

IMSLP and Open Access to Music

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International Music Score Library Project

June 21–22, 2026

About IMSLP

- ▶ Repository of public domain (and freely licensed) music
- ▶ Currently listed on IMSLP:
 - ▶ Over 250,000 compositions
 - ▶ Over 865,000 scores/parts
 - ▶ Over 27,000 composers
- ▶ Items digitized by IMSLP staff, online resources (incl. libraries, the Internet Archive, etc.), users and other sources
- ▶ Collections hosted by regional members (Canada, US, Taiwan, Germany) and listed in a single database

Brief history of the origins of the modern copyright system

- ▶ (Historical) American model
 - ▶ Copyright term begins at publication (if published with a copyright notice identifying the claimant and year of publication)
 - ▶ After initial term (28 years from 1909), copyright could be renewed; otherwise, copyright expired
 - ▶ Limited monopoly of copyright to be balanced by public knowledge and user rights (fair use)
- ▶ French (Berne Convention) Model
 - ▶ Copyright exists automatically from the work's creation, irrespective of any formalities
 - ▶ Copyright lasts for the author's lifetime plus 50 (now, in many countries, 70) years
 - ▶ Romantic idea of work ownership with attached economic rights

Copyright: one-sided or two-sided?

- ▶ In theory...
 - ▶ Copyright terms delineate when the rightsholder's control ends
 - ▶ The copyright term is granted in exchange for the eventual benefit to the public (old “American” model; contrast with Berne model)
- ▶ In practice...
 - ▶ Copyright law was conceived for books; the medium of consumption and performance is not the same for music
 - ▶ The balance of rights applies fairly well to “circulating” items (chamber, piano, piano-vocal works), but structural facts are different for orchestral works distributed on rental

The old structure

- ▶ Publishers and rightsholders
 - ▶ Control access to many items (rental-only model)
 - ▶ More resources (e.g., for lawsuits) than performers/groups
 - ▶ Incentivized to extend protections as far as possible, even beyond the bounds of copyright law itself (with no penalty for trying)
- ▶ Users and performing groups
 - ▶ Information imbalance
 - ▶ At the mercy of publishers and rightsholders (risk losing access to future items)
 - ▶ Individual users especially lack coordination

IMSLP's role

- ▶ Getting as much access to public-domain materials as possible, and digitizing as much as possible (including doing it ourselves)
- ▶ Coordinating people who have copies of relevant materials (and putting them in a public repository)
- ▶ Researching facts relevant to copyright (death dates, publication details, etc.)
- ▶ No limits based on work popularity/stock considerations due to low cost of storing digital copies

Digitization and coordination

- ▶ Major project right now: digitizing scores ourselves (plus processing)
- ▶ Digitizing sets of parts
- ▶ Consolidating digitized collections and locating gaps
- ▶ We would *really* love your help
- ▶ We like responding to requests, too: we might already have what you're looking for waiting to be processed
- ▶ By popular demand: my guide to our digitization process

My contact information

(Seriously, email me!)

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