

MUSEUM REPORT 2020/21

Collections Committee

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Overview 2020/2021 [GRR]

The past year has been memorable and unique in many respects. According to our original redevelopment plans, this should have been the final year of our NLHF-supported redevelopment, leading to the launch of all our new spaces and public engagement activities, including those for general visitors and formal and informal education programmes. September 2021 was originally intended to signify the completion of the one-year operational test of the new structure and mark the formal end of our redevelopment grant.

The impact of the pandemic has led to rescheduling a period spanning almost 18 months in the completion and launch of the project. The pandemic has imposed major changes, and in some cases long-term suspension, of some of the public-facing activities that had been planned and developed over the past four years. All changes have been discussed and agreed with the projects' sponsors and we are now in the process of producing revised delivery plans where required – particularly in the field of visitor engagement and financial sustainability – to reflect the current and expected changes in visitors' behaviour that are likely to affect us in the long term.

However, the impact of this disruption was contained due to the fact that the project had not yet entered its public phase when social restrictions came in place. As a result, the increase in costs we've experienced has been moderate compared to many other museums of similar size, and there has been no significant loss of income at this time. As a result, the feasibility and long-term deliverability of the project have not been compromised.

This is particularly true for the capital redevelopment work, which has continued successfully – thanks to outstanding support from RCM Estates and Projects – and will be almost completed by the time of this year's meeting. The Museum galleries, the Weston Discovery Centre and the Performance Studio were all completed and delivered in 2020 and the display of the permanent gallery was completed last December, with the exception of the digital interactive elements that are being installed in the coming weeks. In the meantime, the construction of the Wolfson Centre in Music and Material Culture has commenced and is on track for completion before summer, enabling us to retrieve the vast majority of the Museum collections before the beginning of the new academic year.

Plans are now being developed to open the gallery to external visitors by the beginning of October 2021, while a preliminary digital launch is planned for the 16th June. Several dissemination events have already started taking shape and will include digital presentations at the annual meetings of the American Musical Instrument Society and of the Committee of Music Museums of the International Council of Museums in early September. Other launch initiatives are currently being developed to build up audiences and strengthen our professional and institutional network as we head towards the reopening.

In the meantime, the outstanding national and international value of our Museum and Library collections has been ratified by Arts Council England through the attribution of Designated Status, a coveted achievement currently attributed to only about 130 of the 2,500 public heritage collections existing in the country.

Conversely, and for different reasons, the impact of the past year on our public engagement, digitisation and documentation, and conservation programmes has been much heavier and, in some cases, will require long-term changes in our delivery plans. Over the past 12 months our audiences have been exclusively digital and we have launched a new webpage of online resources for researchers, families and schools (<https://www.rcm.ac.uk/museum/digitalresources/>). Increased efforts have been focused on our Twitter account @RCMMuseum, which is currently our only dedicated social channel, reaching over 2,600 followers. This has proven particularly successful during lockdown periods, with some tweets reaching over 75,000 impressions and 6,000 engagements. Further engagement with social channels will be required in the long-term and we are exploring Spotify Playlists and Instagram as the two most obvious channels of development.

At the same time, school programmes, dissemination, consultation and evaluation activities were all suspended this year, and we are keeping in touch with professional organisations in the museum sector to plan for a restart in the new financial year. The Museum is leading a research project with three RCM PhD students in Music and Material Culture to analyse long term re-planning by peer museums in 14 other countries, as part of a broader exercise which will lead to a revised Learning and Participation plan, for which we shall seek external financial support (see later, under 'Forward Planning').

Our digitisation plan was also slowed down by the restrictions to travel and access to the building, as retrieval of items from off-site storage, preparatory work with volunteers and student placements become impossible. Moreover, our partner institutions (such as the Internet Archive) remained closed until very recently. Plans are now in place to restart the programme before summer.

Finally, our conservation plan had to be generally revised, as only collection monitoring work was allowed for most of the past year, while regular conservation, retrieval of collection items, retuning of the instruments in the gallery were all in some way impacted by various restrictions.

The Museum team has also been reconfigured to reflect the change from the redevelopment to the public phase of the project. The position of Research Assistant, as well as the internships in Learning and Participation and Digitisation were all closed, while the team currently consists of a Curator (Full Time), an Administrator (FT), a Learning and Participation Officer (FT, currently replaced by maternity cover PT 3 days/week), a Digitisation and Documentation Officer (FT), a Conservator (PT 1 day/week). Recruitment for part time gallery invigilators and new volunteers should be announced by summer, as well as a call for a one-year research fellowship to start in September.

Forward Plan

The next year marks the launch of the public phase of the museum redevelopment. This consists in a major shift of our primary focus from preparatory activities, such as design, construction and content development, to the delivery of our visitor engagement, education and communication programmes.

The activities leading to, and immediately following the Museum launch will have a key role in our placement in a recognisable position for visitors, but also for funding bodies and other institutions – including, but not limited to, other Museums and research centres. These will be the primary focus of our activity until autumn 2021, including several targeted digital events, aimed at reaching professional, academic and business partners (such as tour operators) in the UK and abroad. A physical launch and the opening to the public is planned for early October 2021.

Our visitor engagement strategy is under constant review, to address the specific circumstances in which museums are operating under social restrictions, which are expected to have a medium-term impact on the sector for at least the next three years.

The following phase – starting in October – also includes the launch of some of the programmes that have been collaboratively developed over the past four years for both formal and informal education. Several of the programmes specifically include RCM students, either individually (offering support to performance and research projects) or enriching our educational offer with public-facing activities, such as performances and a composition festival. The refinement of our operation plan in relation to all other departments of the RCM will be a key element of this phase.

Our temporary exhibition programme will start in October, with a first event focusing on Musical Portraits in Bohemian London (1870–1930), with a strong emphasis on the role of the RCM in a broader cultural context.

The increased focus on digital engagement, embraced by the museum sector over the past year, is leading to a revision of our current online resources and channels, including the use of social media and of online repositories, keeping in mind the balance between academic research and public engagement beyond academia which is at the core of the identity of the museum.

The conservation programme is transitioning from a focus on the items on display, to a long-term conservation plan which will include regular and preventive care of the 15,000 items that are in the collection, but also provide a roadmap to guide grant applications and the allocation of resources in the years to come.

The digitisation programme will restart before summer and focus on c. 6,000 items that still require basic inventory and digitisation. The work is undertaken with the support of volunteers and a partnership with the Internet Archive.

These two areas of conservation and digitisation will also be able to rely on the dedicated spaces created in the new Wolfson Centre in Music and Material Culture which is going to be delivered by summer 2021. After the completion of construction and fit-out, and testing of the climate control and security system, the new space will allow us to retrieve the majority of our collections currently stored off-site and launch a programme of object-based learning starting from the academic year 2021/2022, also supporting the work of PhD students who are already working on collection-related topics.

The Centre will be launched separately with an event targeted to the different audience – a specifically academic one – that is likely to engage with it in the future.

The retrieval of the collection – and the support of a specifically recruited, time limited, collection management officer – will also support a general audit of the collection, to be completed before the end of the year.

Finally, the upcoming year will mark the end of the financial support from the NLHF and will require the launch of our new business and sustainability model, which is being updated to reflect the challenges and opportunities caused by the pandemic.

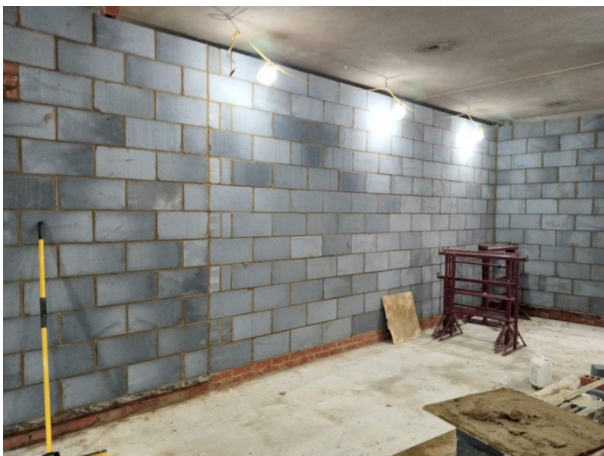
Capital Redevelopment

Gallery



We spent the final months of 2020 putting the finishing touches on the permanent display in the Museum's Lower Gallery. The final group of free-standing instruments was delivered at the end of November, marking the long-awaited reunion of these objects at the Royal College of Music. The mounting concept has been developed in collaboration between the Museum and ZMMA, and expertly delivered by Richard Rogers. Over the past months, we began testing audio-visual interactives, installed graphic design elements, sequenced light settings, and mounted a temporary display for the shop.

Wolfson Research Centre for Music and Material Culture



The RCM Estate - Project Team ushered in the new year by breaking ground on the WCMM during the first week of January. We have employed Woodlands Commercial to oversee ground works and construction of the site, which they expect to complete by the beginning of May. In a time when so many building projects are enduring ongoing delays, it has been immensely energising to witness the progress of this site.

Bruynzeel Storage Systems has been procured to fit out bespoke shelves and racking for collections items. Current timeline projections indicate that mobilisation of the WCMM should last approximately 8 weeks and that the facility will be fit for purpose by the end of June 2021. We are also in the final stages of confirming technical and digital requirements for the WCMM and look forward to

maximising its potential as a world-class space for object-based learning, digitisation, conservation and independent research.

Collections

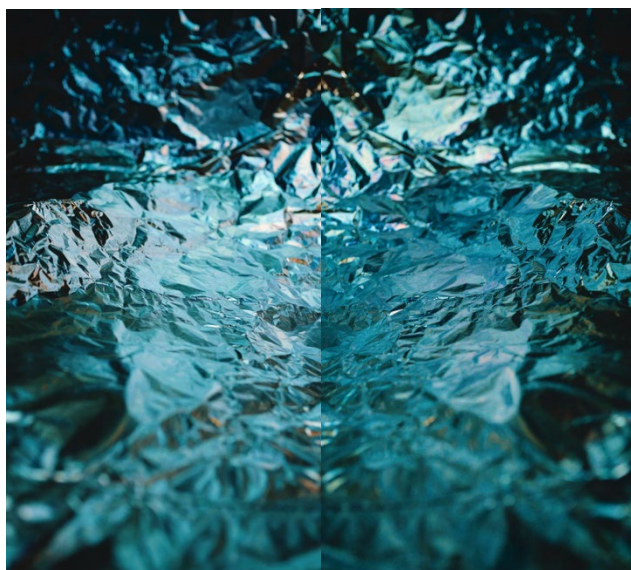
New Acquisitions [GRR, RM]

Key acquisitions include:

- Thomas Hawker, *Portrait of Mary Harvey, Lady Dering (1629-1704)*, 1683. The painting was part of the family collection of the late Countess Mountbatten of Burma and portrays the first woman whose music was published in the UK. It was purchased at auction at Sotheby's thanks to the generous support of the ArtFund, the V&A Purchase Fund and a personal contribution by the RCM Director.



- *throughfracturedmirrors* (2020) – the first acquisition of a digital artwork in the Museum's collections, now installed in the Museum's lobby area. Completed by former RCM students Matthew Lomax and Connor D'Netto, the work consists of a multi-channel video and sound installation, lasting approximately 20 minutes.



Cataloguing and Digitisation [RM]

Cataloguing and digitisation works were heavily impacted by the pandemic. On-site works were severely reduced, and digitisation partnerships with the Internet Archive and ArenaPAL have been placed on hold until at least 2021. Newly catalogued works include items from the Vanity Fair collection of prints depicting 19th century musicians.

Public Access [RM]

Circa 8,850 records from the Museum collections are now available through the online collections' catalogue (<http://museumcollections.rcm.ac.uk>). This was developed by Surface Impression through a capital project funded by the RCM and is regularly maintained and updated.

The Museum records are also available through several other specialised platforms that increase impact and visibility through clustering of contents. These include:

- MIMO (<http://www.mimo-international.com>): 851 records of musical instruments are available through this platform, which is the largest international resource specialised on musical instruments in museum collections. It currently includes ca. 64,000 instruments, 13,000 of which were harvested from the MINIM project.
- Google Arts and Culture: over 1,880 items are available through this platform, as well as 11 digital exhibitions developed by the Museum and the Library teams. The current Street View of the College is slated for an update, once restrictions are lifted further, to reflect the changes to the RCM buildings.
- MINIM-UK: 897 instruments from the Museum collections are available through the MINIM-UK platform (<http://minim.ac.uk>), the largest national resource for musical instruments in public collections, conceived and delivered by the RCM Museum between 2015 and 2018 and currently including over 22,697 instruments.
- Art UK: The Museum was one of the first UK venues to join the Art UK Sculpture Project. The Museum's collection of sculptures is available to explore on the resource, in the context of thousands of other national cultural institutions. The RCM now shares 162 artworks through this platform.
- ArenaPAL: c.5,000 images are available through this commercial platform that has been managing copyright fees and authorisation on behalf of the Museum since 2014. Images from the collections have appeared in recent documentaries on Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and in BBC Music magazine.

Accreditation [LH]

The Museum received full Accreditation from the Arts Council of England in 2013. Following its closure in 2016, it was awarded Provisional Accreditation status. The Museum's Provisional Accreditation status was renewed for the fourth time in March 2020. In light of the coronavirus pandemic, ACE has extended all current accreditation awards for an additional 12 months. We are preparing the documentation required to re-apply for Full Accreditation status in March 2022.

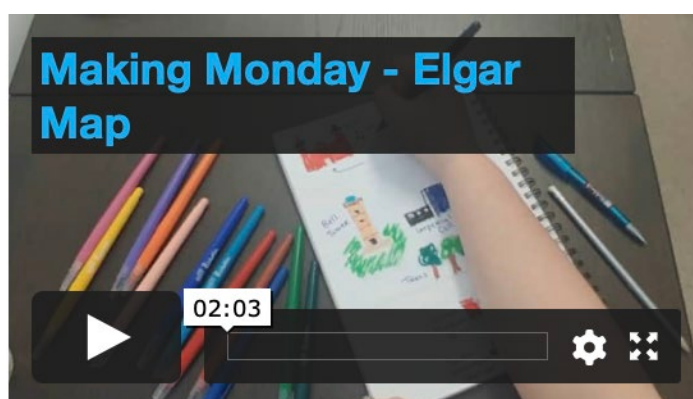
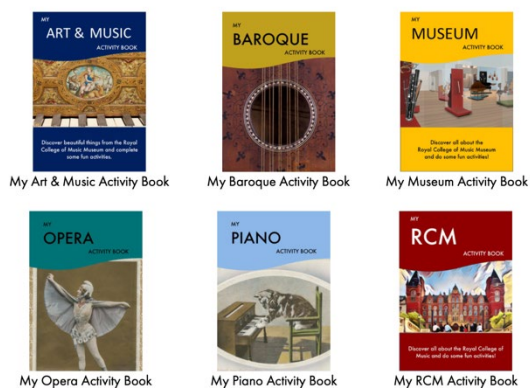
Designation [LH]

The Royal College of Music's internationally renowned collection of musical materials has been awarded prestigious Designated status by Arts Council England (ACE). Awarded to collections that form a vital part of England's culture and artistic heritage, the Designation Scheme is a mark of distinction celebrating a collection's outstanding cultural value, uniqueness and national importance.

The Royal College of Music collection comprises over one million items, including 15,000 instruments, portraits, images and engravings held by the Royal College of Music Museum. The remaining material is held in the RCM Library and includes manuscripts, prints, letters, concert programmes and books. Designation highlights the important cultural value of these items, which give fascinating insight into the past, present and future of music.

Public Engagement and Dissemination [LH/JL/AMB/MK]

Digital Learning Resources – Families



Following the transition to remote working in March 2020, the Learning team focused on producing digital learning content for family audiences, producing 29 new digital learning resources that include 'hands-on' materials (activity books, colouring pages) and craft video tutorials ('Making Monday' activity series).

These resources were released via the Museum's Twitter account throughout the spring and summer months. The 'Making Monday' video series was subsequently converted into downloadable craft packs, reformatted using the Marketing team's design pack (along with activity books, colouring pages, and museum poems) and published on the RCM website in March 2021. The Museum Learning Intern also developed four gallery trails that families will be able to use when the new museum is open to visitors later this year.

In October 2020, the Museum team collaborated with the Sparks team on a series of online learning courses titled 'Singing the Museum to Life.' In April 2021, the Museum teamed up with Sparks team once more on the 'Sparks Explorers' online programme. The course took inspiration from key objects in the Museum's collection, which were then transformed into a series of dramatic workshops and creative craft activities.

What is a museum?

A museum is a building that has a collection of objects inside, either on display or in storage.



Some objects were found in nature.



Other objects were created by people.

Museums often focus on one thing - like art, science, or history. At the Royal College of Music, our museum is all about... you guessed it! MUSIC!



If you had a museum, what one thing would your museum be about?

My Museum is all about...

How do museums work?

Most museums have exhibitions that people can visit. In exhibitions, objects are organised in a certain way and explained so that we can learn about the world and our history.



People visit museums to...



...look at objects on display



...and take part in an activity, like a guided tour.

What kinds of things do you like to do in a museum?

Teacher Ambassador Project

Following the Teacher Ambassador Learning Day at the Royal College of Music (November 2019), we have used participants' feedback to create three educational sessions and three bespoke gallery tours for KS3 and KS4 students. In addition to the work generated from this event, we have also created a guided museum tour targeting KS1 and KS2 students. Following the creation of a Digital Resources page on the Museum webpages, we aim to upload content for at least one topic per key stage in order support curriculum learning and encourage schools to engage with our collections, as well as learning resources for families.

Digital Learning Resources – Schools

In autumn/winter 2020, the Learning team created a suite of downloadable school resources that included sessions for EYFS, KS1, KS2, KS3&4, and SEND students. In collaboration with the Marketing team, we have created a new template and design scheme for museum resources that aligns with resources produced by the Sparks programme.

Expanding the orchestra

Romantic music (c1810 – 1900) is all about **emotion, passion and drama**.

Artists, poets and composers were trying to portray **feelings** like love, hate, loss, betrayal and joy, and music was often used to evoke **stories**.

Romantic composers were a lot less bothered about following rules. They played around with **tempo** and **tempo**, using **rubato** – slowing down and speeding down - to make the music sound more expressive.

The **orchestra grew to be much larger** in the romantic period. Wind, brass and percussion sections got bigger and louder. All of these sections made a really loud sound, so the string sections had to grow too just to match the volume.



Ludwig van Beethoven is a composer that bridges the gap between the classical and romantic periods. He is most famous for his 9 symphonies and writing a lot of music for the piano.

Why did woodwind and brass instruments change?

Romantic composers like Tchaikovsky, Grieg and Brahms wanted to add more notes to their chords to form **extended chords** and use **dissonance** to make their music more expressive.



Tchaikovsky

Grieg

Brahms

On the left are some musical instruments from the Royal College of Music Museum, and on the right are modern woodwind and brass instruments you would see in an orchestra today.

Can you see the difference the early and modern versions of these instruments?



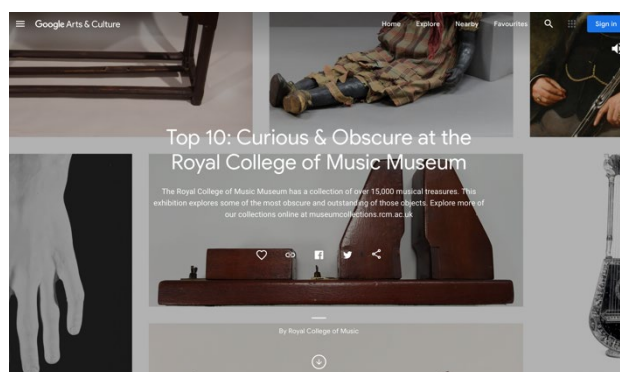
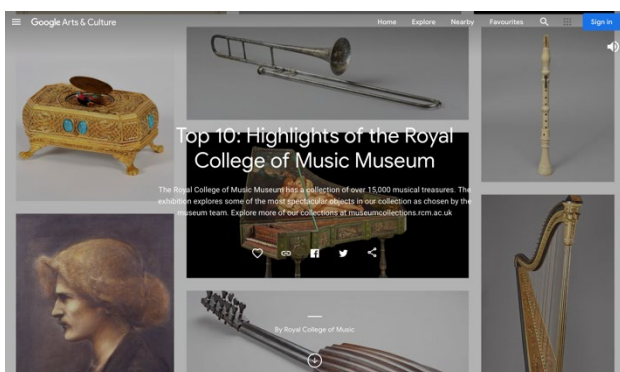
Musical instrument makers began to make more valves and keys for these instruments. Valves and keys helped these instruments play more **chromatic** notes.

Digital exhibitions

Our digital exhibitions continue to be popular, with many users accessing our collections through the Google Arts & Culture platform. This year, we launched a series of exhibitions to raise awareness of our collections in the lead-up to the public launch programme.

Digital exhibitions published in 2020-2021:

- 'Top 10: Highlights of the Royal College of Music Museum' (May 2020)
- 'Top 10: Curious & Obscure at the Royal College of Music Museum' (May 2020)
- Three digital 'Stories' exploring the theme of musical celebrity (April 2021)



Temporary exhibitions programme

The Museum's temporary exhibitions programme will launch with *Musical Portraits in Bohemian London (1870–1930)*, an exhibition that celebrates the relationships and accomplishments produced within a close community of musicians and artists based in South Kensington. The exhibition draws almost exclusively on the RCMM's collections and will bring together a robust selection of portraits, original drawings, photographs, musical scores and instruments. We have procured a graphic designer and secured a creative partnership with Morris & Co. to maximise the exhibition's visual impact and broad appeal. The exhibition is scheduled to be mounted in September.

Volunteering, internships and placements

Volunteers

On-site inventory, cataloguing and digitisation have been placed on hold while remote working conditions have been enforced throughout the 2020-2021 academic year. We look forward to integrating a wide range of opportunities for volunteers into the day-to-day operations plans for the Museum and Wolfson Research Centre for Music and Material Culture.

Interns

Maura Kalthoff completed her tenure as Learning Intern in March 2021. Maura was a key contributor in the team's strategic pivot to digital engagement resources shortly after lockdown measures were introduced, devising a broad range of creative activities and video segments for young and family audiences.

Communication [LH/JL]



The RCM Museum's Twitter account has attracted more than 400 additional followers this year. Our Twitter account now has over 2,600 followers with a high rate of interaction – our tweets have an average of 116,649 impressions and 3,129 engagements each quarter.

In February 2021, we invited Britten Pears Arts to 'takeover' our Twitter account as part of LGBT+ History Month. Our Twitter account received a noticeable increase in followers because of this creative partnership, and we are keen to explore similar initiatives as part of our future communications strategy. Social media collaborations with other creative organisations will allow us to acquire resources and followers across multiple platforms, while also providing opportunities for meaningful dialogue and positive publicity.

Our followers continue to respond positively to and make independent enquiries about our social media content. These informal interactions show that our followers are eager to learn more about our collections, especially throughout the pandemic, when accessing information in person has posed significant challenges. As we move towards reopening our physical spaces to the public, digital content will remain a vital means of building our audiences' anticipation of visiting the new museum later in the year.

We hope to use additional social media channels to build the museum's online presence, as well as develop a wider online audience. In addition to Twitter, we are exploring the possibility of establishing a presence on Instagram, a platform which has more welcoming functions and interface opportunities for the museum to showcase its collections and interact with new audiences. Throughout the pandemic, Instagram has emerged as an integral tool used by museums around the world to engage with prospective visitors. Followers on museums' Instagram accounts have increased tremendously, and it has overtaken Twitter as a more popular platform within the cultural sector.

We are also continuing to develop more visually appealing content in different formats. In the run-up to the museum's public launch programme, we hope to engage younger followers (20–35 age range) to help cultivate a fresher image of the museum online. At the same time, we are planning digital content which is family friendly. 'Behind-the-scenes' content illustrating the museum's redevelopment journey also has the potential to be used as engaging digital content. Social media partnerships with other museums (as mentioned above) forms another potential source of diverse and attention-grabbing digital content.

Loans

Lockdown restrictions and mass museum closures resulted in the RCM Museum's loans programme being put on hold for most of the year. We look forward to resuming our role as a key lender for museums in the UK and abroad following the relaxation of current Covid-19 restrictions.

Conservation [SC]

Conservation Projects/Highlights

Projects were impacted by lockdown restrictions, as well as the fact that the Conservator role transitioned to a part-time contract in March 2020 (initially 0.4 FTE from March to December and then 0.2 FTE from January).

Conservation project highlights include the following:

The conservation of the Clavicytherium, RCM0001, c. 1480

The surface of the instrument and case were cleaned and consolidated. Some of the missing decorative elements were replaced, as well as some keys and touch plates.



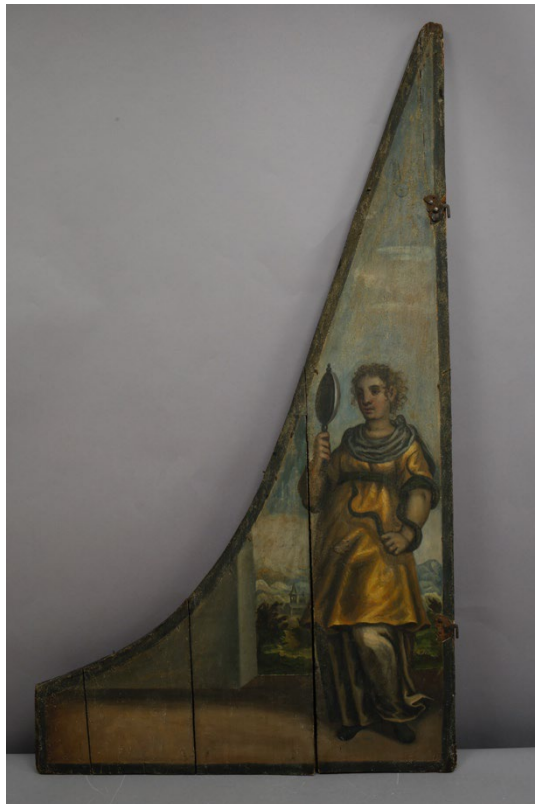
Conservation of the Cittern, RCM0048, 16th century

The instrument was missing all of the pegs, as well as the rose, bridge and strings. New pegs were made by a luthier (Jonathan Hill), and a parchment rose was commissioned from a rose maker in Italy. A new bridge was also made. The decisions about the rose, pegs and bridge were informed by similar instruments at the Musée de La Musique in Paris. The surface was cleaned, and the paint losses retouched (photos on next page).



Collaborations with Conservation

- Installation of the new museum display was completed with the assistance of **Richard Rogers Conservation**.
- The Clavicytherium lid (inner side) was conserved by paintings conservator **Lucy Odlin**.



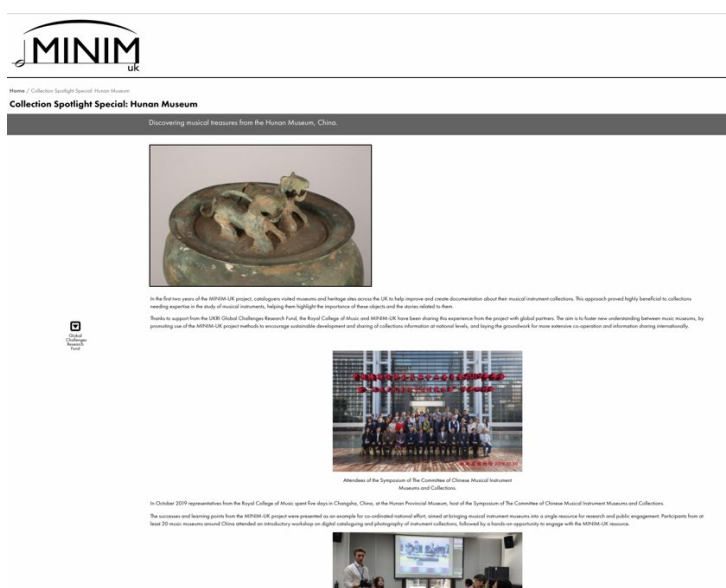
Employment Opportunities

Ellie Clark (Collections Management Intern) completed her internship in May 2020. During her time at the RCM, Ellie worked on record management of conservation documentation, updating approximately 800 records (of the circa 1300 obtained during the 2016 survey) and completing condition checks for the paintings on display in college.

Research and Knowledge Exchange

MINIM-UK Project [RM]

In May 2020, MINIM-UK published the results of its partnership with the Hunan Museum (Changsha, China), supported by the UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund. The outputs included 180 published records of historic Chinese instruments spanning 3,500 years of Chinese musical history, generated using the cataloguing and photography principles shared by the MINIM-UK project with the Committee of Chinese Musical Instrument Museums and Collections (CCMI) during the visit to the Hunan Museum in October 2019.



The MINIM-UK platform is being piloted as a digital repository by the arts charity Drake Music, a leading national organisation working in music, disability and technology. Drake Music plan to use MINIM-UK to publish records on instruments held in their physical holdings. These instruments are available for lending to musicians with special accessibility needs, and their records will include images, audio, and video. The inclusion of schematics will also enable makers to reproduce and experiment with the published technologies.

The resource has also been updated with new acquisitions and content from the Royal Academy of Music, and the Cobbe Collection. At the time of writing, MINIM-UK hosts 22,697 historic instrument records from 226 venues.

Research Strategy and Outputs [AMB]

The museum continues to deliver the key goals laid out in its research strategy. The team now has access to a range of academic journals relating to their individual areas and are being encouraged to read and share these with a view to developing individual outputs and foster a research-active approach across the various areas of activity. Research-active members of the team are working on a number of edited collections, journal articles and book chapters.

Publications

- G. Rossi Rognoni, Carl Engel (1818-1882), in *Through the Eyes and Ears of Musical Instrument Collectors (1860-1940)*, ed. by Christina Linsenmeyer (Abingdon: Routledge, expected 2022). Cover of the Digital Humanities and Musical Heritage programme.
- G. Rossi Rognoni, 'Preserving Functionality: Keeping Artefacts "Alive" in Museums', *Curator: the Museum Journal*, special issue on Sonic Museums (2019)
- Anna Maria Barry, 'An Opera Singer's Gothic Fiction: The Autobiographies of Sims Reeves', *Journal of Musicological Research* (2019), 38:3-4, 233-252
- Anna Maria Barry, 'Lady sings the blues? Tragedy, Autobiography and Reassessment', *Billie Holiday: Essays on the Artistry and Legacy*, Eds. Michael Perez and Jessica McKee (McFarland Press, 2019), 38-53
- Michael Brown, Anna Maria Barry, Joanne Begiata (Eds.), *Military Masculinities in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Manchester University Press, 2019)
- Anna Maria Barry, 'Charles Incedon: A Singing Sailor on the Georgian Stage', *Military Masculinities in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Eds. Michael Brown, Anna Maria Barry, Joanne Begiato (Manchester University Press, 2019), 82-101
- Anna Maria Barry and Dr. Verity Burke, 'Behind the Mask: Death Masks, Celebrity and the Laurence Hutton Collection' (to be published in *Victoriographies*, 2022)
- Anna Maria Barry, 'From the Stage to the Page: Male Opera Singers and the Nineteenth-Century Press', *Work and the Nineteenth-Century Press: Living Work for Living People*, Eds. Andrew King, Fiona Snailham and Elizabeth Tilley (Routledge, 2022)
- Anna Maria Barry, 'Framing Ethel Smyth: Portraiture, Music and Suffrage' in *Ethel Smyth, Women's Suffrage, and Opera from The Wreckers to The Boatswain's Mate*, Ed. Christopher Wiley (Boydell & Brewer, 2022)