



CONCERT PROGRAMMES

The McCann Collection at the Royal Academy of Music has an extensive collection of concert programmes. Many, though not all, are searchable through the following link – www.concertprogrammes.org.uk.

The collection of concert programmes as represented through this web link relate only to those prior to 1954, and not to the remaining collection, which includes further runs of British and some international concert and opera programmes through to c.1996, and a large collection of ballet and some relating to musical theatre and light opera, and a bound run from 1895-1938 of the Paterson Orchestral Concerts (Glasgow). A selection of individual British concert programmes from the Collection, up to 1915, is catalogued in the Museum and Collections' database.

As with the over-500 early-to-mid 19c playbills in the McCann Collection, these programmes are searchable in detail by date, performer, work, aria (if given) and, of course, individual composer / performers and venue. Of these, the majority of string programmes are solo violin recitals, chamber music recitals or mixed concerts of instrumental and vocal numbers. However, some programmes for more unusual types of concerts are catalogued, including a bassoon and harp concert (2008.284) and a concert featuring a band of harps (2008.291). Programmes were taken from both London and the provinces, and a variety of different concert venues – ranging from major concert halls such as the Aeolian Hall (London) to private houses. Some annotated programmes were also included in the project. Performers were both described and indexed in the course of the cataloguing. The following is a brief 'highlights' list of significant instrumentalists and/or performers who featured prominently in the catalogued programmes:

- Violinists - Jan Kubelik, Mischa Elman, Marian Jay, May Harrison, Lady Hallé, Sarasate, Eugéne Ysaÿe; cellist – Jean Gerardy
- Harpists – John Thomas, Aptommas; pianist – Mark Hambourg, Myra Hess, Wilhelm Backhaus, Emil Sauer
- Ensembles - London String Quartet, Joachim Quartet, Brussels Quartet, St. Petersburg Quartet

A number of performer-composers were also documented in the programmes; some from performers more famous as performers, and others from performers more famous as composers – for example, Ravel (Edinburgh, 21/01/1911) and Debussy (Edinburgh, 01/03/1909; however Debussy did not appear due to ill health).

The programmes catalogued provided an insight into musical programming of the era, for instance in providing a detailed account of mixed vocal and instrumental concerts and their repertoires. Interesting aspects of the programmes include the inclusion of a significant amount of songs by female composers – for instance, Liza Lehmann and Teresa del Riego. One programme documented

through this project was from a concert given by the harpist 'Aptommas' in the Corn Exchange, Stamford. This programme provided information about a specific type of repertoire selection: audience choice guided by the performer. This concert format – a kind of concert also known as a 'Plebiscite' concert – gave the audience the chance to choose most of the items in the concert from a predetermined list. The voting took place between the audience arriving and the beginning of the concert.

As well as programme and performer information, other aspects of the programme were documented which provided a fascinating insight into sociological aspects both of musical performance and more generally. For instance, adverts in the programme were also recorded. The sale or hire of keyboard instruments (pianos, player-pianos such as pianolas and organs) featured prolifically in these adverts, often including prices of instruments and opinions about the instruments from notable musicians of the day. Another interesting aspect of the adverts was the importance attached to trademarks. For instance, an advert stating that 'Pianola' is a trademark not a generic type of instrument, or adverts with information about how to tell a genuine version of their instrument from a copy. Other information recorded includes adverts about publications and composer's works – for instance, record 2008.706 – which provide an invaluable social commentary on both concert and composer. Finally, non-musical adverts have also been recorded, such as an advert for the Charing Cross Turkish Baths, adding to the rich tapestry of sociological information contained in the Museum and Collections' catalogue.

Other aspects of the programmes documented also provide interesting sociological and historical details. For instance, concert programmes provide insight into how World War I affected concert-making. For instance, there is a catalogued programme from a harp concert given by Mario Lorenzi during World War I, which has an Italian focus; there is a programme from a Ballad Concert given on 17/10/1914 which has patriotic items including 'National anthems of the Allies'. Notices about late-comers are included in the catalogue, providing information about historical concert etiquette. Sociological information such as carriage details and train times are also documented, giving a telling snapshot of the sociological standing and expected location of the concert audience.

Valuable information was provided by cataloguing some small groups of programmes from the same concert series – for instance a collection of programmes from the London Ballad Concerts (1915), Royal College of Music Pupil's Concerts (1895-1896), Leeds Popular/Subscription Concerts (1885-1890) – and a complete set of programmes from the Edinburgh Classical Concerts (1906-1911).

From these sequences, it is possible to note both the similarities and differences between concerts in the series. For instance, some soloists featured regularly in the Edinburgh Classical Concerts, even playing partially identical programmes from year to year; conversely, particular concerts were priced higher than others within different seasons at the Edinburgh Classical Concerts, this comparison potentially demonstrating the perceived value and ratings of individual performers.

These programmes also show how material was recycled. For example, photographs of performers appearing in more than one Edinburgh Classical Concerts were frequently identical. In addition, some programme notes from the Leeds Popular Concerts were described as being taken directly from programmes from the [St. James's Hall] Popular Concerts.

Finally, there is also, in the Barbirolli Collection – a separate collection – a run of bound volumes relating to programmes from Sir John Barbirolli's concerts, as well as a run of albums of cuttings from his early career onward. These are also being catalogued into Apollo as individual programmes. Each of the above programme collections, McCann and Barbirolli, sit alongside iconography which may include photographs, letter and documents, instruments and other items held within the Museum and Collections' database.

Janet Snowman, Curator of Art and Iconography