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On the Structure of the Repertory: RIPMxix Series A and Series B

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We have, I believe, always been prudent when discussing the Repertory, for the actual published form and content of RIPMxix must inevitably be the result of a long collective experience of working with 19th-century periodical literature sanctioned by international accord. However, with the Centres now in place, and the organ through which to communicate established, namely *Periodica Musica*, and the certainty of proceeding with active international collaboration assured by IAML and our three Commissions, we believe that it is fitting to fix our attention to determining the structure of RIPMxix, and this we have done during the past year both in Vancouver and in Parma. Let us then open the dialogue concerning the form and content of RIPMxix by outlining various options. It is to be remembered, however, that these remarks constitute what might be referred to as a position paper, intended to stimulate further reflection and discussion, from which will result the definitive form of RIPMxix.

There are, at least for the sake of discussion, five basic questions:

(1) Which periodicals should be indexed first and how should the priority for selecting these periodicals be established?

(2) Who should do the indexing? Should it be limited to those working at the Centres and to members of national indexing groups, or, should the opportunity to participate be open to all who are qualified?

(3) Within each periodical what specifically should be catalogued and indexed? (I suppose this could be referred to as "depth of indexing".) Should we treat titles only, full contents or some compromise between the two?

(4) What cataloguing method and indexing norms should be employed?

(5) In what form should the resulting reference tools (the Repertory itself) be published and disseminated?

The first question, which concerns the selection of journals for indexing, is not uncomplicated but it is the question most easily resolved. Our method of proceeding in this matter has been to ask members of our Commissions to select, for their individual countries, no more than ten journals for priority indexing. A list of these journals will appear in *Periodica Musica*.

With respect to those who will undertake the cataloguing and indexing, we believe that the only criteria for participation should be appropriate training in either library science or musicology, and the interest and ability to produce work that satisfies the standards established for RIPMxix. Judging from the inquiries we have received, the number of those interested is large indeed, and, it is our

position that—given the magnitude of the corpus we intend to treat—it would be somewhat less than reasonable to limit participation, at least at this point. We would, then, favor an “open door” policy, with the understanding that work in the individual countries would proceed under the auspices and direction of either the national group or the national RIPM representative. This method of operation, however, has some very definite implications for the ultimate design of the Repertory. And this leads us to our next consideration, namely, within each periodical, what should be catalogued and indexed?

This is clearly the most difficult question confronting RIPMxix and a response to it should be formulated with respect both to our desire to gain rapid access to the maximum amount of information, and the reality of the resources available to accomplish this task. Perhaps it is worthwhile recalling here that the proposed *Nineteenth-Century Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*¹ (1944) produced only a single volume, dealing with the years 1890 to 1899. Like the editor of *The Waterloo Directory of Victorian Periodicals*, we too are wary of seeking a “scholarly Utopia”² but we wish nonetheless to prepare for its attainment. We believe that gaining limited access to important periodicals in a reasonable amount of time is desirable, but that we must develop a methodology that foresees the moment when more extensive indexing will be possible. Moreover, we believe that the methodology must take into account both the resources of the two Centres, and the work of individuals with little more than the periodical, a pencil and a strong desire to participate in this undertaking. Unfortunately, to demand from the isolated scholar an in-depth bibliographical control of a journal—which today clearly requires a computer, mastery of a complex indexing thesaurus, and a great deal of leisure time to exercise this passion—would eliminate a large number of prospective participants.

Thus, what we propose is two series: Series A and Series B. The former would offer limited access to journals; the latter would, in conjunction with Series A, offer more in-depth control of a given source. Series A could, in part, be prepared by isolated scholars; Series B would be prepared only at the Centres and at the headquarters of those national groups possessing appropriate personnel and equipment. Before dealing with the nature of each series we must point out what we believe to be a fundamental difference between indexing 19th-century and 20th-century journals. When dealing with literature of our own century, we may assume that the periodical is easily available for consultation. Thus, an index reference need generally supply only a volume and page number, as the scholar can simply examine the journal in his local library, and determine if the reference is useful for his research. On the other hand, as we see it, the problem is entirely different when dealing with 19th-century periodicals for they are very rare and one cannot assume that the scholar will have immediate access to the source. For this reason, a simple volume and page number reference is insufficient, since this information alone gives the scholar neither the title of the article he wishes to consult nor the page on which the article begins and ends, nor, for that matter, the year in which the article was published. An index reference to 19th-century literature, therefore, must be augmented with the bibliographical information that allows the scholar to order a copy of the article in which the reference appears. Moreover, such information should include titles,

¹ Helen Grant Cushing and Adah V. Morris, eds., *Nineteenth-Century Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, 2 vols. (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1944).

² Michael Wolf, John S. North and Dorothy Deering, eds., *The Waterloo Directory of Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, Phase I (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1976). p. viii.

for article and section titles offer at least an initial indication of whether the subject of the reference forms an essential part of the text, or whether it is of secondary importance. Thus, we believe that an index to 19th-century periodicals should be preceded by a chronological checklist, or, in other words, an extensive table of contents. This would indicate in chronological order, volume by volume and/or issue by issue, all pertinent bibliographical information (i.e., authors, titles, first and final pages) for each article or section including Nouvelles diverses, obituaries, advertisements, etc. All sections of a journal would be accounted for, each would be independently coded, and, as we shall see, it is to these codes that Series B will refer. This procedure is somewhat similar to that which is employed in the much-praised *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*.³

For RIPMxix, this catalogue would form the first and fundamental part of Series A. Moreover, it could be prepared by anyone with a knowledge of our cataloguing procedures and access to a periodical. Once completed, the catalogue would be typed into our computer which, thereafter, would produce an author index—part two of Series A—and, if so desired, a key-word index—part three of Series A—similar to that employed for the *Comprehensive Dissertation Index*.⁴ It is to be noted, however, that the indexing procedure for the third part of Series A will require further study and collaborative consultation.

Thus, a Series A volume would consist of three parts, it would be devoted to a single periodical and would be prepared by one individual (with the assistance of the Centre) who would sign the volume and receive royalties based upon its sale. Series B, then, would be an in-depth index to the contents of a journal. This is obviously a much more elaborate procedure and, therefore, would largely be the responsibility of the Centres. Index references in Series B would include not only a volume and page-number reference to the cited subjects but also a reference to Series A which would reveal a full bibliographical citation for the article or section containing the cited material. Thus, Series A is an essential step in the preparation of Series B. One must understand, however, that a volume in Series B may take several years to produce—not to mention the time required to prepare an indexing thesaurus in four languages. In concrete terms, then, Series A would give access to titles of articles and sections of 19th-century journals, and while no one amongst us would deny that such access is limited, all of us would nonetheless rejoice at having such a documentary resource available today. At the same time, Series A is understood as an initial but essential first step towards in-depth bibliographical control of the contents of selected 19th-century journals.

There are three advantages to establishing this method of operation: (1) it will allow a large number of people to participate in this undertaking while fully exploiting the resources of the Centres; (2) it will permit, in a reasonable amount of time, extremely important Series A results which will be of great value to 19th-century scholars; and (3) it will in no way prevent us from seeking the more elaborate bibliographical control we all desire, this being the object of Series B. Finally, with respect to the published form of the Repertory, it is likely that we shall employ electronic composition generated by computer tapes prepared at the Centres, and that like RILM, the Centres will be responsible for

³ Walter Houghton, ed., *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*. 3 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966-1979).

⁴ *Comprehensive Dissertation Index 1861-1972*, 37 vols. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Xerox University Microfilms, 1973).

producing the volumes.

There are, of course, many questions to resolve, and these, along with the entire proposed structure, will be submitted to RIPMxix Board members for initial consideration in the form of this report, and for detailed examination at the next IAML Conference, at which time we shall present the cataloguing rules proposed for Series A, and distribute a full three-part Series A prototype.

Et bien voilà, le dialogue est commencé. If, after a year's existence, RIPMxix stimulates an intense discussion concerning the questions raised today, and if that discussion leads to concrete results, we shall indeed have something to celebrate in Washington on the occasion of our second anniversary.