

A Guide to Resources in Sound Heritage

INTRODUCTION

This guide aims to introduce you to resources available for musical research in historic houses. It is not comprehensive, but includes a few key sources in each area linked below. It is currently weighted toward British historic houses from the 17th-19th centuries, but includes information that can be useful for researching houses from other times and places.

Who this guide is for

- curators, conservators and visitor experience staff in the heritage sector who wish to research or deploy music in their properties, but who may have limited musical knowledge or resources
- students in musicology or museum studies starting research on music in heritage settings

GENERAL MUSIC RESOURCES

The standard English-language encyclopedia of music is [Grove Music Online](#), which includes articles from the eighth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* along with material from other Oxford University Press music reference tools. *Grove Music Online* includes articles on countries, cities, instruments, and a wide range of people (composers, performers, instrument builders, publishers) as well as on musical forms and techniques. It is a subscription publication but is available through many public libraries, universities and colleges.

Information on British musical personalities, not directly linked to music, is available through the [Oxford Dictionary of National Biography](#) which may also have more detailed information than *Grove* in the case of lesser known musical figures. The DNB is also a subscription publication, available through public, university and college libraries.

The 10-volume *Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London 1660-1800*, ed. by Philip H. Highfill, A. Burnim Kalman, and Edward A. Lighthouse (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973-1993) provides a wealth of information about theatrical personalities associated with stage music in domestic collections.

The [International Music Score Library Project \(ISMLP\)](#) is a free online library of public domain scores, supported by a large user group who supply scans and information. It allows browsing by time period and region, as well as by composer. It can be used to source music in cases where you have information about music in a historic property but no extant scores.

Allen Scott, *Sourcebook for Research in Music* (3rd ed., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015) is an exhaustive index of print and online resources on virtually any music topic - useful if you need detailed information about existing research in a particular area.

[RILM Abstracts of Music Literature](#) is among several wide-ranging databases maintained by RILM (Repertoire International de Littérature Musicale), an international and multilingual body for the documentation and dissemination of musical research. It can be used to search for articles and books relevant to your topic. It is a subscription service, available from research and university libraries.

MUSICAL SCORES - MANUSCRIPT AND PRINT

Music collections in historic houses can include a very wide range of printed and manuscript material, from full scores of stage works and oratorios to instrumental parts for band and orchestral music. Especially common source types are: printed sheet music for one or more voices, keyboard, harp, guitar and/or melody instruments such as violin and flute (whether loose, or bound with other items in binders' volumes); manuscript copybooks compiled by amateur performers; instrumental and vocal tutors; and domestic devotional music such as psalms and hymns.

Printed Music

The article 'Printing and Publishing of Music' by Stanley Boorman et al. in *Grove Online* provides an overview, and includes a section of bibliography on Great Britain. The [Music Printing History](#) website has simple explanations of music printing techniques with some excellent images and films.

British music prints from the 17th to 19th centuries are usually undated, and the inclusion of plate numbers was rare before the 1820s; this means it can be difficult to assign dates to music found in historic houses and thus to understand when it may have been purchased and used.

Bibliographical records of music prints often include approximate dates supplied by cataloguers, based on information derived from a variety of methods (some detailed below). The British Library's main catalogue, [Explore the British Library](#), and the catalogue of the [National Library of Ireland](#) are especially useful for British prints. UK and Irish academic, national and specialist library catalogues are amalgamated in [COPAC](#), which also includes records from UK National Trust libraries.

Other national library catalogues have holdings of British music, as well as supplying information about foreign prints that may appear in UK historic house

collections. Many have interfaces in English as well as their principal language. Some especially useful catalogues include:

[Karlsruhe Virtual Catalogue](#) Union catalogue of German, Austrian and Swiss libraries, with coverage of book traders' listings and other national union catalogues around the world

[Bibliothèque Nationale de France](#) French national library, with links to the Catalogue Collectif de France (union catalogue) and a vast number of digitised documents in its Gallica collection

[Trove](#) National Library of Australia portal including online resources as well as library records

[Library of Congress](#) Includes many early British imprints as well as music published in the USA

Another source of dates, as well as general information about musical sources, is [RISM](#) (Répertoire International des Sources Musicales) an international inventory of written musical sources. Not all of its records are yet online (some are still available only in print) but conversion is ongoing and new records are regularly added. Unlike many music research tools, this database is free without subscription.

If no dates are available in library catalogues, approximate dates for printed music can sometimes be found by checking the publisher address supplied on the title page against databases that record date ranges when the addresses were current. The [British Book Trade Index](#) furnishes information on producers of English and Welsh prints; Scottish printers and publishers are listed in the [Scottish Book Trade Index](#). Both include information about music publishers within databases devoted to the wider book trade.

Sources providing information and publisher address dates specifically on the music trade include the book by Charles Humphries and William C. Smith, *Music Publishing in the British Isles from the Beginning until the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (2nd ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), which lists music sellers, printers and publishers for Britain and Ireland; and the online [Dublin Music Trade](#) database, which can help with dating music prints from Ireland.

After the Copyright Act of 1709, music prints were often (though not always) entered at Stationers' Hall. Michael Kassler, *Music Entries at Stationers' Hall, 1710-1818* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) is an index that can help with dating 18th-century prints.

For later music prints where plate numbers appear (usually centered at the bottom of the page), dates can be found by checking O.W. Neighbour and Alan

Tyson, *English Music Publishers' Plate Numbers in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965).

Music prints and bindings can sometimes be dated (approximately) by checking watermarks; a date or a symbol may be linked to a papermaker active at a particular time. To use this method to date bindings, check any watermarks on the front or back flyleaves of the volume. For further information and resources on watermarks see the pages of the [British Association of Paper Historians](#).

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Basic information on musical instruments and makers is available in many of the sources listed under General Music Resources; *Grove Music Online* is particularly useful.

For further help with images and descriptions of musical instruments, see [MIMO](#) (Musical Instrument Museums Online), a free online database containing records of instruments held by a large number of museums around the world. The site is searchable by instrument families and maker's name as well as by museum.

The [MinimUK](#) resource, launched in October 2017, supplies information on c. 20,000 instruments held in British instrument collections, along with articles, videos and other useful materials.

The [Musical Instruments Resource Network](#) site supplies many further sources, as well as helpful information on identifying and caring for historical instruments (including how to make decisions about playing condition).

MUSICAL CULTURE IN BRITAIN

Sources on concert life and musical culture in Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries:

Books

Book series devoted to British music from this period:

[Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain](#) (Ashgate/Routledge)

[Music in Britain, 1600-2000](#) (Boydell & Brewer)

Particularly useful individual volumes include:

Cowgill, Rachel, and Peter Holman, eds. *Music in the British Provinces, 1690-1914*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Drummond, Pippa. *The Provincial Music Festival in England, 1784-1914*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011.

McVeigh, Simon. *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Wyn Jones, David, ed. *Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Databases

[Concert Programme Project](#)
[Calendar of London Concerts](#)

[Music Festival Database](#) (particularly useful as a companion to Drummond, *The Provincial Music Festival*, as it is not only fully searchable but also provides information about London festivals as well as those in the provinces)

[Country Dance and Song Society Online Library](#) (oriented toward colonial American sources, but includes material on British dances and dance publications - including Robert Keller's compendium [The Dancing Master](#) with dances from 17th- and 18th-century England)

[Listening Experiences Database](#)

HISTORIC HOUSES AND THEIR COLLECTIONS

Books

Arnold, Dana. *The Georgian Country House: Architecture, Landscape and Society*. Stroud: Sutton, 1998.

Christie, Christopher. *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

Girouard, Mark. *Life in the English Country House*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978.

Jackson-Stops, Gervase. *The Country House in Perspective*. London: Pavilion Books, 1990.

Stobart, Jon, and Andrew Hann, eds. *The Country House: Material Culture and Consumption*. Swindon: Historic England, 2016.

Tinniswood, Adrian. *The Polite Tourist: A History of Country House Visiting*. London: National Trust, 1998.

Young, Linda. *Historic House Museums in the United States and the United Kingdom: A History*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

Databases

[National Trust Collections Database](#)

MUSICAL STUDIES OF SPECIFIC HOUSES

Cave, Penelope. "[Piano Lessons in the English Country House 1785-1845.](#)" PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 2013.

Faulds, Katrina. "[Invitation pour la danse: Social Dance, Dance Music and Feminine Identity in the English Country House c.1770-1860.](#)" PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 2015.

Gifford, Gerald. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music Collection at Burghley House*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.

Martin, Cheryl. "The Music Collection of Thomas Baker of Farnham, Surrey." *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* 44 (2013): 19-54.

McCleave, Sarah. "The Mackworth Collection: A Social and Bibliographical Resource." In *Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, edited by David Wyn Jones. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.

Mullaney-Dignam, Karol. *Music and Dancing at Castletown, County Kildare, 1759-1821*.

Maynooth Studies in Local History 98. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011.

Rana, Leena. "[Music and Elite Identity in the English Country House, c.1790-1840.](#)" PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 2012.

Troughton, Jane Elizabeth. "[The Role of Music in the Yorkshire Country House.](#)" PhD thesis, University of York, 2015.

Wood, Caroline. "Music-Making in a Yorkshire Country House." In *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies I*, edited by Bennett Zon, 209-24. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

HELP WITH RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

The University of Illinois has produced a helpful guide on [using digital cameras most effectively in archives and collections](#):

For help with contextual research in archives such as local record offices, see Laura Schmidt's [Using Archives: A Guide to Effective Research](#). Produced for the Society of American Archivists, this guide is geared toward US users but includes information and advice that can be applied to archival work elsewhere.

The National Archives in Kew (Richmond, Surrey) provides [events for in-depth and professional training for aspiring archival scholars](#).