzzled by Forkel's listing of Haydn's orchestra in 1783. It includes no flute,
though Haydn's symphonies of this period require a flute. This small but irritating discrepancy has recently been somewhat clarified by information from an unexpected quarter, the diaries of a Spanish military traveler. On a visit to Esterháza in 1785, General Miranda recorded the orchestra as twenty-four musicians rather than Forkel's twenty-three. With this new corroboration one may suspect the usually reliable Forkel of a simple omission.\textsuperscript{11}

Apart from personal diaries, more general travel books often contain material for an absolutely untouched area of bibliography: historical ethnomusicology. The boundless curiosity of the general reader in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries stimulated countless reports on distant voyages. From preliminary skimming it appears that a careful review of this material will reveal many comments on exotic music. Some descriptions even furnish detailed measurements and analysis of playing techniques, thus providing important collateral evidence in the growing problem of evaluating acculturation. The tasks of the bibliographer for ethnomusicology raise many special questions beyond our present scope, but the wealth of need and opportunity in this field is obvious.

The study of musical instruments badly requires help from research bibliographers. At present even the basic lists of instrument collections have many lacunae and typically omit the essential information concerning the nature of the collection. The list in \textit{Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart}, though more extensive than most, gives clues to the composition of the collections in less than half of the entries. Many of these aggregations are not adequately cataloged in any manner, much less in printed catalogs. Where printed catalogs exist, the standards of description and even the basic categories continue in debate. For research purposes, the specimens in each category must ultimately be drawn together in some form of union catalog. On the basis of existing reference tools, who would suspect that the Harvard Musical Association has some Chinese instruments; that the Museum of Primitive Art (New York) contains several strange aerophones; that there is a large collection of keyboard instruments in Lima, Peru?

The lengthy enumeration above represents only a sampling of our tasks, which could easily be continued in subjects such as electronics, acoustics, performance statistics, esthetics, and many other areas of bibliographic chaos. In conclusion, however, we are brought face to face with two general overriding problems. First, how much do we
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know about existing bibliographies? To take an example close to home, there are numerous indices, thematic catalogs, and similar tools in American dissertations. Many of these are scarcely known and utterly unused beyond the institutions that supervised the work. Some survey of existing aids will be required to make best use of research already completed and to provide sensible planning to avoid duplication in future efforts.

The second, related question may be even more pressing: when one of the bibliographical tasks has been completed, how can its results be distributed to assure maximum use? Here we must meet an unpleasant reality: until musicology grows in strength, the small demand for specialized bibliography eliminates commercial publication and will tend to limit subsidies from foundations. There are several partial answers to this problem. We must not be too proud to consider limited editions in nearprint, xerox, or microprocesses. The idea of cooperative indexing carried on by exchange of cards between libraries should be applied to all types of specialized bibliography. Reduced still farther, a tangible minimum progress can still be maintained by the deposition of typewritten copies in half a dozen major international libraries. With careful advertising of the location of each new bibliographical aid we can secure the essential effects, if not the luxury, of mass communication.

References

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