

Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

Vol. 13, No. 2 Spring, 2009

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCAt)

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:



photo by Rachel Clements

Dear Readers,

This, our first “post-credit-crunch” issue, offers some tantalizing information about English composers, maintenance, reactions to last issue’s article by Paul Irvin, some reflections on 19th century music, some insights into the training of our next generation of restorers and more.

In the spirit of money/space saving, some insights into I’ve spent some time pondering the state of online music.

Online free scores have captured the attention of loads of people. Why should I, in a magazine which reviews music scores, be plugging them?

Firstly, we all like a free thing anyway so there’s no point in pretending these free sites aren’t out there. Let’s get to grips with them and see what’s available. If you’re like me, you’re kicking yourselves for some quite unnecessary purchases from outfits that frankly don’t add any scholarship but just put a cover on an old favourite.

Secondly, it’s a great way to browse. I often find I buy more from a physical shop than an online one, simply because I can “see” the music. Well, having a peek at a pdf is a great innovation, but seeing the whole thing is even better, and sometimes by looking up “Autumn” of the Four Seasons, I may decide I want to see more of Vivaldi or his contemporaries. I have found that this is very useful for choral music.

Thirdly, it’s legal. Dead composers from 200 years ago don’t need our money, and their descendants are so far removed that we really don’t owe them anything. This stuff belongs to all of us. So, if you’ve got a score like this to which you own the rights, share it with the world, and make it public domain. If you want to create variations or edit it, your stamp will be shared with the world. Once something is made public, it can’t be made un-public very easily, unless we fail to use it.

Fourthly, it doesn’t hurt to see what other editors have done. There are quite a few scores out there by volunteers who actually do a great job and have something to offer. Many solve practical problems of transposition, clef changes, innovative arrangements for situations where you don’t have an orchestra available or where you want to adapt for an ensemble such as a brass quartet or recorder consort. This can solve many problems which would otherwise mean a worthy work “sitting on the shelf”.

Fifthly, although older editions do not replace scholarly editions, we can learn to recognize this by looking at some of the old editions online. We owe a debt to those first publishers and musicologists such as Brahms, Mendelssohn, and the Bach Gesellschaft, to mention a few. Similarly, we owe a debt to the present day people who ensure we have got the right accidentals, that we have the most recent scholarship to inform our understanding, and that the different versions out there are

researched. Quite simply, if you can look at a score and play it for free, you'll want to know more, and then be in a better position to know which scores you really want or need in a good edition. For the serious student or performer, there is simply no substitute for properly researched editions of Bach. I recently taught a lesson where it was very clear that a well-researched Urtext does make a difference. The student had downloaded something, compared it with my score, and saw the light. The fact that the download of the free score occurred did not detract from the sale of a "proper" Urtext; in fact, it encouraged it!

Sixthly, even with downloads, it's often cheaper to buy a score anyway and less hassle. Or you might buy it as pdfs on a CD-ROM. Why not just print what you want to play rather than have the whole book?

My final plea would be to those who spend their time making editions to consider sharing them in more than one format, not just the one you use regularly. I would recommend a pdf (which fixes it) plus an editable file (so people can amend it) such as Sibelius, Finale, Capella, or Noteworthy Composer. There is free software out there (such as CutePDF) to "print to file" your very own edition in pdf. While you might have the most popular software right now, in years to come others may not be as up to date and "what everyone has" may change; so ensure your worthy contribution has longevity.

Perhaps a new method- such as the Albertus Bryne score-CD-ROM reviewed in this issue- is the way forward, where you can see the original manuscripts, variants, editorial solutions, alternatives, and a practical "performing edition". There are certainly many instances where a scholarly edition is the only way to get a work into a performable state, but we like to have a choice. Or maybe we should just issue this in MIDI format only. iScores, anyone?

Below is a short list of some websites I have personally seen that I think are worth checking out. (Disclaimer- as far as I know these are all legal. If they are not then let me know and I'll retract the statement.):

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werner_Icking_Music_Archive

As far I'm concerned, one of the early pioneers of this effort. Whilst some are "not top shelf editions" they are free and offer access to a load of people, especially those who can't afford these or want a look first before they invest.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choral_Public_Domain_Library

Simply the most amazing website ever. It started on its own and then was taken into the "Wikipedia" family, and offers a huge range. It's well organized and gives credit to a load of wonderful people all over the globe.

<http://www.mutopiaproject.org/>

A volunteer-run effort to create a library of free content sheet music, in a way similar to Project Gutenberg's library of public domain books (see below). I found this not terribly comprehensive compared to Werner Icking, but it is free. Tantalisingly, many sites have things other sites lack and vice versa.

http://imslp.org/index.php?title=Main_Page

International Music Score Library Project. This looks to be a promising site. I have only browsed a little bit, but thought it well worth a look. It was taken down due to copyright differences between different countries but since 2008 it's been reinstated with a rigorous copyright vetting system (e.g. A team ensures it's out of copyright before it goes up). It's still up to you in whatever locality you are living (or your computer is living) to check which laws apply to you. I love the fact that this has not suffered the fate of Napster.

<http://www.musedata.org/>

You have to sign up as an individual or academic first; lots of midi, not scores, so less comprehensive than I thought when I first looked. But hey, it's free.

<http://gfhhandel.org/gfhweb.htm>

This is actually a list of sources and links, but this led me to loads of sources both paid and free and if you want Handel's operas, you're in luck.

Broadside Ballads and Folk Tunes:

The problem here is matching tune and words; but that's in the nature of the genre. Still, it's great fun. This is relevant as many keyboard works are based on folk songs and dances:

Child Ballads

<http://www.childballads.com/> text, not music.
Bodleian collection

<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads/>
text, not music.

National Library of Scotland

<http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/index.html>
text, not music.

<http://www.lukehistory.com/ballads/loyalsold.html> has Royalist ballad texts.
Contemplator

<http://www.contemplator.com/folk.html>

<http://www.folkinfo.org/songs/> has a song database and an abc converter.

<http://www.8notes.com/> has a traditional song section and searchable database.

<http://www.thesession.org/tunes/index.php> has abc converter, music notation but no text.

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/martin.nail/Folkmus.htm> listed many but not all of these

<http://www.ictmusic.org/ICTM/>
Not music scores, but free stuff:

Project Gutenberg

http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page

It's really devoted to literature published in English. It's spawned many copycats for literature in other countries - it is a leading model for how digitization can really remove difference, offering access to people all over the globe. Just for the Shakespeare alone it's a real treat.

Musipedia

<http://www.musipedia.org/>

A search engine for identifying pieces of music. This can be done by whistling a theme, playing it on a virtual piano keyboard, tapping rhythms or other means. I tried "Ode to Joy" and it was identified quickly without any confusion. Of course, I haven't tried anything from "Pierrot Lunaire" but it sounds like a bit of good clean fun. If you are like me, and keep finding snippets of tune in weird places (e.g. I once found an Airforce Ranger song in the Beethoven's Emperor Concerto), then this is the site for you.

Then there are loads of digital images of art, but don't get me started....

Do you have favourite "free sites" you'd like to tell others about? Write in so we can share them with the world.

Thanks,

Micaela Schmitz