

Like a Scholar: Gaining Hands-On Experience with Specialized Music Tools and Resources

MISTI SHAW

As the Music and Performing Arts Librarian at DePauw University, I provide sequential library instruction that is integrated within the music history curriculum. I frequently collaborate with music history professor Matthew Balensuela to identify ways in which I can better meet the library instructional needs of his students and thus improve the quality of work they submit to him. In the fall of 2011, he reflected that his students were not getting enough experience working with specialized music tools, including thematic catalogs, works lists, and scholarly collected edition scores in the 300-level topics course (similar to a seminar). Rather than give a lecture and create an assignment for them to complete outside of class—typical for their sophomore year music history survey—I created an in-class activity so that students could gain hands-on experience using the tools while I was present, so that I could assist with their questions.

There are usually between fifteen and eighteen students enrolled in each topics course which meets for three hours each week of a semester of fourteen weeks. Before the class meets, I select the compositions to be assigned to students who will work in teams of two. In a Mozart or Beethoven course, I might select a variety of compositions, including a piano concerto, a string quartet, a symphony, and other works whose entries in the composer's thematic catalog seem straightforward. When class begins, each pair of students receives a worksheet with their assigned composition indicated at the top. Before they begin their work, I give a brief ten-minute overview about thematic catalogs and collected editions and why they may be helpful when conducting research. After reminding the students that I am available to answer questions should they arise, they tackle their worksheets. (See Appendix for an example.)

1. Locate the assigned composition within the thematic catalog, located at the front of the classroom.

The students must first spend a few moments familiarizing themselves with how the thematic catalog is arranged before they can find their work's entry. They are often intimidated by the German text, but after a little encouragement, most identify their entries quickly. Once they find their entry, they record the following information onto their worksheets: the composition's title, its instrumentation, the year(s) it was composed, where the manuscript is held (the worksheet asks that they simply list the first city that they see in the Autograph area of the entry), and whether or not a facsimile exists. While students work on this portion of their in-class activity, I sit nearby in order to give additional information about thematic catalogs to each pair of students in a more personal setting. I might explain what incipits are, show students the abbreviations table, or discuss alternative ways thematic catalogs may be arranged—chronologically versus genre, for example. Usually students feel comfortable asking questions in this setting and express interest in learning about the other information and headings they see within the entries.

2. Using the composer's works list in Grove Music Online, locate the score by pulling the correct volume from the collected edition.

Students must find the entry for their composition in the *Grove Music Online* works list in order to determine which volume contains their work within the collected edition. After writing the volume and page number on their worksheets, students visit the collected editions area of the stacks and try to locate their work within the correct volume. If the library owns more than one collected edition for the composer, the worksheet will remind students that I want them to locate the score from the newer edition. When they pull the correct volume and flip to the page where the composition first appears, the students find a sticky note with a congratulatory message that I placed in the volume before class began. They remove the note and affix it to their worksheets and head back to the classroom.

3. Locate and read a full-text review for a sound recording for the composition using the International Index to Music Periodicals (IIMP) or the Penguin Guide to Recorded Classical Music in print in the reference section.

The worksheet indicates that students may select a favorable or unfavorable review—as long as it's a review, they can use it. They must write two or three sentences about what they find most interesting in the review, which helps to ensure that they engage with the review rather than skim through it quickly until they find the “answer.” While most students enrolled in a topics course will have already received instruction on searching for scholarly

journal articles in a prior course, few will have had the opportunity or need to search for and use sound recording reviews. When asked to write a critique of musical sound or performance, our students sometimes do not know what to listen for, or do not fully understand the language to employ and terminology to use. Exposure to sound recording reviews provides these students with examples they can use as models for their own critiques while in the relaxed classroom environment of library instruction.

4. Navigate to a digital archive containing the composer's works

If this is a Beethoven class, they are directed to the Beethoven-Haus Bonn digital archive¹. In a Mozart class, they visit the Digital Mozart Edition.² Other digital collections online are not devoted to specific composers, and might be useful for a variety of other topics courses. These collections might include the Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection, the Library of Congress American Memory Collection, and digitized collections from university libraries such as the University of North Texas, UC-Boulder, Yale, and others.

We know that students turn to Google more often than library databases when conducting research, and many struggle to evaluate online resources for quality, authority, accuracy, and objectivity.³ Rather than urge students to use library databases exclusively, or lecture them on evaluating online resources, I prefer to show students examples of scholarly online resources and facilitate engagement with them. At DePauw, I have observed that students who gain experience using trustworthy Web sites and quality digital archives get better at recognizing and discarding online resources that are unsuitable for research.

The class worksheet directs the students to the archive I have chosen for them. Their tasks involve exploration of the archive, searching for manuscripts or early editions, and identifying other features that can assist research, such as accompanying images or bibliographies. At the Beethoven-Bonn archive, the students must see if there is information about their assigned composition, find an image or PDF of a manuscript or early edition, and search the site for any accompanying images or anecdotal information they find interesting. They provide a short summary of their findings. Students

1 Digital Archives of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn, http://www.beethoven-haus-bonn.de/sixcms/detail.php?template=startseite_digitales_archiv_en.

2 Digital Mozart Edition, <http://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/main/index.php?l=2>.

3 A partial summary of the Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academic Libraries project, is in Steve Kolowich, "What Students Don't Know," *Inside Higher Ed*, August 22, 2011, http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/08/22/erial_study_of_student_research_habits_at_illinois_university_libraries_reveals_alarmingly_poor_information_literacy_and_skills.

alert me when they finish their worksheets so that I can review their findings and answer any lingering questions.

The first time I assigned this worksheet in a topics course, I was surprised by how much the students enjoyed completing the tasks. A few of the students believed that the work they did—using thematic catalogs and searching for scholarly scores using works lists—was work that musicologists do, and they felt proud about this. One student remarked “I feel like a true scholar.” Another student said, “This was so much more fun than last year,” which was a reference to the research assignments they received in their music history survey course. Any worries I had that the students would find the tasks boring or confusing were dispelled as I saw them “high-five” each other as they located their scores in stacks.

Semester-end class evaluations were similarly positive, and indicate that students enjoyed the hands-on aspect. For the question, “What was the most useful part of the session(s),” a student wrote, “Misti planted clues inside of research tools we needed to use that are not easy to look for without instruction. We went on a scavenger hunt through the library and it gave us confidence to find things ourselves and it was fun!” Another answered the question with, “Telling us about how to use reference tools, and then having us actually use the reference tools.” One student responded, “The session gave us a chance to try out the different resources that were presented. I love the interactive portion and scavenger hunt.”

Though this activity might be too challenging to assign to a class containing more than twenty students, it might be possible if the music librarian is able to enlist the assistance of another librarian, professor, or staff assistant. The activity can be modified for a course that is not composer-specific; for a course on a particular era in music history, compositions can be assigned from a variety of relevant thematic catalogs or other specialized tools. The activity could also be expanded if the course meeting time lasts longer than fifty minutes. If given more than an hour, I might ask students to visit a composer bibliography in *Grove Music Online* and locate a book and a journal article that DePauw owns or offers in full text. I cannot show each student how to use each resource in the music library—no instruction librarian can. Yet, I urge music librarians and music history professors to consider adding a hands-on learning component when possible not only to increase student competence, but to also combat the intimidation they experience when confronted with specialized tools and resources in music libraries.

Appendix: MUS390 Topics: Mozart In-class Activity

Names of those in your group:

1. Find your composition in the Köchel thematic catalog (front of room near piano).

a) K number: _(instructor fills this in)_____

b) What is the instrumentation of the work? (Translate the instruments into English as best as you can).

c) Where and when did the premiere take place?

d) Where is the manuscript held? If it's held in more than one place, pick one. Ask Misti for help if you need it.

e) Is there a facsimile? Just answer yes or no.

2. In *Grove Music Online*, go to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Works List. Using the columns of the Works List, locate your K number/composition in the table.

Using the *NMA* column (the New edition), locate the volume your composition appears within the collected set in our library.

You must physically walk to the collected set downstairs in the stacks and locate the volume on the shelf.

Once you find the volume, pull it off the shelf, open it and look to the left of the inside of the cover. You should see a purple Post-It note.

What is written on the purple Post-It note? _____

3. Navigate to the music library Web site, click on *IIMP*, and locate a sound recording review for your composition. It can be favorable or unfavorable—as long as it's a review for a recording containing the full version of your work. If

you cannot locate a review in *IIMP*, use the *Penguin Guide to Recorded Music* (in front of room, by piano).

- a) Write 2-3 sentences about what you found interesting in this review. Would you be compelled to listen to this recording? Why?

Optional extras for another class or a longer class:

1. Locate a sound recording of this work in our online catalog. If you can't find one, proceed to b.

- a) Write the call number here: _____

b) If we don't have a sound recording at DePauw, locate one in Worldcat (using the link on the Music Library Web site). Name the title of the sound recording you found: _____

Go to the bibliography in *Grove Music Online* for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Click on the + sign to view the bibliography for "Biographies, studies of life & works."

2. Locate a book that DePauw owns. (Use Worldcat to do this, if you like) (Remember: italics in title but nothing in quotation marks means it's probably a book.)

- a) Write down the title and author:

b) Write down our call number: Go to the "Operas" portion of the bibliography

3. Locate a journal article for which there is full-text access at DePauw. Start at the top of the operas bibliography—you won't have to go too far down.

HINT: the **titles** of journals will be in italics. The article will appear within quotation marks.

Journals are often abbreviated. You must click on the abbreviation to see the full name of the Journal. **SEARCH FOR THE JOURNAL TITLE** using the **Journals tab** on the Music Library Web site. Then, navigate to the years to find your specific issue and article.

- a) Write down the full citation for the journal article that you found access to.