

# Music Documentation in Libraries, Scholarship, and Practice



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## An Update for U.S. RISM Series A/II

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In the United States a new project is underway to update holdings in the RISM Series A/II database. Organized by the U.S. RISM Office and the Joint Committee on RISM of the American Musicological Society and the Music Library Association, the current project will catalog relevant manuscripts acquired by libraries in recent decades that have not yet been reported to RISM, as well as those that were previously unavailable for inclusion. We are especially interested in locating and reporting manuscripts from collections that have not up until now been represented.

### Project History

The U.S. Series A/II database currently holds nearly 48,000 records, the vast majority of which were compiled in the 1980s and 90s during a cataloging project funded principally with grants from The National Endowment for the Humanities. Music libraries of academic research universities and conservatories; the National Library of Congress; public libraries in major U.S. cities; privately funded independent research libraries; historical societies; museums; and individual collectors are all represented. A recent project, in 2008-2010, funded by the Mellon Foundation, focused on the manuscripts at Yale University, which had not been surveyed in its entirety in earlier years due to policies that prevented their full participation. The Juilliard Manuscript Collection, a high profile collection, donated to the school in 2006, and including numerous holographs that had never before been available to scholars and musicians, was also included in this round.

### Scope of the Update Project

With Yale representing the final outstanding major music manuscript collection in the U.S. to be surveyed for Series A/II, we effectively brought the large-scale phase of the inventory in the U.S. to completion. However, while recognizing that the work of RISM is never completely “done”—manuscripts will continue to be located or change hands—an

extensive enough body of unreported 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts remains to justify a one to two- year cataloging project to wrap up the RISM task at hand before we turn our attention to new projects.

We will include several libraries with manuscript holdings that have not appeared in RISM before now, including Princeton University, the Lilly Library at Indiana University, and St. Vincent's College. In some cases, policies against microfilming or photocopying for surrogate copies prevented earlier participation. The advent of digital cameras, now generally allowed in rare book reading rooms, has improved access in this regard as have digitization projects.

- No manuscripts from Princeton have been reported to RISM beyond two J.S. Bach autograph manuscripts in the Scheide Library that were cataloged from published facsimiles. So far, 50 manuscripts within the scope of A/II, have been identified and will be reported, among them Bach and Mozart autographs as well as many copyist's manuscripts of Handel works in the James S. Hall Collection. The music librarian at Princeton hopes to include the relevant manuscripts in an upcoming digitization project in conjunction with RISM work.
- The manuscript collections in the Lilly Library include on the order of 40 music manuscripts relevant to RISM A/II. Many thanks to Mary Davidson who alerted us to this collection and who did preliminary work on an inventory.
- St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania holds 3500 music manuscripts in their collections as well as early prints, many of them carried from Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Boniface Wimmer, a Benedictine monk who established the St Vincent Archabbey, a scene of thriving musical life in rural 19<sup>th</sup>-century Pennsylvania. Of particular note are 40 manuscripts of the works of Joseph and Michael Haydn, including at least one previously unrecorded Michael Haydn autograph. Also of interest are manuscripts of Johann Matthias Kracher, Michael Haydn's student. Jim Cassaro brought the existence of this collection to our attention and has graciously offered to catalog a significant portion of it for RISM.

Many of the libraries already included in A/II have obtained additional manuscripts since their initial surveys. To name a few examples, the Music, Houghton, and Theatre Collection Libraries at Harvard have acquired between them roughly 150 manuscripts within the scope of A/II since 1998. In 2009 the Beinecke Library at Yale acquired the Hanover Royal Music Archive, containing as many as 300 manuscripts relevant to A/II. Although we learned of this particular acquisition during the Yale grant period the magnitude was too great to fold into the project.

We will revisit other libraries because some of their manuscripts were overlooked or were unavailable during previous surveys, not surprising for a project of this magnitude. We expect the most extensive updates by far to come from the Library of Congress whose significant manuscript holdings have been underreported to date. Although targeted as a priority during initial years of the U.S. A/II survey, establishing a complete and authoritative manuscript inventory proved difficult due to the fact that LC had for a period of time long ago expedited materials processing by classifying documents and moving them to the stacks prior to shelf-listing and cataloging them, with the result that a body of documents has never been shelf-listed or cataloged. Library staff estimate a

minimum of 5000 manuscripts that need to be reported to A/II. A survey of the full opera scores alone reveals nearly 600 that are unreported. Colleagues at LC are combining the RISM manuscript survey with an internal census that will aid in establishing bibliographic control of this portion of their holdings---an effort from which both they and RISM will benefit.

### **Project Methodology**

The first step in coordinating this update project on a national level is, of course, to determine the order of magnitude of the work to be done. In October a call for updates was posted to list serves and websites of the Music Library Association and the American Musicological Society. Libraries were asked to review their holdings in order to identify manuscripts beyond those currently in RISM, and send inventory lists with basic bibliographic information. We are following up with libraries individually, including the 74 institutions currently in the database. Early results of this ongoing survey indicate as many as 10,000 new items should be added to the database. While the present task remains focused on 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts, we asked libraries to report their 19<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts, as well. While we do not have immediate plans to catalog these later manuscripts, a list will establish the extent of an initiative with expanded parameters and inform future work. It is also more efficient for libraries to conduct one inclusive manuscript survey now rather than have to do another later.

We obviously rely heavily on librarians to review collections and provide the initial data to establish this project. We are grateful for their assistance—RISM is at its core, after all, a collaborative enterprise. As has been the case in the past, it is unlikely that institutions, particularly those with large manuscript collections, will be able to commit the staff or resources necessary to contribute cataloging to the project, especially in these days of budget and staff reductions. We will seek funding to support hiring project staff.

We will use the Kallisto cataloging program as we did with the Yale and Juilliard project and for which the RISM Central Office provided excellent technical and cataloging support. A further advantage to using Kallisto for this purpose is the access it allows to the backend of the entire international database, which is enormously useful during the cataloging process.

Digitization will play an important role in carrying out the work of this project. As in previous years, cataloging will be done primarily from surrogate copies since distances are too great and travel expenses too high to enable this work to be done onsite. We hope to work primarily from scans and digital images as it is no longer feasible to rely on the microfilms; many institutions no longer produce them. Fortunately, increasing numbers of libraries have digital projects underway or plan them. As we contact each library with regard to their inventories we are investigating the prospects for obtaining surrogate copies. A number of libraries contacted have either already digitized their manuscripts, will flag them for future work, or have agreed to scan them and provide pdf files for RISM cataloging. We will factor targeted digitization into the grant proposal for those institutions unable to fund it otherwise.

Furthermore, digitization projects and RISM work go hand in hand to produce an outcome with the greatest impact for scholarship and access. You have heard this week

about the University of Washington's digital project for which they harvested RISM metadata and modified it to suit their local needs. In another case, the Morgan Library and Museum, a member of the Music Treasures Consortium (a collaborative project with other institutions housing significant music manuscript collections) is digitizing their entire collection of music manuscripts and will link their images to and from the RISM database. In an example with implications for the current project, we collaborated with Juilliard in the cataloging of their manuscript collection, all of which had been digitized before we began. We cataloged the manuscripts entirely from the images online and supplied Juilliard with the RISM records as we went so they could incorporate the metadata in their OPAC, as well as the portal of the Music Treasures Consortium. We also linked the images in the RISM database. With this approach, they saved us the time and expense of a trip to New York (enjoyable though that might have been) and we saved them the cataloging work. Above all, the end result that combines detailed RISM metadata with high quality digital images, and makes them available in local and international contexts produces a resource that greatly facilitates discovery, enhances access, and aids research. We anticipate some of the work of the present project to proceed in a similar fashion and encourage these trends to continue.

In this regard the value of RISM A/II is on the rise and its enormous potential for underpinning digital projects is increasingly being realized, strengthening its role as a central tool for music scholars seeking primary resources. Cataloging has become more, rather than less important in the context of digital projects. Whereas some have tried to argue that scanning could take the place of cataloging—even if large-scale scanning were affordable—RISM metadata supplies value-added information critical to the identification of manuscripts that cannot be derived from simply looking at the item.