

## The Royal Music Library: Understanding Provenance and Collecting Practices

Reference: 2021-WH-Music

<b>Supervisor (name &amp; role)</b>	Dr Loukia Drosopoulou (Curator, Music)
<b>Department &amp; Site</b>	Music, Western Heritage, London (St. Pancras)
<b>Start date/Timeframe</b>	Start time flexible from May 2021 onwards, but preferably Summer 2021. (exact start date to be agreed with the supervisor)
<b>Duration</b>	<b>3 months</b> (or part-time equivalent) For a part-time placement, the student would be required to spend a minimum of <b>1 day/week</b> on site at the Library.
<b>Suitability for remote working</b>	Some project tasks will be suitable for remote working, but the first part of the project will largely have to be undertaken on site.

### Context for placement

The British Library has a world-famous collection of printed and manuscript music, recordings, concert programmes, books and periodicals on music. The Library's Music Department is responsible for the custodianship of Western printed and manuscript music, which includes material published in every European country, as well as manuscript autographs of every major composer and notable British composers' and publishers' archives.

The [Royal Music Library](#) consists of music collected by several generations of the Royal Household, reflecting the musical tastes of its successive members. It contains about 1,000 volumes of manuscript music and 4,500 volumes of printed music, dating from the late 16th to the early 20th centuries. Among the many treasures are 97 volumes of Handel's autograph manuscripts, and scores by Purcell, Steffani, J.C. Bach and Mendelssohn. With a few notable exceptions, such as the provenance of the Handel manuscripts, little is known regarding the provenance of the majority of the music, in terms of when it was acquired and by whom.

The PhD placement student will undertake a bibliographical study of selected parts of the Royal Music Library collection. Findings will improve understanding of its provenance and the collecting practices of members of the royal household, particularly George III, Prince Albert and Queen Victoria.

The project will help to improve the Music team's work in curating and promoting this collection through agreed outputs emanating from the research, which will include metadata enhancement; writing content for online exhibitions and blogs; and using digital tools to analyse and visualise the collection.

### Expected tasks and outcomes

The project will consist of two parts. In the first part the PhD student will:

- Undertake research on selected parts of the collection, focusing primarily on 17th and 18th century manuscript and printed volumes;
- Gather information from evidence such as bindings, copyists' handwriting, and provenance annotations, which will be recorded onto an Excel spreadsheet;
- Undertake some research on former owners.

The research will help to group similar volumes together, allowing for a better understanding of their provenance and owners' collecting practices. It is expected that this part will take up about two-thirds of the placement during which time approximately 400–500 volumes will be examined for provenance information.

The student will also be expected to produce blog posts for the [Music blog](#) and present their research at a talk for Library staff.

In the second part of the placement, depending on the student's interests, the project could go into one of three different directions:

Use knowledge gained in the first part to:

1. Enhance catalogue metadata in accordance with library and archival standards.
2. Visualise and analyse the collection by using visualisation and digital mapping tools.
3. Create content for the online exhibition and learning resource [Discovering Music](#).

**Please note for option 2:** Whilst there is some support available from the Digital Scholarship team in the use of digital mapping and visualisation tools, the student will have to rely on their own knowledge and skills, as there is limited expertise within the Music curatorial team to provide full training in this area.

#### **Training and development opportunities**

All placement students are welcome to access the Library's offer of workshops, talks and training. For further details please refer to the [Application Guidelines on the British Library website](#).

In addition, this placement project will offer the following:

- An induction into the Library and Music Collections area, and an opportunity to meet and work with the Music curatorial team and to join departmental meetings in order to gain insights into the day-to-day workings of this area of the Library.
- Depending on the student's experience, training will be provided for the first part of the project and options 1 and 3 of the second part.
- Significant opportunities for professional and personal development in music librarianship and curation, and to gain experience in these areas in the context of a national research library.

#### **Required knowledge and skills**

Please ensure that you are aware of the general expectations for all applicants, as detailed in the [Application Guidelines on the British Library website](#).

For this specific project, the following additional criteria apply:

- An interest in music librarianship and curation
- Subject knowledge of Music
- Ability to read handwritten annotations in historical sources
- Good level of confidence in using Excel for data entry
- Music research skills
- Ability to use digital mapping and visualisation tools (if this direction is chosen in the second part of the project)

Application deadline: 5pm on Friday **18 December 2020**

Further information on eligibility, conditions and how to apply is available on the British Library website: <https://www.bl.uk/news/2020/october/phd-placement-adverts-2020>