

## *Around the Archives*

# What's Past is Prologue: the Collections of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

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The archives and collections of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) occupy some 330 linear metres of rolling stack shelving within the main campus on Renfrew Street, Glasgow. Having opened its doors to the public only four years ago, the search room facility has welcomed over 500 visitors and researchers, responded to thousands of individual enquiries and contributed to many outputs from film documentaries, BBC programmes and coffee-table publications to historically informed classical music performances, scholarly research papers and exhibitions both within and furth of the building. This article seeks to highlight the RCS's collections both as a national repository for the performing arts and as a scholarly resource rich in research potential, both creatively and academically.

The archive distinguishes between institutional records (intrinsic collections) and materials which relate to, or were acquired from, external parties (extrinsic collections); these are delineated in Table 1 and Table 2.

<b>Collection</b>	<b>Linear metres (approximate)</b>	<b>% of holdings</b>
Governance Records	15	4.5
Buildings' Records	7	2.0
Finance Records	14	4.5
Principals' Correspondence	8	2.5
Secretaries' Correspondence	13	4.0
Performance Ephemera	31	9.0
Student Records	15	4.5
Staff Records	15	4.5
Total	118	35.5

Table 1 Summary of the relative extent of intrinsic collections held by the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's archives.

THE COLLECTIONS OF THE ROYAL CONSERVATOIRE OF SCOTLAND

<b>Collection</b>	<b>Linear metres (approximate)</b>	<b>% of holdings</b>
Jimmy Logan Archive	22	7.00
Friedel Keim Collection	10	3.00
Edward H. Tarr Collection	12	3.50
Reine Dahlqvist Archive	36	11.00
David Nicholson Archive	1	0.33
Bach Choir Archive	1	0.33
Robert Minter Collection	3	1.00
Sir Ernest Bullock MSS	1	0.33
Choral and Orchestral Union Collection	3	1.00
John Cairney Collection	2	0.50
Francis Reid Papers	5	1.50
Britannia Panopticon Archive	2	0.50
John Webb Collection	82 <sup>1</sup>	25.00
John Steane Archive	4	1.00
Others	28	8.50
Total	212	64.50

Table 2 Summary of the relative extent of extrinsic collections held by the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's archives.

<sup>1</sup> The John Webb Collection is separated into the collection of papers, workshop tools and personal ephemera accounting for 4 linear metres, and the historic and contemporary musical instrument collection, largely held off-site, accounting for approximately 78 linear metres.

The intrinsic collections tell the story of the RCS over its 169-year history. Founded as the Glasgow Athenaeum in 1847, the institution was opened by Charles Dickens (Plate 1) on 28 December of that year. In his opening speech Dickens praised:

the high purpose of this brilliant assembly ... I find it with a reading-room, a coffee-room, and a news-room; I find it with lectures given and in progress, in sound, useful and well-selected subjects; I find it with morning and evening classes for mathematics, logic, grammar, music, French, German, Spanish, and Italian, attended by upwards of five hundred persons; but, best and first of all and what is to me more satisfactory than anything else in the history of the institution, I find that all, this [*sic*] has been mainly achieved by the young men of Glasgow themselves, with very little assistance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/dickens/charles/d54sls/chapter46.html>.

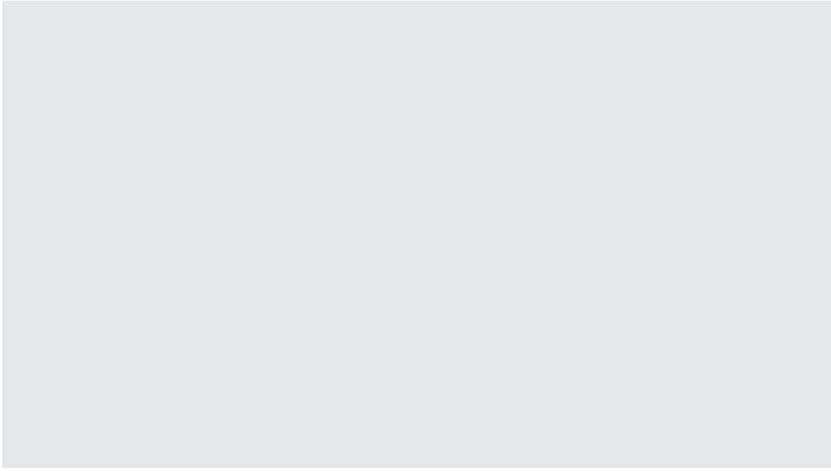


Plate 1 Charles Dickens' signature on the Glasgow Athenaeum *Book of Strangers*. RCS Archives, IA/3/1.

The Athenaeum movement began in the late eighteenth century with the establishment of various private members' clubs servicing individuals occupied in scientific, literary or artistic professions and their patrons. In 1824, John Wilson Croker (statesman), Sir Thomas Lawrence (portrait painter) and others founded the Athenaeum Club on Pall Mall, London, marking the beginning of the popularisation of the movement. In an era when education was not universal and universities were considered both elitist and exclusive, the Athenaeum clubs provided a locus for further learning, reading, discussion and debate.

The Glasgow Athenaeum, unlike many similar clubs, was explicit in its intention to provide 'a source of mental cultivation, moral improvement and delightful recreation to all classes';<sup>2</sup> 'all classes' in this instance referring to both social class and gender. It is interesting to note that the Athenaeum Club in London, one of the few still extant in any form, only began admitting women in 2002.

In 1890, the Glasgow Athenaeum School of Music was founded under the directorship of Allan Macbeth. Born in Greenock in 1856, Macbeth was a graduate of the Leipzig Conservatorium, the oldest conservatoire of music in Germany, founded by Felix Mendelssohn in 1843. After graduation he returned to Scotland to conduct the Choral and Orchestral Union (1880–87),

<sup>2</sup> Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Archives (hereafter RCS Archives), 1A/2/1, Board of Governors' Minute Book, 1847.

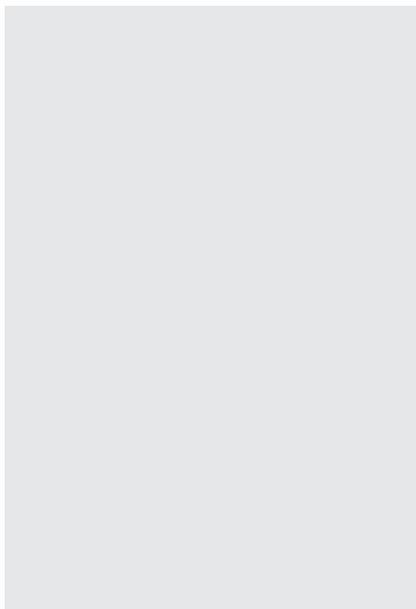


Plate 2 Henri Verbrugghen *c.*1900, Professor of Violin and de facto Head of Strings at the Glasgow Athenaeum. RCS Archives, PA/3/1/29.

distinguishing himself not only as a conductor and composer in his own right, but also as a director who brought international musical talent to Glasgow.

Among those Macbeth appointed to the Athenaeum School of Music was Henri Verbrugghen, a violinist and graduate of the Brussels Conservatorium where he studied under Jenő Hubay and Eugène Ysaÿe. Verbrugghen helped to cement the European conservatoire-style education that Macbeth sought to establish in Glasgow, the first of its kind in Scotland (Plate 2). Verbrugghen's reputation as a violinist (he gave the UK premiere of the Sibelius Violin Concerto in D Minor) and educator led to his invitation in 1915 to become founding director of the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music (now the Sydney Conservatorium of Music)<sup>3</sup> and the conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

In 1929 the growth in importance and prestige of the Glasgow Athenaeum School of Music led to the evolution of the Scottish National Academy of Music (SNAM), under the direction of Newcastle-born William Gillies Whittaker,

<sup>3</sup> In 2015, the Sydney Conservatorium produced a centenary publication which features material drawn from the RCS Archives: see P. McCallum and J. Simonds (eds), *The Centenary of the Con: A History of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music 1915–2015* (Sydney, 2015), 22–3.

a notable conductor and Bach scholar. Under his tenure, the Glasgow Bach Choir reached its apogee and the SNAM's Bach Cantata Choir was born. The records of both choirs are now held by the RCS's archives,<sup>4</sup> along with the personal correspondence of William Gillies Whittaker (notable correspondents include Ezra Pound and Jean Sibelius).

The Glasgow Bach Choir was one of many which had begun to establish themselves across Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The London Bach Choir gave the UK premiere of Bach's Mass in B Minor<sup>5</sup> at a time when the German composer was little known in Europe, and in the English-speaking world in particular. A revival of Bach's compositions can be traced to an 1829 performance of the *St Matthew Passion* conducted by Felix Mendelssohn; the first since its premiere in Bach's own lifetime in 1724.<sup>6</sup> Mendelssohn was evangelical about Bach, and the *St Matthew Passion* in particular, as his friend the German theatre actor, playwright and tenor Eduard Devrient later remembered:

My argument was, that having all of us the conviction that the 'Matthew Passion' was the grandest and most important of German musical works, it was our duty to revive it to the world for general edification ... We were speaking of that strange chance that, just a hundred years after the work could have been last heard, it should now again see the light. 'And to think,' said Felix triumphantly, standing still in the middle of the Opern Platz, 'that it should be an actor and a Jew that gives back to the people the greatest of Christian works.'<sup>7</sup>

Devrient sang the part of Christus, and a happy coincidence places this revival performance a few short weeks prior to Mendelssohn's visit to Scotland which inspired the latter composer's *Hebrides Overture*, also known as 'Fingal's Cave', completed the following year and premiered in London in 1832.

Mendelssohn's advocacy for Bach's music proved to be pivotal to his rediscovery. By the end of the nineteenth century Bach's reputation was such that his complete oeuvre was brought into print, spanning some 46 volumes and taking nearly 50 years to complete. The series is now known as the *Bach-Gesellschaft-Ausgabe* and a complete first edition, hand-annotated by Sir Donald Francis Tovey (an Edinburgh-based musical analyst, writer, teacher, composer and conductor), is held by the RCS's archives.<sup>8</sup>

William Gillies Whittaker retired as Principal of the SNAM and Gardiner Professor of Music at the University of Glasgow (both roles were contiguous at the time) in 1941. His replacement was organist and composer Sir Ernest

<sup>4</sup> <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb2607-bc/1-4> and <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb2607-bcc/1-2>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.thebachchoir.org.uk>.

<sup>6</sup> P. Radcliffe, *Mendelssohn* (London, 1976), 16.

<sup>7</sup> E. Devrient, *Meine Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy* (Leipzig, 1869; tr. N. Macfarren, London, 1869), 46-61.

<sup>8</sup> RCS Archives HD/2ff.

Bullock. In 1937, as organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey, Bullock was commissioned by Buckingham Palace to write the fanfare and arrange the national anthem for the coronation of King George VI,<sup>9</sup> and later for the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953.<sup>10</sup> Sir Ernest Bullock's collection of original manuscripts, including those composed and arranged for both coronations, are held by the RCS's archives.<sup>11</sup>

It was during Sir Ernest's tenure as Principal that the SNAM became the Royal Scottish Academy of Music (RSAM), an appellation which would persist until 1968 which saw the addition of 'and Drama', making the more familiar RSAMD. Drama tuition had long been associated with the institution since the Glasgow Athenaeum period. The first records of dramatic recitals are from 1886 in the old Athenaeum Theatre by members of the Glasgow Athenaeum Dramatic Club. Often recitals were limited to Shakespearean scenes and short soliloquies from the classical repertoire. The College of Dramatic Art, however, was not officially constituted until 1950, with formalised diplomas, and later degrees, then being offered.

In 2010, to mark their sixtieth anniversary, the RCS's archives began an oral history project aimed at collecting early memories of the College of Dramatic Art, a department of the RSAM run by Colin Chandler (director), Geoffrey Nethercott (voice) and Marie Pirie (movement). Alumnus John Cairney shared his recollections as the very first drama student to cross the RCS's threshold:

We were threatened by being denied admittance by an old fellow in a bowler hat and a wing collar holding up a placard saying 'Do Not Enter Here; Theatre is a Place for the Devil – Avoid Temptation'. As soon as I heard that I couldn't wait to get in! I mean, that's what I was after!<sup>12</sup>

The interview with John Cairney is the first of many planned *Reminiscence* events aimed at bringing the living memory of the institution into the archive while simultaneously offering public-facing events.

In 1962 the College added film and television courses to the curriculum under the supervision of John Groves, after whom its television studio was later named.

The College of Dramatic Art has left a rich archival legacy for the RCS including: over a thousand performance stills in various media (both black and white and colour photography, slides and negatives); annual directors' reports; prompt books from previous student performances (occupying 12 linear metres of rolling stack shelving); event programmes; press cutting reviews; and

<sup>9</sup> RCS Archives, EB/007ff.

<sup>10</sup> RCS Archives, EB/008–9.

<sup>11</sup> <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb2607-eb001-023>.

<sup>12</sup> Oral history recording with alumnus John Cairney on 19 December 2014. An edited version is available on the RCS's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyOi9NW-TpU>.

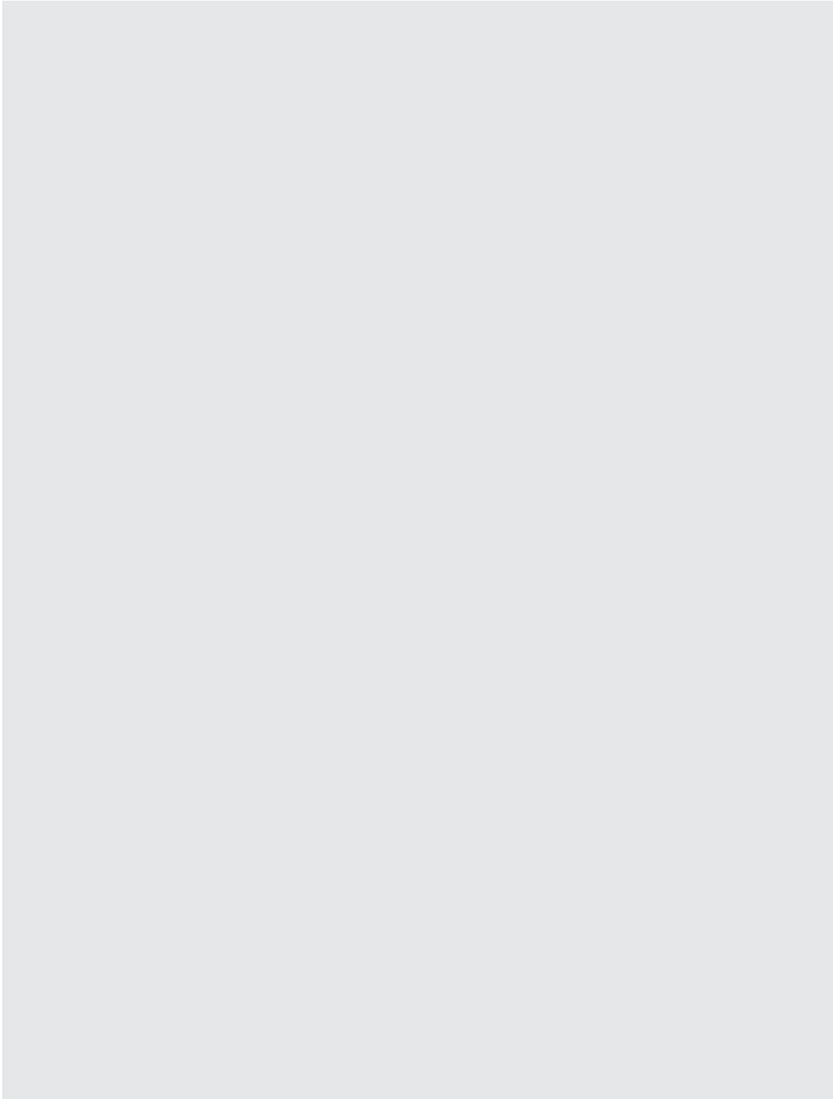


Plate 3 College of Dramatic Art production of *Beauty and the Beast* (1953) with Alex McAvoy and Nancy Mitchell.

extensive historical student records, which include individuals' measurements for the purposes of costume fittings (Plate 3).

The RCS's archives also keep the historical records of the institution, in particular historical finance, personnel and student records, many of which are under embargo because of the strictures of data protection legislation. All non-current personnel records have been transferred to the archive, as well as School of Music student records from 1904 to 1968 and School of Drama student records from inception to 2008. Student records for the Athenaeum School of Music prior to 1904 are no longer extant.

The archive's collection policy states that the RCS is interested in acquiring materials and records in all areas of performance art, and particularly, but not exclusively, those with a geographical pertinence to Scotland and the city of Glasgow. To this end, the extrinsic collections cover a wide range of performance genres including: classical music manuscript collections; programmes (many of which are hand-annotated by critics); stage designs; dance scores (i.e. choreographic notations and movement maps); historic and contemporary musical instruments; manuscripts of plays and poetry; and historically significant props and costumes.

One of the largest of the extrinsic collections is the Jimmy Logan Archive, which occupies 22 linear metres of archive shelving. Jimmy Logan (1928–2001) bequeathed his papers, music and performance ephemera to the RCS in his will and the collection includes a wealth of materials rich with research potential.

The Jimmy Logan Archive has been worked on by a number of volunteer cataloguers and archivists since falling under the curation of the RCS. Perhaps most significantly, Patrick Cadell CBE, erstwhile Scottish Keeper of the Records and leading advocate for the sector, created the first catalogue of the Jimmy Logan papers and music on Archives Hub in 2004.<sup>13</sup> This record was used as a template for all future cataloguing of archival collections when, ten years later, the archive department was formally instituted.

In January 2016 the Jimmy Logan Archive featured prominently in an exhibition within the RCS on the history of variety theatre performance in Scotland. Jimmy was known as a comic, singer and entertainer (as well as a theatrical impresario, composer and many other things besides) and his extensive collections provide an embarrassment of riches for exhibition. Chief among these is a portrait by artist June Crisfield Chapman depicting Jimmy as his alter ego, pantomime dame Lizzie Trotter.

The exhibition also featured some of the archive's lesser known extrinsic collections, specifically the Britannia Panopticon Music Hall Archive of A. E. Pickard Scrapbooks. Pickard, known as one of the last great eccentrics, purchased the old Britannia Music Hall on Glasgow's Argyle Street in 1906, renaming it the 'Panopticon'. The Pickard scrapbooks contain press clippings and correspondence relating to the shows and features of the music hall,

<sup>13</sup> <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb2607-jl001-133>.

including trained animals, Victorian freak shows and circus acts. The Britannia Panopticon deposited their archive with the RCS in 2014 before embarking upon a digitisation project for the collection in association with the University of Glasgow. All of the scrapbooks are now available to view online and some have already featured on the RCS's Whittaker Library Facebook page as our archival 'Object of the Month'.<sup>14</sup>

The RCS's profile as a centre of excellence in brass pedagogy is supported by some of the world's most eminent collections in this field, most notably the Robert Minter Collection of largely seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music manuscripts of rare and obscure trumpet repertory; the Friedel Keim Collection of original research into the history of trumpeters throughout the world, which also includes a wealth of personal correspondence; the Enderby Jackson archive of nineteenth-century Crystal Palace Brass Band Championships; the Edward H. Tarr Collection of scholarly materials including over a hundred original urtext editions of brass music, and most recently the library of the late Swedish musicologist Reine Dahlqvist. These are all underpinned by the world-class John Webb Collection of historic and contemporary musical instruments acquired by the RCS in 2012.

Antithetical to many archives services, the RCS's historic musical instruments are a living collection which contributes both to the student experience and to the performance output of the institution. A necessary balance is struck between the careful conservation of sensitive materials and the exigencies of historically informed performance, which allows both performers and listeners to gain an 'authentic' reading and experience of early music.

In the four years since the establishment of the archive store and search room facility, the RCS's holdings have grown in both scope and extent. The archives continue to attract donations and deposits from performers, directors, critics, designers, researchers and educators in the creative arts sector.

The extent of the RCS's collections, both intrinsic institutional records and also extrinsic performance art and research collections, necessitates that this article can only touch on a small percentage of the archive's holdings. That said, it is hoped that the elucidation offered above will provide some insight into the role archives can play in recording the cultural memory of Scotland from the perspective of its national conservatoire.

For more information on the RCS's archives and collections please visit the 'Library and IT' section under 'About RCS' on the institution's website<sup>15</sup> or contact the archivist directly at [archives@rcs.ac.uk](mailto:archives@rcs.ac.uk).

<sup>14</sup> <http://pickardpapers.gla.ac.uk/items/browse?collection=11>.

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.rcs.ac.uk/about\\_us/libraryandit/archives/](https://www.rcs.ac.uk/about_us/libraryandit/archives/).