INDEXING GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

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In the small personal collection of gramophone records there is possibly little need for indexing—the owner knows what he has got and where to find each item. When the collection grows beyond, say, some 20 discs, the need for an index begins to be felt. The good index serves two purposes—it shows all the works in the collection (except perhaps those bought for frequent playing over a short period before discarding, e.g., the typical “pop” record) and also indicates where any particular record should be found. The first aim postulates the need for analytical entries for “recital” discs and for “fill-ups” to longer works; it may also suggest the need for other entries, mentioned below. If one is to locate any particular record speedily, then the collection must be kept in some sort of order, however arbitrary. One cannot normally remove a page from a book and file it elsewhere, so that a book index is usually reliable, but a gramophone record index is useless if records are moved from one position to a different sequence without the index being suitably amended. The index should be of a type that will accept new additions and the withdrawal of other records with reasonable efficiency, unless the collection is a static one.

If index entries are made under every possible heading, one can answer nearly all likely questions about one’s holdings, but this desirable goal could result in an unwieldy index in a large collection. As an example, an orchestral record could be entered under the composer, the conductor and the orchestra, the soloist (for a concerto or similar work), the musical form (such as symphony or overture), the title (“London symphony”, “St. Paul’s suite”) and the date of composition. Other suggestions for extra entries could doubtless be found. With jazz records, the manufacturers often give the names of all players in a group or band, and it would be perfectly feasible to make an entry for every instrumentalist. To some collectors this could be regarded as a fantastic waste of time, but for the jazz enthusiast it might be a most valuable effort. It would then be simple to discover the records one possessed that featured any particular player.

The public library’s, the record manufacturer’s and large special collections, such as that of the B.B.C., will justify intensive indexing. An ordinary collector will want to economise on the number of entries yet still desire to answer as many reasonable questions as possible. If the index is to be limited to a single entry for each work the natural answer is to use the composer for standard music. For other works the choice would lie between the title of a composition or the name of the artist recording it. In practice, single entry is usually found to be less than satisfactory and at least two entries are desirable. For discs of classical orchestral music there is clear merit in making entries under the name of conductor or orchestra. The Gramophone classical LP record catalogue (a most helpful aid to the indexer of standard music) prefers the latter; I feel that

* Based on paper read to the Society in October, 1960.
the major interest is normally in the conductor, and that a reference from the name of the orchestra to conductors who have recorded with it should be enough. The entry might read: ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA. See under: Malcolm Arnold, Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Adrian Boult . . .

With vocal works it is desirable to make added entries for the soloists, but it may be difficult to know just where to draw the line with an opera requiring a large cast of soloists. A work such as Verdi's "La Traviata" may name a dozen principals on the sleeve (i.e., outer cardboard cover) or album. A library will probably make a separate entry for each; the collector will have to make a personal decision as to whether he copies this example or limits his entries to those performers that he knows by name, and omits entries for those he does not. Soloists, both vocal and instrumental, naturally deserve entry, and there is value in making entries under a favourite instrument and also under those that are rarely heard in a solo capacity, such as viola or bassoon. The former will show off the strengths of a collection, while the latter entries act as a reminder when somebody says, "I think the French horn has a wonderful sound. Have you any music of it?"

Not only the musical theorist will be pleased if he can find entries under "Symphonies", "Chamber music" and the like. The concerto is probably the most popular form of all music at the present time, and an entry of this type gives an enquirer an immediate guide as to what is available in a collection. Full entries are not required; indeed, references may be quite adequate and will certainly ease the task of the owner making his index. Under "Concertos", for instance, he may indicate that he has Beethoven's 5th for piano, the Brahms violin concerto, etc., leaving the user to look under the composer's name for fuller details. This can be carried a step further, by simply listing the composers' names and not indicating individual works, but I would not recommend this.

With light music (a most difficult field to define) entry might be made under the composer (if well known) or under the performer(s). Title entry would also be very useful. Added entries would be of the kind indicated above. Added entries for jazz records, assuming that the main entry is made under the performer or group, would be under the title of each work, under the composer (if he has a place in jazz history, such as Ellington) and under instruments (such as tenor saxophone, trombone, etc.) The same tune occasionally appears under different titles, but this is a minor hazard.

The actual method and arrangement of one's catalogue and index must be a personal choice; the library system of making a single entry only on a separate card or sheaf takes up a lot of space, in relation to the size of the collection, but is completely flexible. In a personal collection, it is a fair economy to make references relating to one entry on a single card or sheet, such as those from the name of an orchestra to its conductors, as exemplified earlier in this paper. A loose-leaf book or books has much in its favour for the private collection, but I feel that the bound notebooks published for writing-up one's own
collection are not to be recommended, for the allowance for various letters of
the alphabet is unlikely to agree with the actual requirements of one’s collec-
tion and a page becomes very untidy if one withdraws records as they are
worn out, given away, replaced by newer recordings, etc. The entry under the
composer should, in my view, be fairly complete, including the title of the
work, its key and opus number (where applicable), the artist(s), number of
sides and size of the record, the manufacturer’s name and catalogue number,
and an indication as to where the record is filed in the collection if one uses
any other scheme than arrangement by the maker’s number. A typical entry
might read thus:

TCHAIKOVSKY, Peter I.

Violin concerto in D major, op. 35. Decca SXL 2029. 2 sides. 12”.

[Stereo].

Campoli (vn), with L.S.O., cond. Argenta.

The indication that the recording is a stereophonic one is added since it is
assumed that stereo discs are filed separately from monaural recordings.

The extra entries under performer, etc., need be but brief. For the record
listed above, the following should be adequate:

CAMPOLI (Alfredo), violin

TCHAIKOVSKY. Violin concerto, op. 35. Decca SXL 2029.

with L.S.O., cond. Argenta.

Similar entries, if desired, could be made under the name of the conductor
and/or London Symphony Orchestra.

The two most popular arrangements of a collection are by one’s own acces-
sion number or by the number given by manufacturers. Whatever method of
arrangement is used, it is best to keep separate sequences for 7, 10 and 12-inch
discs and to separate 78 r.p.m. from microgroove records. If you give your own
stock numbers to records it usually means that the newest-purchased works are
together on the right of the collection, and these are likely to be the records
that are played most often. It also provides a quick check upon what one has
bought over a period, and indicates if purchases have been spread over a broad
musical field or bought within narrow limits. There should be little need to
move records from one place to another, and any withdrawn can have their
numbers allotted to new accessions and so retain the sequence of numbers.

If you use the manufacturers' numbers you can place all your H.M.V.
records in one sequence, all Philips in another, and so on, or you can ignore
the manufacturer's name and simply arrange records by the prefixes and num-
bers, so that CLP, CML and CTL (prefixes used by three different labels) would
be in close proximity on the shelves. The advantage of using this system is
that the number is already clearly shown on both disc and sleeve; on the other
hand, such a method requires re-arrangement of records from time to time as
the collection grows and as manufacturers bring out new prefixes. Either system
arranges records in a purely arbitrary order but accepts discs of all categories.
In a collection that is mainly classical it is quite possible to arrange records under the name of the composer (choosing the first-named or the major one when a disc includes works by two or more musicians), or one can file under the name of the soloist or group, or even attempt a chronological sequence. A classified arrangement is possible, putting all orchestral works together, all instrumental and all vocal, and then sub-dividing as required. The last class might then be separated into songs, sacred choral works, secular choral works, light opera, grand opera, etc. Solo instrumental works would be filed under the instrument, arranged by the name of the soloist, or by the composer, as desired.

Having made the catalogue and decided upon the most suitable arrangement of the records themselves, one must make the link between the two, so that the catalogue becomes an index and one can quickly discover any wanted work. My ideas here have been strongly influenced by those of Mr. William Diehmer of Chicago, who is at present working on a filing system which he calls Recocards. If you use the manufacturer's number, it is clearly shown; if you use your own accession number, it should be neatly stencilled or printed on a piece of paper and attached to the sleeve. By the use of small strips of coloured adhesive tape, a form of colour-coding that allows of quick identification is possible. If the arrangement is by composer, then a coloured strip could be used to identify the major composers, e.g., a red strip at the top of the spine would indicate works by J. S. Bach, a green strip a little lower would show the Beethoven discs, while those unmarked between would be recordings of works by Balakirev, Barber, Bartók, etc. If makers' numbers are used, the first two records in each fresh sequence of manufacturer or prefix could have a coloured strip on the spine for speedy discovery. If one of the two records is then played, the other sleeve indicates clearly enough the position to which the borrowed sleeve must be returned. In any of these schemes, a second colour could be used to show the type of record, so that all orchestral works could be marked with a blue strip, all instrumental ones with an orange one, etc.

If records are arranged by collector's accession numbers, coloured strips can be used in echelon, so that each record's correct place in the sequence is quite clear from the position of the coloured strip. The first record has the strip at the top of the spine; the second sleeve has a similar strip (say) a fifth of an inch lower, and the third a further fifth-inch down the spine. Colour coding can be adapted for a classed collection or a chronological sequence. Colours can also be used to indicate records by favourite artists. To affix the strips, a cardboard strip is used as a guide. The width of the strip can be used as a measure as to the length of tape to cut off, while the strip is marked down its length at one-fifth-inch intervals (or whatever distance is chosen) in order to ensure that each strip is placed exactly in position on the sleeve. This suggested interval will allow fifty different positions on a 12-inch cover, and twenty-five on a 7-inch sleeve. 10-inch records will require a separate ruler, marked at one-sixth-inch intervals to allow for fifty positions. This form of indexing is
only really effective if the arrangement is likely to be permanent, though it is possible to affix a fresh strip on the sleeve if the position of a record is changed, but removing the old one might damage the sleeve.

If you file by the manufacturer's number, this must be shown on your catalogue entries. If you arrange by your own accession number, that must be given as part of the catalogue entry. If colour coding is used, you can place small strips of paper, in the same colour order as on the sleeve, on the catalogue entry. Whatever the arrangement used, colour coding can help one to locate a disc more quickly and assist in its return to its proper place, which is one of the most important steps in the operation.

This paper may have made a basically simple process seem most difficult. In fact, the compilation and maintenance of a catalogue-index of gramophone records needs but a modicum of intelligence and limited skill. If this is properly done, the collector will need no further urging to keep his catalogue up to date, for it is a most valuable tool towards the provision of musical enjoyment for himself and any visitors.

[Readers interested in music and its preservation are recommended to consult E. T. Bryant's *Music librarianship: a practical guide, 1959*, which covers the entire subject in an adequate manner, and contains an extensive section (pp. 184-281) on gramophone record libraries.—ed.]

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**ENGAGEMENT**

As we go to press we note with pleasure the announcement of the engagement of one of our members, Miss Phyllis Holt-Needham, to Sir Arnold Lunn.

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**MARRIAGE**

We have pleasure in announcing that one of our members, Miss Sheila Hough, was married to Mr. Bryan Silcock on January 28th, 1961. Mr. Silcock is a Science Correspondent at the B.B.C., and Mrs. Silcock is Executive Editor and Indexer to *International Abstracts of Biological Sciences*. We wish every success to a union combining science and scientific indexing, the common bond ensuring mutual interests and, we anticipate, lasting happiness.

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**INDEXING FOR STORKS!**

In the index to Nelson's *Textbook of pediatrics, 7th edition, 1959*, the following entry appears:

Birds, for the, 1-1413

According to the *Richmond News Leader* of 5th February, 1960, the author's daughter was assisting in the compilation of the index and inserted the line as a joke. It was missed in the proof stage, and allowed to stay in two reprints of the book, as many persons appreciated the humour.

*(Cutting submitted by John Cook Wyllie, U.S.A.)*