

Stories and Lessons
from the World's
Leading Opera,
Orchestra Librarians,
and Music Archivists:
North and South America

Volume 1

Patrick Lo
Robert Sutherland
Wei-En Hsu
Russ Girsberger

**Stories and Lessons from the World's
Leading Opera, Orchestra Librarians,
and Music Archivists, Volume 1**

“In every orchestra where I have had the pleasure to be Music Director, the librarian has always been a musical assistant to me. I have tried to give them all the benefit of complete freedom in their work and my door was always open for any advice they have asked me for. I have also appreciated their advice and the work of all these wonderful ‘assistants’ whether in Montreal, Los Angeles, New York, Munich, Israel, and now in Florence where I have been and am still in contact with the library on a daily basis. Each and every one of them deserve my congratulations and gratefulness for their wonderful work.”

Zubin Mehta

Music Director Emeritus, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra
Conductor Emeritus, Los Angeles Philharmonic



Maestro Zubin Mehta.
(Source: © Winfried Hösl)

“The Symphony Orchestras and Opera Houses of the world all have a largely invisible force at the center of their operations, a force without which they could not function: the orchestral librarian and musical archivist. Yet this essential and highly important role is filled by persons whom the public rarely sees and almost never has occasion to applaud.

This marvelous compendium, with contributions from some of the leading lights amongst classical music’s librarians, illuminates, often with delightful humor, what they do, why they are absolutely essential, and how their libraries function as the kitchen, nerve center, and institutional memory of the world’s great symphony orchestras and opera houses.”

James Conlon

Music Director, Los Angeles Opera



Maestro James Conlon.
(Source: © Bonnie Perkinson)

“As a composer who has had many major orchestral and operatic premieres, I have been especially lucky to have had wonderful librarians who were most helpful assisting me through these bumpy processes. As a conductor, I dare to say that a knowledgeable librarian is an integral part for the excellence and success of any performance. Thus, it is extremely gratifying to learn the insights of these unsung heroes and heroines of the classical music industry, especially when now we begin seeing the light at the end of this long, dark tunnel of the COVID-19 Pandemic, when the world is poised to reset and restart our artistic mission.”

Bright Sheng (盛宗亮)

The Leonard Bernstein Distinguished University Professor of Music
School of Music, Theater and Dance
University of Michigan



Maestro Bright Sheng

“What a wonderful idea to highlight the people and their work which is probably the most important part of an orchestral performance that the audience usually cannot witness. The accomplishments of orchestral librarians are probably the most influential parts to a performance without holding a musical instrument! As the scores are the gates to the wonderful worlds that the composers created, it is so important to us performers to have scores that lead the way, give us an inspirational first impression of a work, accompany us through the adventures of exploring the musical possibilities, all the way until the final touches of inspiration in a performance on stage. I am extremely grateful for all the immaculate and indispensable work we receive from our wonderful librarians, and am so happy that in this very book, their essential work of taking care of the books containing the musical stories that we musicians want to tell, get to shine in the deserved spotlight.”

Daishin Kashimoto

Concertmaster, Berlin Philharmonic



Daishin Kashimoto

“When I think of our Staatskapelle Dresden Music Library, I first of all think of the complexity of the tasks they have to manage. It’s a constant challenge to provide, arrange, and modify the scores for concerts, recordings, operas, ballets, and, last but not least, for the studio theatre—often under considerable time pressure, too. I perceive it as a gift with what quality, meticulous care, and rapidity this work is done. Despite an often-extensive workload, the willingness to support us musicians to the full is always there. Agnes Thiel and Vincent Marbach succeed in doing this above all with their very empathetic way of communicating. A heartfelt thank you to them both!

Volker Stegmann

Assistant Principal Trumpet, Staatskapelle Dresden



Volker Stegmann

“As musicians, we are immensely grateful to the librarians of Bayerischer Rundfunk, who look after the Münchner Rundfunkorchester, Chor and Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks. Their competence, flexibility and professionalism in coordinating between artists, publishers and various archives is indispensable to the success of every concert we play.

Please enjoy browsing this entertaining compendium of the challenging and sometimes funny events that take place behind the scenes in preparation for your beloved concerts.

Thank you again to the librarians of Bayerischer Rundfunk for making all this possible!!”

Tobias Steymans

Principal Concertmaster, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra
[Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks]



From left to right: Tobias Steymans (Principal Concertmaster), Hilde Harrer (Proof Reader), Michael Fritsch (Senior Librarian). (Source: © BR/Markus Konvalin)

“As the General Director of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, I am proud and delighted that our two music librarians have been acknowledged in this volume. One cannot emphasize enough on the important and indispensable work, yet so invisible to many, they contribute towards the production processes of our opera and ballet (and concerts). I highly appreciate the competence, patience and flexibility they hold in their professional interaction leading to a successful artistic outcome. I hope you will enjoy reading their stories.”

Gita Kadambi

General Director, Finnish National Opera and Ballet



Gita Kadambi

“Ever since the founding of the orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic Historical Archives have been of inestimable importance as an essential cornerstone of its artistic identity. We take great pride in the fact that since 1842, the archives have collected and preserved important documents and precious memorabilia. The archives bear witness to the orchestra’s eventful history and document its unique legacy and the high standard of quality to which the ensemble has adhered since its inception. The Historical Archives make a valuable contribution to Philharmonic endeavors and represent an indispensable repository of Viennese musical tradition from which future generations of musicians will also draw.”

Daniel Froschauer

Chairman and Violin Section Leader, Vienna Philharmonic



Daniel Froschauer.
(Source: © Julia Wesely)

“Opera is a complex, many-sided art form. There are many disparate parts that have to be brought together to make a performance possible. At Opera Australia, the Music Library, which can be taken for granted, is the glue that binds everything together. Their work—which ranges from making parts legible and checking for correct cuts, to detailed analysis between editions to check for note lengths, instrumentation, and harmonic inconsistencies, and a myriad of things in between—is demanding and time consuming. And yet, how often have I been to the Music Library to ask for something, only to find that it has already been thought of, taken care of, and executed with skill and precision. The Opera Australia Music Library is a place of assiduity, perseverance, excellence, and marvellous flexibility. We, on stage, in rehearsal rooms, and in the pit are immensely grateful!”

Tahu Matheson
Head of Music, Opera Australia



Tahu Matheson.
(Source: © Prudence Upton)

“Each instrument in the orchestra possesses a distinct and irreplaceable voice; each member of the world’s great orchestras helps to shape their respective ensembles with the beauty and power of their individual contribution. But one of the most important players in each of those ensembles makes no sound at all in performance, and that is the music librarian. All the various facets of a performance—musicians, chorus, stage, production—flow through the music library; and as a concertmaster and a conductor, I can attest that the librarian is one of your most important and trusted allies in helping to prepare the best performance possible.”

David Chan
Concertmaster, The Metropolitan Opera



David Chan

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Foreword

The Librarian's Mission in Music: Maestro Muti Preserves Generations of Musical Heritage

Wei-En Hsu

The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Hong Kong

(in interview of Maestro Riccardo Muti)

The music libraries are the heart of a concert hall, orchestra, and opera house. Beyond these institutions are the librarians who dedicate themselves to preserving the history of music, and bear great responsibility in preserving culture. The librarian may not have a personal connection with an audience, but the work that is passed on from generation to generation only happens through his or her work.

Maestro Riccardo Muti was raised with the tradition of passing music down from childhood, beginning with his grandfather, and on to his father, who instilled the same appreciation for music in Muti and his brothers.

“Music has been in my life since childhood,” said legendary Maestro Muti. “My father, a medical doctor, believed music education at home was just as important as any other endeavor.” Muti’s father began the tradition for his family; it has become a family legacy to keep music alive to each subsequent generation.

Cultures around the world have different approaches to musical education, but one element that is almost universal is its ability to connect people. The maestro’s upbringing celebrates this tradition as it has inspired his entire career. His work continues the legacy by passing on the love of performance.

Having studied philosophy and then music in college, perhaps this philosophical thinking led him to see music and life in a different way. Also, with the mentorship of the legendary Nino Rota, Bruno Bettinelli, and Antonino Votto, his musical journey was nothing but extraordinary.

After working as a professional musician for more than five decades, Muti’s heart is set on nurturing the next generation of musicians. Arturo Toscanini had a great working relationship with Giuseppe Verdi, and was the teacher of Votto. The experience of these Italian musical giants was passed on to Muti, and Maestro is ready to pass them on. His Riccardo Muti Italian Opera Academy serves as a great platform to train young conductors, singers, and répétiteurs.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO), where Muti has been Music Director since 2010, is one of the greatest orchestras in the world. The company, the musicians, and Muti, all know that music is not entertainment. It is nourishment,

it is enrichment, and it is the heart and soul of the mind. In the newspaper, classical music is often listed as entertainment.

We musicians, we do not entertain. Musicians are not just professionals, we have a mission: music makes mankind gentle, more inclined to *la bellezza* (Beauty): sculpture, painting, architecture, and nature.

Muti believes that musicians today are so aggressive because the world is aggressive – and that we need to go back to expressing with simple and deeper feelings.

I'm really proud, the library in Philadelphia is now under my name, "Riccardo Muti Library." For me, this is such a great honor; one of the most important recognitions that I care about. Not because of my name, but to show other conductors and musicians how much I admire librarians' work. At the same time, there's a group of people who dedicate themselves to this artform. Musicians bring the music alive, but librarians keep the history of the institutions alive for the next generation.

During this pandemic, the musicians are forced to be silent, this is very dangerous to the world. Romans used to say, *Mens sana in corpore sano* (a healthy mind in a healthy body). The fact that we can't go out, can't embrace each other, there's the price we'll have to pay in the future. So once this pandemic is over, music will be one of the best medications, people will need this soul food more than ever.

Before I leave this world, I want to leave something from my experience to the young musicians. I was lucky to meet so many great artists and work with them. These valuable experiences are things you won't get from the books, and I'd like to share them with the world.

Muti, one of the musical giants in our generation, keeps no secret, but hopes that the world will be a better place because of the power of music and the action of a humble maestro.

Wei-En Hsu
The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Hong Kong



Chicago Symphony Orchestra librarian Peter Conover stands beside Maestro Riccardo Muti as he waits to take the stage in Tokyo, Japan before Verdi's Requiem. © Todd Rosenberg Photography. Photo by courtesy of riccardomutimusic.com.

“I love the quiet pensive moments right before the concert. The silence and privacy which I’m able to document before a conductor or artist takes the stage to applause and ultimately a long, music filled performance. The beauty of the new cameras is that they are silent. So when people are comfortable with me being there, I can document without being disruptive. Everybody just finds a spot to be before the concert starts. Once the music starts, Peter will often go to his other scores he is working on while on Tour” - Todd Rosenberg.

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Foreword

Patrick McGinn

When the title of a book catches my attention, as this one has, one of the first things I do is turn to the Table of Contents. Beyond the title, this is often what draws me further in. The list of names and organizations therein is not only very impressive, but also meaningful as most of them have been dear colleagues and close friends for many years.

MOLA: An Association of Music Performance Librarians is a not-for-profit organization of organizations representing a highly diverse membership. It was first established in 1983 by a handful of orchestra, opera, and ballet librarians from North American organizations. Since then it has grown to be an international organization with close to 300 members from every corner of the world.

No matter the type of organization, be it symphony, opera, ballet, academic institution, or band, we all do basically the same thing: provide and prepare music to the highest standards for our musicians. Because formal training in our field is extremely limited, most of us learn this craft through the modern version of apprenticeships: working as interns, mentees, summer hires, and assistants alongside more established colleagues. This approach is valuable through its efficiency, since there is no reason for each of us to reinvent the wheel. We rely on each other and the organization's collective wisdom for guidance, to answer questions, to offer suggestions, and to discuss similar issues. As well, our music directors also serve as music directors with other organizations around the world, which requires effective coordination among multiple librarians to facilitate programs, shipping, and music preparation. One of MOLA's primary missions is to support this communication as we serve our organizations and work with publishers.

As you read these interviews, you will find both similarities and differences in the various approaches to the many issues that confront us on a daily, weekly, or even yearly basis. The variations in challenging situations and the problem solving they require can be credited, at least in part, to the way our positions fit into our own unique organizations.

Even though each of us comes from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and interests, the one common thread is that we are all, foremost, trained musicians. As I read each chapter, I experience a wonderful feeling of connection and

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gain a personal insight into each person's "backstage" life. I hope you enjoy reading about these amazing people and their organizations as much as I do.

Patrick McGinn
Principal Librarian, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
President, MOLA 2020–2021

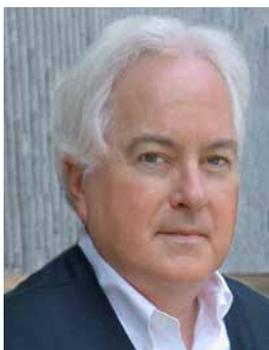


Foreword

F. Paul Driscoll

Music has the power to inspire, comfort, exhilarate, and soothe our spirits. Because music exists only in real time, in the present, it allows us to step away from our fears about the future and our regrets about the past. Music has never been needed more urgently than now, when a global pandemic has caused a giant intermission in our lives, filling our days with anxiety. The professional music librarians of the world's opera and orchestra libraries are the guardians of a great tradition; their stewardship, especially now, is an act of artistic heroism. Anyone who loves music will treasure the stories of these women and men and be humbled by their individual and collective devotion to music.

F. Paul Driscoll.



(Source: OPERA NEWS / The Metropolitan Opera Guild)

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Acknowledgements

“I know music can save lives, heal deep wounds, unify communities, and can bring real hope and comfort in the darkest hour. This is why I am an activist” – Joyce DiDonato.

This book was written in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis with the unshakable belief that music is a universal language that gives us hope and consoles our sorrows in the midst of chaos and social distancing. During these “darkest hours,” in this book, we would like to educate and advocate that we orchestra librarians, even though we are not the ones who perform onstage, are also “activists” who bring people together. We have the power to change the world for the better through our music.

The authors would like to express our thanks to several people who made invaluable contributions to this book.

Of prime importance are all of the librarians who participated in the interviews. They made time to respond to our questions, often overcoming language barriers to communicate with us in English, all the while navigating the strictures imposed upon them and their ensembles by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to Peter Conover, Principal Librarian of the Chicago Symphony, for helping to set up an interview with Maestro Riccardo Muti. Peter and Maestro Muti also made connections for us with performance librarians in Italy who participated in our interviews. Thanks also to Mónica Lugo, Executive Assistant to the Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, for acting as liaison for Maestro Muti.

Thanks to Charlotte Maiorana, our editor at Emerald Publishing Limited, for her faith in this book project.

The authors wish to express special thanks to the very witty Michael Fritsch (Senior Librarian, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra) for helping us connect with other German-speaking orchestra members who are not MOLA members. They made our interviews more comprehensive.

And finally, Messrs. Hsu, Sutherland, and Girsberger must recognize the leadership and inspiration of Dr Patrick Lo. In 2013, Patrick published an interview with Robert Sutherland in *Fontes Artis Musicae*, the *Journal of the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres*. This was the first time that such an interview with a performance librarian had been published in a widely recognized library journal. The response to that interview resulted in Patrick’s book *Conversations with the World’s Leading Orchestra and Opera Librarians* (Rowman & Littlefield, ©2016). Patrick has, perhaps, done more to bring awareness to our little corner of the music library field through his interviews and books than anyone had previously achieved. We are grateful and indebted to his keen interest in what we do and how we do it, on behalf of all performance librarians.