

NOW WHERE DID I PUT THAT FRANCK SONATA?

by David Hamilton

[This popular article on the cataloging of private classical LP record collections is reprinted as it appeared in 1969. Further articles on the subject, including the use of personal computers, will be welcome. --J.W.N.F.]

At some point, most people acquire enough records so that flipping through the whole pile to find a specific item becomes rather a chore. This stage--an important one in the metamorphosis from just-plain-Record-Consumer to full-fledged-Record-Collector--calls for some thinking about the problem of shelving sequence. At first, the difficulty can probably be resolved by simply dividing that one cumbersome pile into several manageable ones: orchestral, vocal, piano, and so on. (I know one young lady who simply sorts her records by century, and this probably works pretty well if you have a high percentage of Medieval and Renaissance music.) But something more formal might also prove useful and--depending on the collector's memory and the nature of the collection--this might be a good time to start thinking about a catalog.

Of course, it's perfectly possible to manage quite a large collection without the help of a catalog: for example, complete operas, in their clearly labeled album boxes, can easily be shelved alphabetically by composer or title, and even many hundreds of these will be essentially self-indexing (as long as you remember that most of the Pagliacci recordings are to be found under Cavalleria). And recital recordings can go in a separate alphabetical sequence, according to the name of the principal performer. Other types of music as well are amenable to rough-and-ready systems of filing by composer, or by genre (opera, symphonic music, piano music, etc.) and within each genre by composer or performer (if your interests are oriented that way), or by various combinations and permutations of these possibilities.

Since the hardest part of compiling a catalog is the initial investment of time in setting it up, however, it's not a bad idea to think about it at an early stage. Do you have a number of records that don't fit clearly into any one place in your filing system because they contain assorted works, each of which belongs in a different category? Do you collect recitals of short works: Lieder, piano pieces, opera

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arias, or perhaps Fischer-Dieskau (a category that will soon have to be indexed by computer in any case)? Do you frequently go to your shelves searching for a particular performer, rather than just browsing for something to listen to? Have you ever tried to remember what was on the other side of that Franck Violin Sonata--Mozart, Grieg, Debussy, or Brahms--because you can't find it filed with the rest of Franck's music? Do you like to compare performances of the same work by different artists? Have you ever been unable to locate a recording of, say, Rachmaninoff's Humoresque in G just when you wanted to play it for some friends (only to have it turn up a few days later on a disc entitled--maddeningly--Golden Age of Piano Virtuosi?).

If your answer to some of these questions is "yes," and you can foresee that your collection will continue to expand, perhaps to the point where you can no longer keep it at your fingertips, some sort of a catalog is worth thinking about. Even the opera collector with his self-indexing albums might find it useful to know what recordings he has by a particular singer, and the orchestral collector may be surprised at the number of duplications of shorter works he will turn up, such as the overtures often used to fill out recordings of symphonies. By giving you a different perspective on your records, the catalog can be useful in various secondary ways--and once set up, it will take only a couple of minutes with each new record to keep it up to date.

For the private collector, the most important guideline to keep in mind is this: your catalog is for you, not for the Library of Congress or the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archive of Recorded Sound. Continuing public institutions with changing staffs and diverse clientele have to get involved with a lot of complications that needn't concern you at all, so don't be inhibited by those elaborate printed cards down at the public library. You don't even have to be consistent, although you may end up confused if you make too many exceptions to your own rules. Remember that the more information your cataloging scheme calls for, the more upkeep and even research will be required, so don't bother with frills--a "frill" being defined as any piece of information that you don't foresee direct use for, or that can just as easily be found elsewhere.

A good way to start designing a catalog is to think about the kinds of questions you may want to "ask" it and jot down a list of the information you want to include. Then you can consider what physical form is best to accommodate that information.

Where? The simplest of these questions will be the location of the recording on your shelves, and this brings us to the matter of shelving. You may prefer to retain the sort of alphabetical system outlined above, filing each record under

the composer or principal performer; in this case, your catalog will have to specify the name under which the record is filed—e.g., that the Lipatti Schumann Concerto is shelved under Grieg. A second possibility is to use the manufacturer's name and number as the principle of shelving--this is more likely to appeal to persons involved in some way with the record business, who have reasons to remember labels and catalog numbers--and it means that the entry in your catalog will include the manufacturer's serial number. (Note that this sometimes useful piece of information is not required by the other methods suggested here, although, of course, you can include it anyway if you like.) On the other hand, the resulting alignment of similar spines and matching albums on the living-room shelves tends to resemble the décor of Sam Goody's emporium--an effect that some may find aesthetically unacceptable.

A third possibility is to assign your own number to each record when you buy it. The great advantage to this method is that new records are always added at the end of the shelf, which eliminates having to shove records around in order to accommodate new purchases. Both this system and the manufacturer's-number method might seem to cut down on your chances of just going to the shelf and pulling out the record you want, bypassing the catalog to save time, but it is surprising how quickly you will learn where records that you use frequently are located. Although arbitrary, both these systems do cut down on the number of difficult decisions required by alphabetical filing systems.

What? Next, you will have to decide how you are going to organize the information about the music on your records. Most likely, you will find that catalog entries that have been organized by composer (and, under each composer, by title) will be most useful—but if you tend to remember titles rather than composers, by all means arrange the main index in terms of titles. Either way, you will have to make some adjustments of the titles as given on record labels and jackets—or you may end up with three recordings of the same piece listed in three different places, such as E (for "Eroica Symphony"), S (for "Symphony No. 3"), and T (for "Third Symphony").

In dealing with this problem, it is worth borrowing a leaf from the librarian's notebook: the distinction between generic and specific titles. The former category comprises titles made up of a word describing a form or medium ("symphony," "concerto," "quartet," "serenade," and similar standard terms) plus a number, key, opus number, or whatever else distinguishes one work in that form or medium from another by the same composer. In contrast to these formula titles, specific titles are those especially invented by the composer for the particular work: Tristan und Isolde, Pier-

rot Lunaire, Rhapsody in Blue, Symphonie fantastique (note that the last two are not generic titles). It greatly simplifies matters if you put all generic titles in a consistent form: first that key word, followed by any necessary qualifiers (to distinguish, say, "Quartet, strings" from "Quartet, piano and strings"), then the number, key, or opus number (whichever of these is standard, or most convenient for you). By applying this principle, and with the help of the Schwann catalog or a good standard musical reference work, you will save yourself quite a few headaches, especially in the baroque-classic-romantic repertory.

When dealing with specific titles, a little common sense helps. Don't make a fetish of using foreign-language titles unless they are the ones you really use; I've never met anyone who refers to Debussy's tone poem as The Sea, but on the other hand a lot of people find Tod und Verklärung rather a mouthful. You certainly don't want to get involved in Scandinavian or Eastern European languages (unless you really speak them, of course), but be careful here; often there is no standard English version for the title of a piece, and you may end up with the same Rachmaninoff song listed under several different English titles.

This matter of titles is one that can get complicated, and the old proverb about crossing bridges is worth bearing in mind. If you have only one Vivaldi concerto, why worry about how precisely it's identified in your catalog, complete with Pincherle catalog number and so on--leave that for the collector who has several dozen. Don't bother, either, about making separate entries for every song in a Schubert recital; just lump them together under the heading "Songs"--unless you have quite a number of them and it becomes cumbersome to go over the listings looking for a particular title. (Of course, if you expect to acquire many more, it might be a good idea to start making separate entries now.) Another useful simplification is to treat groups of pieces that are usually recorded together (Bach's Brandenburg Concertos or Wolf's Italian Songbook, for example) as single works. With experience, you will think of other ways to save time and energy.

Who? Under this rubric, you must first decide how much information about performers you want to put in your catalog entry. I can imagine circumstances in which a collector might feel that the identity of the performers is not of sufficient importance to include this in the catalog--but once the inevitable duplications start piling up, the collector may want to reconsider. On the other hand, it's hardly worthwhile to list every serving-maid and messenger in opera recordings unless you are a dedicated fancier of vocal culture. (After all, that messenger may turn up singing Otello in a few years--or vice versa.) The same

rationale operates in the area of accompaniments to vocal records: Toscanini and the NBC Symphony may be worth listing, but perhaps not the Odeon Light Opera Orchestra under Herr Bratwurst.

Related to this question is that of a cross-index by performers, a type of catalog that may be useful even if you have decided to dispense with a composer-and-title listing. Of course, it adds considerably to the work involved: at least one and sometimes several more places to enter every new record. However, if questions like "What records conducted by Furtwängler do I have?" are going to come up regularly, the performer index could be a very useful adjunct to your collection.

Whence and When? These points, especially the first one, are primarily for specialists: the origin of a recording, whether it is a reissue, and the recording date. Since these apply mainly to older recordings, they may not concern you, but the collector who owns both recent and historical discs might want to include dates for the latter, or perhaps merely indicate that it is an "acoustic recording."

After you've decided what information to put in the catalog, the question of its physical form must be faced. There are two main possibilities: index cards and loose-leaf notebooks. The former are certainly more flexible, especially if you put every recording on its own card. Of course, the degree of flexibility you need will depend on your rate of acquisition (and also of discard); if you expect to revise your collection and its catalog frequently, cards are easier to work with. On the other hand, they are not as convenient for browsing, and a box of cards doesn't sit as comfortably in the lap as a loose-leaf binder. Perhaps because of my library experience, and because my collection has a high turnover rate, I have a strong preference for cards, but a small, fairly stable collection could very well be indexed in a notebook with one page to a composer. The more heavily represented figures could be broken down by medium: a page each for piano music, chamber music, orchestral music, vocal music, or whatever categories are applicable in a given case.

The actual format of the entries isn't critical. In the following pages we will illustrate some suggested layouts and cataloging techniques.

The Schwann catalog is a pretty good model to follow, but you may want to be much more detailed in some areas. If so, try to get your hands on a copy of the British Gramophone Classical LP Catalogue or, best of all, the Clough and Cuming World's Encyclopaedia of Recorded Music,* which is a valuable reference work even though the last supplement was

*Still available from Greenwood Press. [Editor's note]

published in 1957. These models are obviously analogous to notebook catalogs, but their format can be readily adapted for use on cards.

For anybody who uses his or her collection professionally, some sort of system is of course indispensable. The layman too can often gain in pleasure and instruction, with a minimum of effort, through some systematic organization. A filing system doesn't have to be complicated, nor a catalog elaborate, to accomplish this; some wise preliminary planning, an initial investment of time, and a little application thereafter to keep up to date are all that you need, and the results will become more valuable over the years.

The following sample entries show how the same group of recordings might be listed, using each of the three methods of shelving we have described.

DEBUSSY

Afternoon of a Faun

Beecham	Beecham-Lollipops
Bernstein	Afternoon
Cantelli	La Mer
Karajan	Ravel-Daphnis
Ormandy	Dukas-Sorcerer
Stokowski	Stokowski-Best

In a collection shelved alphabetically by composer and title, the catalog entry must show the name under which the record is filed. It is simplest to use whatever is named first on the spine of the jacket, but you can deviate from this if you like (in which case it is advisable to mark the title you are using somewhere on the jacket). In the example above, the Beecham and Stokowski recordings are part of miscellaneous collections filed under the conductors' names (with a short title added to identify the particular disc); Karajan and Ormandy are filed under works by other composers; Bernstein and Cantelli are both all-Debussy records (hence the omission of the composer's name, to save time and space).

DEBUSSY

Afternoon of a Faun

Beecham	Angel 35506
Bernstein	Columbia MS-6271
Cantelli	(M) Seraphim 60077
Karajan	DG 138923
Ormandy	(M)(10) Columbia AL-26
Stokowski	Capitol SP-8673

Here the same records are listed as for a collection in which the manufacturer's name and number are used as the filing principle. Rather than interfiling 7-, 10-, and 12-inch records (which encourages warping), it is a good idea to shelve each size separately and indicate on the card by a "(10)" or "(7)" any records that aren't standard 12-inch size; similarly, you can indicate monophonic records with an "(M)," if this distinction is important to you.

DEBUSSY

Afternoon of a Faun

Beecham	B-1024
Bernstein	B-2057
Cantelli	B-1876
Karajan	B-1568
Ormandy	A-1045
Stokowski	B-2465

For those who assign their own shelf numbers to records, the entries become very simple; just assign the next available number to each new record. Again, it's a good idea to sepa-

rate different sizes, and this can easily be done by setting up distinct numerical series for each size; in the example here, 10-inchers are numbered beginning with A-1000, 12-inchers starting with B-1000. Another possibility, if you have records shelved in several different places (e.g., living room, den, and rumpus room), is to use a different numerical series for each location.

The following sample cards show various types of cataloging—different formats and different degrees of depth. To simplify matters, the system of homemade shelf numbers is used throughout, but any of the three systems we have already outlined can be used in these formats.

HAYDN

MASS, No. 9, D minor ("Nelson")	S,A,T,B,cho,orch
Sylvia Stahlman, Helen Watts, Wilfred Brown, Tom Krause, Choir of King's College, Cambridge, London Symphony Orchestra - David Willcocks	B-1045
Maria Stader, Claudia Hellmann, Ernst Haefliger, Viktor von Halem, Bavarian State Radio Chorus & Orchestra - Rafael Kubelik	B-1234

The treatment of a generic title is illustrated here; if you prefer, this could simply be entered under Nelson Mass, but there is something to be said for having all the Haydn Mass cards in one place. If the key or the number doesn't matter to you, leave it out; similarly, the abbreviated list of performing forces given in the title line is merely a convenience, which saves repeating the voice ranges in listing each recording. For that matter, you certainly don't need to list all the soloists' names unless you find the information useful; these records could be identified, respectively, as "Willcocks" and "Kubelik" without further ado.

MOZART

B-2037

Don Giovanni - Complete recording

Philharmonia Chorus & Orchestra - Carlo Maria Giulini

Don Giovanni	Eberhard Wächter
Donna Anna	Joan Sutherland
Donna Elvira	Elisabeth Schwarzkopf
Zerlina	Graziella Sciutti
Don Ottavio	Luigi Alva
Leporello	Giuseppe Taddei
Masetto	Piero Cappuccilli
Commendatore	Gottlob Frick

Complete opera recordings could be listed in the style used above for the Haydn Mass, but this isn't helpful if you want to know who sings which part. In a collection heavily weighted with complete operas and/or "highlights" records, the use of 5 x 7 cards is worth considering if you want to list all the Valkyries, or specify exactly which "highlights" are included. Note that on this card the shelf number is in the upper right-hand corner--a position that is feasible if each card lists only one recording.

VERDI

AIDA - Act 1, Scene 1: Celeste Aida	Tenor
Jussi Bjoerling	B-1986
Enrico Caruso (1911)	B-1006
Beniamino Gigli (1937)	B-1587
Peter Anders (in German)	B-1749
Richard Tucker (complete opera)	B-1401

Operatic excerpts can be listed in the order in which they appear in the opera, or alphabetically; in the latter case,

the mention of act and scene would be omitted from the card above. This example shows how dates can be given for historical recordings, and how the use of a "wrong" language can be indicated. Whether you want to list the performances of "Celeste Aida" in complete recordings on this card as well is a matter of individual taste. I find it simpler to check back in my file to the complete recordings than to add an extra listing for every aria, duet, etc., in the opera.

CHOPIN

BALLADES Piano

(complete) Alfred Cortot	B-2069
(Nos. 1, 4) Vladimir Horowitz	A-1742
(No. 1) Teresa Carreno (piano roll)	B-2856
(No. 4) Sviatoslav Richter	B-2694

This card illustrates one way to deal with groups of works that are sometimes recorded together, sometimes not. (Note that none of these suggested formats attempts to indicate what else is on the record; since the record itself is directly at hand, there seems no need to waste time and space on that information.) An intensive collector of Chopin might want to make a separate card for each Ballade, but might blanch at following the same procedure for every mazurka: 51 cards for the Rubinstein set! Again, the guiding principle is whether the additional detail will be of any use to you.

BEETHOVEN

CONCERTO, Violin & orchestra, D major, Op. 61

Jascha Heifetz, NBC Symphony Orchestra - Arturo
Toscanini (Auer-Joachim cadenza) Victor LCT-1010,
from M-705; March 11, 1940 - Studio 8-H,

Radio City B-1007

Fritz Kreisler, London Philharmonic Orchestra -

John Barbirolli (Kreisler cadenza) Angel COLH-11,
from HMV DB-2927/32s; June 16, 1936 - London

B-1839

For the very specialized collector, the degree of detail on this card might be useful, although the only really necessary items would be the composer and title, the names of the respective violinists, and the shelf numbers. Whether the authors of the cadenzas, the LP catalog numbers, the 78 rpm sources, the dates and places of recording, or even the names of the orchestras and conductors are essential is up to the individual making and using the catalog. Even here, the composer's first name and dates aren't given; there's no need to duplicate that on every card for a well-known composer.

SCHWARZKOPF, ELISABETH Soprano

Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 (Karajan) B-2045

- - ibid (Furtwängler) B-1703

Mozart: Don Giovanni (Elvira) B-2037

Schubert: Songs B-1067

Wolf: Spanisches Liederbuch (w/Dieskau) B-3045

Bach: Cantata No. 51 B-2795

Mozart: Exsultate, jubilate B-2795

Schwarzkoft Song Book (Schubert, Schumann,
Wolf, Wolf-Ferrari, Debussy, Rachmaninoff;
Danny Boy) B-3012

A sample card from a performer cross-index shows how two recordings of the same work might be distinguished, how to indicate what role a singer takes in a complete opera (although I'd be inclined to restrict this to nonobvious cases--e.g., a recording of Bohème in which Tebaldi sings Musetta), and one possible way of listing a miscellaneous collection (you could also list all the titles on the record). It's impossible to maintain alphabetical order on such cards once you start making additions; the simplest thing is to put a line at the end of the alphabetical sequence, make additions in random order, and hope to retype the card some day when it all gets too cumbersome.