

THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SCENARIO

• A lecture on antiquarian music books, read at the International Antiquarian Book Fair, San Francisco, Feb. 12, 2011, to complement a musical performance and exhibit of treasures from the music library of the University of California, Berkeley, prepared by John Shepard. I am pleased that Madeline Duckles (see next page), then in her late-90s, could be in attendance.

More on the Mozart opera later. Let's begin with a tale of two of my favorite booksellers, the brothers Rosenthal. When Barney decided to move to San Francisco back in 1960s, Albi was worried. From the booksellers' Book of Proverbs as codified by E. P. Goldschmidt, Albi quoted thus: "A bookseller needs to be where books *grow*." (Well, as they say: so there you are.) I'm honored to be with you here out in this Bibliographical Sahara. I'm pleased that some of you dealers can find time to be away from your booths, and I hope that others in the audience may find some treasures in those booths.

My topic is music, its antiquarian dealers and its collectors, who may be either personal or institutional librarians. Appropriate to this subject, my presentation is opinionated, discursive, and filled with names. The exhibition of treasures from the music library in Berkeley reminds me of my own rites of passage into this world. Fifty years ago, library collecting was on the ascendancy. Following an established practice of the day, the Newberry Library gave me the assignment of building its collections by visiting European dealers. In March 1963, we landed in London – just as my good friend Vincent Duckles was also landing, to do the very same thing for Cal/Berkeley. My work was cut out for me. He was far better known, and I suspect he had a bigger purse. In fact, his efforts were part of the greatest music collecting program since the Eastman School of Music was developing the Sibley Library around 1930.

Albi Rosenthal began our social life at a lovely river outing at Oxford,

with our wives along. The next day, back in London, down to business. Both of us scored nicely. At Cecil Hopkinson's First Edition Bookshop, I creamed the lovely music bibliography section in his Catalogue 68 the very day he mailed it out. Meanwhile, Vincent visited William Reeves, and found a proof copy corrected by Meyerbeer himself, which was later used by John Roberts, Vincent's successor, in his dissertation. Vincent was ahead by a nose in books, but I won in location: Hopkinson lived in a sumptuous apartment at no. 1 Hyde Park Street, while Reeves was at a musty warehouse far out on Norbury Crescent in south London.

Off to the continent and Vienna, we via Paris, Vincent via Munich, where he may have increased his lead while we skipped out to enjoy the Garnier Opéra. In Vienna, together we talked music bibliography with the ancient Otto Erich Deutsch on Schwarzenberg Platz, near the Russian cannon. I think I caught up with Vincent in Vienna, thanks to a small antiquarian stock at the music publisher Ludwig Doblinger. More important over time, my friend Christa Landon put me in touch with a book scout who could get behind the Iron Curtain to swap food from the West for scarce East European music. I of course shared his name with Vincent (a few years later).

Back to London, Vincent via Paris this time, where I think he actually saw the elusive Mme Legouix, I via Munich with a seminar at the feet of Helmut Domizlaff. Back in London, I met with Tim Neighbour of the British Museum, probably the finest music acquisitions person of the day. (He later told me I should have asked to see the Doblinger basement, where the best stuff was; and for all I know he had seen Hopkinson's catalogue in proof. But he probably would not have wanted the Meyerbeer, which would have gone to Manuscripts, and he was Printed Books.) He also sent me to Golders Green, where the young Richard Macnutt had just acquired the Leonard Hyman shop. One grows up fast in the world of antiquarian books, and quickly learns how much one does not, will never know. There were also more lovely dinners — the Hermann Barons, the Alec Hyatt Kings. At one, the best moment of the trip: the delightfully outspoken Madeline Duckles asked my wife, "Haven't I seen that dress before?"

Let me return to the Bibliographical Sahara and pay respect to major nearby music collections. At the Beethoven center at San Jose, the enthusiasm of a collector, the late Ira Brilliant, matched up with Bill Meredith, scholar and professor. Stanford has had mixed luck. The Memorial Library of Music strikes me as a classic story of a rich man talked into odd high spots, and the library thanking him with a catalogue that should have been much better. Stanford's treasure is its sound-recording collection, thanks to a collector, William R. Moran: in our world of streaming sound, its future is rich. At San Francisco State, Frank De Bellis's Italian music books include many treasures. The American music collection assembled by Sister Mary Dominic Ray in San Rafael was beyond the resources of Dominican College, so now the University of Colorado in Boulder loves it. The Bay Area gem is what you see a sample of here today.

In institutional libraries great music collections often simply happen. The university library in seventeenth-century Upsala got its treasures as booty from the Thirty Years War. More often, there was the special presence, either (1.) a community, (2.) a librarian, or (3.) a collector. Considering its community, it is hard to imagine the New York Public Library not having a great music collection. The community setting in late 19th-century Berlin was different: the city was suddenly prosperous, with a culture-vulture mentality, and home to an ambitious, newly centralized government. So, while the Viennese were out waltzing, the Preußische Staatsbibliothek latched onto a wealth of manuscripts by the Viennese Masters.

Librarians help too. At the Library of Congress soon after 1900, thanks to Herbert Putnam, Oscar Sonneck was doing what Vincent and I could only dream of doing. His checkbook was fatter, and back then, rarities were plentiful and disgustingly cheap. Berkeley in the 1960s claimed both an intellectually rich musical community, and a librarian in Donald Coney, who respected Vincent's eminence, but was also well aware of the strong music department.

The scenario in institutional libraries is different today. Ours is an era of

politician- administrators who like statistics. Allocations are determined by formulas, budgets are devoured by online contracts and over-priced periodical subscriptions. A financial calculus governs both institutional libraries and booksellers. Today the institutional model is macroeconomic: its services are strategized, its collections harvested; but the booksellers' model is still microeconomic: small stocks, personal customers. Collectors want particular books, readers want insight, and both of these are essentially microeconomic. Their model thus resonates less with the bureaucracies of library administrations, more with the learning and lore of antiquarian booksellers.

If today's future for antiquarian music is mostly one of collectors, this could be good news for music collecting. Collecting requires passion; books and music can deepen and fine-tune each other. Investors still stash their music in bank vaults, but the collectors I have known – Lester S. Levy in Baltimore, J. Francis Driscoll in Boston, among others whom I'll mention – have always been very welcoming. They find time in their busy schedules: it is clear where they love to be. Booksellers know that the commerce is in knowledge and love as well as money. New collectors need their guidance. In time, lore becomes the currency: you tell me something I don't know about my collection, and I'll show you something I bet you don't know. Some of this lore goes into annotations to the bookseller's citations; it often sells the item and justifies the price.

Among music collectors, the patron saint is Giovanni Battista Martini, sometime teacher of Mozart and author of one of the first histories of music. His collection, rich and vast: perhaps this is why Padre Martini's history did not get beyond the Romans. The collection is also one that both Vincent and I knew from happy experiences. In 1972, he prepared a lovely facsimile of Martini's notes on his books, and dealings with his fellow music collector and historian, Charles Burney. My story is happy in a different way. In 1977, I had long planned to be in Bologna, on a day when a public strike had been called just the previous afternoon. The one-man library

staff was needed on the picket line. But he acted like a collector rather than a civil servant, and locked me in the library. When he let me out at five o'clock, I was very hungry and quite constipated, but I had learned a wealth about early music typography. Thank you Sergio, thank you Padre.

Among other great collections, François-Joseph Fétis's is now at the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels; Paul Hirsch's is at the British Library as of the 1950s; among the Americans, Walter Harding's went to the Bodleian in the 1970s, Jim Fuld's to the Morgan two years ago. Great collections usually end up in institutional libraries, but let us not forget: it's the passion of their collectors, not the repositories, that makes them great. Collectors collect to context and character. Context means scope: the item fits a collecting profile. Character means individuality: the item is special, it has a texture of the lore of events before or after publication. Symphonic narratives are hiding there: we should be so lucky. Let me recall a bit of musical lore. It's from the high end, but this is where one usually finds the most exciting lore.

Beethoven wrote his *Appassionata* sonata on a visit to the countryside, and carried the holograph home in the rain. It's in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, where one can still see the water stains. It is a great story: I first heard it from a Newberry trustee who was deeply moved when the custodian, Vladimir Fédorov, did the show-and-tell. (Great dealers, and great rare book librarians, really do perform on their books, as effectively if not as beautifully as Yo Yo Ma.)

The lore can extend to bibliographical detail. Most music was first issued in small editions. If orders piled up, more copies could be run, but from plates that became worn, or were often altered or replaced. Jim Fuld once took special pleasure in showing my wife his copy of the first edition of the Schumann *Carneval* from a very early press run, in which each of the eight letters of the title has a tiny face, very distinct, engraved into it. As the plates wore down over many later press runs, the faces became a blur.

Such details matter to scholars when an argument can be made for their importance; to booksellers too, when collectors are interested. But

institutional libraries have millions of items in their collections. Their curators can tell their tales only when they do what antiquarian booksellers do: namely, they discover the music and sell it. Library cataloguers are trained to follow rules and cut corners, but custodial librarians need memories like booksellers and collectors. To jog their memory, they often set up informal provenance files apart from the library catalogue – notes, offprints, clippings from the booksellers’ blurbs. Many administrators are suspicious of institutional memory, and gladly suppress it (particularly when it resides in old-time staff members who have not grown old gracefully). WorldCat is their bibliographical record of choice. Of the works I just mentioned, however, the Beethoven isn’t listed there (it’s in Paris) but if it were, don’t expect any raindrops. No way to tell whether any particular copy of the Schumann is a valuable early impression with faces, or a late one with blur. We all use WorldCat, but we recognize it for what it really is: Borges’s Library of Babel, as available from your local, friendly WalMart.

Let me talk about sheet music. To some, all printed music is sheet music (the Bach Gesellschaft edition, in 47 large, thick folio volumes, is “sheet music;” it’s rather like calling Wagner’s Ring on your iPod a “tune.”) But for most of us, sheet music is the vast world of four- or six-pagers that fell apart in piano benches. The quantity, from both Europe and America, is immense. I once estimated the US total before 1950 at 1.6 million titles. That’s titles, often with dozens of surviving copies of each title. A highly deserving Sheet Music Consortium is now addressing the cataloguing problem. The charge is being led by a few major collections – major meaning over 100,000 items, like UCLA and Indiana. Other major collections can only dream: among them LC, NYPL, Brown, Newberry, the American Antiquarian and the Philadelphia Free. (If a music cataloguer’s output is about 3,000 titles a year, they’d need a stimulus package.)

Dreams of a comprehensive catalogue of sheet music are part of the library scenario. Antiquarian booksellers dream different dreams. Their numbers resonate instead with the half a million dollars that a Star-Spangled Banner first fetched recently at Christie’s. Copies of the second state, with the word “Patriotic” spelled correctly, are worth a fraction of

that. Of the eleven surviving copies of the first, WorldCat cites only one, maybe two: I simply can't tell from the descriptions. Nor does WorldCat often suggest the relationship between several dozen other early editions that it cites. Dealers, also collectors and scholars, live in another bibliographical world. For the SSB, they turn to sources like Muller and Wolfe, as updated by discussions with colleagues. They develop smarts, and they build their own reference libraries. Their instincts recall the wisdom of Meredith Willson's Music Man: "Ya gotta know the territory."

Considering the bulk of its data base, the Sheet Music Consortium needs to use "one size fits all" rules that discourage notes on the lore and other "copy-specific data." This scenario is not for the booksellers who love to dig out facts, and who derive much of their intellectual and monetary rewards from condition and provenance. Nor is it one for those rare-book librarians who are proud of their collections and love to work with readers. Special rare-book cataloguing rules are now being worked out, even a sub-set for rare music, with options for notes on provenance, condition – all the good stuff. (Not to mention the artistry of their covers, which can be coveted by museums, or the tales they tell, which historians love.) Ampler bibliographical records are to be encouraged, although I am not sure that the problem is one that information systems can handle. The systems are sound in theory, hierarchic, top down, but the historical and practical world works from the bottom up; and Aristotle and Plato will always argue with each other.

So what is the territory that you gotta know? Who collects music? Musicians are legendarily poor, but they often find money to collect; music lovers support the concert world, but their patronage rarely inhibits their urge to collect. Music lives on taste. And there are many musical tastes, which have proliferated with sound recordings and broadcasting. The Bach-Beethoven-Brahms repertory now shares billing with early music – the likes of which we'll hear next – but also hymns, band music, pop, rock, folk, Tin Pan Alley, and world music. All musical tastes today are minority tastes, and as

the minorities get smaller and smaller the collectors become all the more passionate, defensive, and outspoken. Gossip and name-dropping become epidemic, and – as booksellers know – reflect, and convert into, book lore.

Dealers know the dangers of their own good taste, and its relation to shifting monetary values. Like performers, they may wish to change things. Well, good luck. Are you really hungry enough to want customers who are passionate about Guy Lombardo? (Of course you are, and I'm a snob.) You may want to tell your Elvis collector: go in for Chuck Berry. Want to try? A hint: Berry is better music. Cheaper too. But also scarcer, as smart collectors will notice. Besides, who am I to say Berry is better? But isn't it true? Or is it really a black musician versus a white? In library school I was taught that librarians can have opinions, but libraries do not. But collectors sure have attitude, so why not booksellers? Just be careful.

Let me comment on the dealings with libraries that acquire antiquarian music. With rare music, one may work with either a rare book librarian – who may not know music – or a music librarian –who will now be preoccupied with streaming audio and copyright. (I might mention that I'm happy to see here several rare book librarians, after workshops yesterday in Berkeley. But about two years ago the music librarians planned their annual conference in Philadelphia for this very weekend, so John Shepard is among the few around.) In decisions on acquiring rare music, both music and rare book librarians are usually involved, as will potential readers and donors. Consensus is the key, which means strong supporters but no detractors: shades of the U.S. Senate. Libraries have no opinion, of course, but they often listen to passionate readers and donors. In academic faculties, it's usually the music historians who love the music library; performers, composers, and music educators less so, although there are many fine exceptions. Happiest of all are the *ménages a trois* (or *quatre*, or *cinq*), among booksellers, librarians, collectors, and donors. The bookseller and the librarian work together on our Guy Lombardo collector. Ideally, it's win-win: the dealer builds the collection, the library ends up with the collection, and the collector is delighted to have served *ad maiorem gloriam Guy Lombardum*.

So where does antiquarian music grow? There are weeds everywhere: Percy Goetschius theory books, *Beethoven the Man Who Freed Music*, *Shining Trumpets*, the *Fireside Book of Folk Songs*. There are also music books that are available when readers want them: *Music for the Man who Enjoys Hamlet*, Opal Wheelers, Wagner comic books, Harrow Replicas, Woolly Whale dachshunds. There are countless manuscripts: Gershwin, Sousa, and Sir Arthur Sullivan, for instance. There are also scarcities, part of the territory that dealers and collectors need to know: early Scott Joplin rags published in Sedalia, Missouri, rather than later out of New York, Chicago jazz editions that were revised to become New York best-sellers; Charles Ives songs from the 1930s, or better, from Redding, Connecticut in the 1920s. Or locally, memorabilia of Charlie Seeger in Berkeley, or his pupil Henry Cowell in Menlo Park, or Darius Milhaud at Mills, or Ernest Bloch at the Conservatory; mission music, pioneer sheet music, Bohemian Grove operettas, Santa Cruz Boardwalk band music. But who am I to tell dealers where to find their stock? Or customers?

In collecting, condition, condition, condition. With music, there is also, for lack of a less pretentious term, something called narrative authenticity. Let me explain. The wear- and-tear can very important evidence of the musical experience. Battered copies that aspiring performers used to learn their repertory, with markings – fingerings for instrumentalists, breathings for singers, phrasings for everybody – are really more interesting than those the performers bought for their shelves when they became famous and could afford morocco bindings. Battered copies, alas, usually get discarded. My point is really the flip-side of William Blades’s chapter of “Readers as Enemies of Books.” But remember Beethoven’s raindrops.

Today, music publishers work with lawyers rather than printers, and most older music is now in libraries. In Vincent’s and my day, there were several dozen specialist music antiquarians. Today there are very few, and their stock consists less of scores, more of ancillary documents. General dealers often handle antiquarian music – and often successfully, when they know the territory. In the past, dealers’ catalogues were all printed, not online. Happily, Jim Coover (Chris Coover’s dad) published a checklist of

antiquarian music catalogues, and assembled an archive for the University at Buffalo, thousands of them and still growing. Will they trace the history of pricing and of collecting fashions? I doubt it. There have been ups and downs, but I cannot imagine a “Galsworthy phenomenon.” Fewer doctoral dissertations are now written on forgettable early minor masters, but there are many modern *Kleinmeister*, also performers who need new works to replenish their tired repertoires.

Of the bottomless supply of music out there, what will ever be collectable? Musical tastes are as unpredictable as collecting tastes. But the two can reinforce each other. I’ve got this book, now let me really hear the music; or, I love this music, now what should I collect? The latter question is for booksellers to die for, since the answer is: countless possibilities, scarce and common, pristine and worn, desirable and junk. Most tastes have their distinctive performance materials, printed and manuscript – scores and parts, extracts and fake books, method books and tutors – as well as memorabilia – posters, programs, and other ephemera, personabilia and correspondence, not to mention prose writings, from fan club mags to the wisdom of academia. There is even musical pornography (to good Frankfurt Marxists, of course, all commercial music is porn). There is also humor, and like music it needs the right audience. The range: from Karl Storck on musical caricature (it works maybe 30 per cent of the time), to Hoffnung (about 80 per cent), to Professor Schmutzig’s method for the waldhorn (two per cent for most of us, 90 per cent for adolescents). For antiquarian dealers, there is the “Rainbeau” catalogue, an anonymous London 1862 parody of E. F. Rimbault’s music sale, with a modern reprint by Jim Coover. It humor ranks at 60 per cent for antiquarian dealers, but it is still weak alongside Francis Farquhar’s 1945 Caveat Book Shop catalogue, not to mention David Magee’s *Course in Correct Cataloguing* – to mention two titles that grew out here in the Bibliographical Sahara.

In sum: music flourishes on the kind of attention to detail that antiquarian booksellers know and love. It is collected in established and in ingenious new areas, as a specialty and as a sidelight for other specialties. Dealers can still sing for joy, when they remember Professor Harold Hill

and get to know the territory.

Finally, my title. (Please bear with me: I need to deconstruct. I promise, I'll clean up afterwards.) Wolfgang clearly had our session in mind when he conceived of his opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. In the new library scenario, books are a decoration in the harem, best stored efficiently, with no concern for who they are. I see Constanza, the soprano heroine, as a valuable book: meant to be read, beautiful, demanding, passionate, sensible, in other words, Mozart. Locked in the harem, she longs for her reader, the tenor Belmonte, honest, decent, and much in love with her. But Constanze is not “accessible” (librarians love that word): and can you blame Belmonte if he is not particularly keen on virtual sex? His adversary is the Pasha, who is holding Constanza hostage for his amusement. The Pasha is powerful, and very busy: Mozart doesn't even let him sing. The Pasha's designated administrator is Osmin. (He's a eunuch: so what is Mozart's telling us about middle management?) The fifth major character is the baritone Pedrillo. Using his ladder, Pedrillo rescues Constanze from the harem – or scenario – and unites Belmonte – like our readers – with Constanze – what you see in the booths here today. You get it: Pedrillo is really Mozart's antiquarian bookseller, whose music is beautiful duets between books and readers, not to mention the music of ringing cash registers.

Let me be clear: Pedrillo is an abductor, but he's no thief, no Blumberg, no Gilkey, no Hasford, no McTague. There's a difference between abducting physical books and helping the physical books introduce themselves to us. I wish that libraries might help in this task more than they generally do. Libraries and their logical systems are essential to our civilization, but so is the fertile chaos of collectors and booksellers; and the music they can make together is pure heaven.