What's in a Name?

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What's in a name?
A rose by any other name may smell as sweet,
but a computer will probably not be able to find it.

SHAKESPEARE/BYRNE

If you wish to avoid disaster when creating and using a music library computer data base, remember the key word: "consistency."

Computers can "read" at an incredible speed, searching through large bodies of information to find and sort strings of letters and/or numbers; but they are not capable of the critical judgments we humans can make – such things as recognizing variations in spelling of the same name. For this reason, title and composer information often must be adapted to ensure consistency throughout the data base. I recommend an approach that does not disregard common usage or familiarity with certain titles, because the goal of consistency should not overshadow the greater goal of making the collection readily accessible.

Here are four basic ground rules:

RULE 1: Articles (in English and other languages) should be placed after the title.

For example, use:

Corsaire, Le	Original Suite, An
Gazza Ladra, La	Rosenkavalier, Der
Night in Venice, A	Sound of Music, The
Nozze di Figaro, Le	

You would not believe how many library files are a shambles because they are loaded with titles starting with "a," "an," or "the."

Foreign words can pose problems if they are not recognized as articles. Here are four foreign language equivalents of the English "a" and "an": un, une (French); ein, eine (German); un, una (Italian and Spanish). The English "the" has singular and plural (sometimes masculine and feminine) counterparts: le, la, les (French); der, die, das (German); le, la, gli (Italian); lo, la, los, las (Spanish).

Here are some other things to remember when dealing with foreign titles:

● Translate the title when practical to do so or when the printed title is in a language that may obscure your ability to recognize it in that form (most often found in foreign publications).

● Be aware that some foreign publications (particularly British band journals) may adapt or translate a title and render it unrecognizably different from either the original or the common English translation. Here's one of my favorites: "Stories from the Vienna Forest" instead of "Tales from the Vienna Woods."

● If a title is translated, a duplicate listing should be entered in the original language. To test whether or not translation is necessary, try to determine whether anyone would be likely to search for the title in English. If the foreign title is common and familiar, leave it in the original language.

Similar search problems can occur when a title starts with a number, such as a collection called *28 Fanfares for Brass*. If the number is left at the beginning of the title, you must recall exactly how many fanfares are in that book in order to find it. Also, for computer alphabet sorting purposes, you may want to spell out Arabic numerals in titles.

RULE 2: Titles containing foreign words indicating a familiar musical form (i.e. "Konzert" instead of "Concerto") should be translated into English.

If the words for musical forms are not translated and standardized, we could have many works for a "Quartet" listed inconsistently as "Quatour," "Quartett," "Quartetto," or "Cuarteto." Because printed titles have probably been determined by the nationality of the publisher (which may be different from that of the composer), I believe translation is preferable, and I recommend the English version of all titles that contain common musical forms such as Concerto, Rhapsody, Overture, Minuet, etc.

RULE 3. Titles containing a musical form should be listed in a consistent order.

I recommend this sequence:
Form (symphony, concerto, sonata, etc.)
Number
Key
Instrument (in the case of concertos)
Opus (or other numbering scheme)
Subtitle (if one exists)
Movement (if an excerpt)

For example, the published title *First Clarinet Concerto Op. 3 in A Major* would be changed to conform to a standard sequence (form-number-key-instrument-opus): *Concerto No.1 in A for Clarinet Op. 3*.

Editor's Note: *Although we agree with the recommendations in this article, we do not follow them in the "Reviews" section of this magazine because we have a different purpose. We want to help you find (and buy!) good new music, so we reproduce the titles exactly as used by the publishers – that makes it easier for you to track them down at your local dealer. However, once purchased, you can (and should) call your music whatever you want!*

While this system often creates a longer title, it is more accurate. Subtitles should be listed in quotes, and individual movements should be indicated by the movement number and appropriate tempo or other indication.

In listing the key, we can use lower case for minor and upper case for major. Unless computer search routines are case-sensitive (differentiate between upper and lower case letters), such abbreviations are useful. It is equally acceptable to use upper-case letters for both with an abbreviation, such as "A maj." or "A min." Again, be consistent.

Numbers at the beginning of titles can also throw off the search for titles and affect sorting of records, for example, the two Holst suites:

> *First Suite in E♭ for Military Band*
>
> *Second Suite for Military Band in F*

BDs who are tempted to list both exactly as the titles are printed on the music (see above, and also notice the difference in sequence) should realize that the operative word "Suite" is lost behind the words "First" and "Second." Therefore, when the computer alphabetizes the titles (according to the first word), the two Suites will be widely separated ("Fi..." and "Se...").

The New Grove Dictionary lists these two titles as follows:

> *Suite No. 1 in E♭ for Military Band*
>
> *Suite No. 2 in F for Military Band*

A consistent listing will allow the computer to deal with similar forms in a similar fashion.

RULE 4. An excerpt should be listed under the major work from which it comes.

This practice is often known as listing by "uniform title." A good rule of thumb is to convert all titles such as, Largo from the New World Symphony (musical form from larger work) to our standard format (form-number-key-opus-subtitle-movement), making it Symphony No.9 in e Op.95 "From the New World" (IV-Finale).

In this form all excerpts will then be listed in one location, identified (automatically) by the parent work, telling us immediately which movements of a symphony or suite are in the library.

If we do not follow this rule, two excerpts from the "New World" Symphony could be located only by searching for the words "Largo" and "Finale." Because both designations are so common, it would be much more difficult to find the right music.

The same rule can be applied to titles that are not printed this way but still have a connection with a larger work. If this information is known at the time of cataloging, use the parent composition. For example, an arrangement of "Climb Every Mountain" should be treated as an excerpt from "The Sound of Music;" and "Tannhauser" would be the "uniform title" (parent) for the excerpt, an instrumental arrangement of "Hymn to the Evening Star." With the aid of the computer, we can then produce listings of all excerpts from "The Sound of Music" or "Tannhauser" that may be in our library.

Many times the name of the parent work will neither be a part of the printed title nor appear anywhere on the music, so the knowledge and experience of the librarian play a vital role in proper identification and listing. It is to our advantage to record the maximum amount of information on every piece of music; and the importance of such decisions should not be underestimated.

COMPOSER AUTHORITY

Calling for the name of the composer is one of the most important ways to access your music collection, so you must establish a clear and consistent procedure for entering that information. If you doubt the extent of variation possible in the spelling of composers' names, consider these printed versions of just one:

Tschaikowski	Tchaikowski
Tschaikowsky	Tchaikowski
Tschaikovski	Tchaikowski
Tschaikovsky	Tchaikowski

In addition to these more or less logical variations (i-y, w-v, sc-c), add the spelling used by the Library of Congress (Chaikovskii) and remember that your computer would treat every one of them as a different composer. You would have to enter all nine versions (and how many more?) to be sure you have found everything by this Russian master.

Do not use the score/parts to establish the definitive spelling of a composer's name. They are often the result of an individual publisher's whim, and are subject to enormous variations, particularly in older editions. Instead, choose one well-respected, scholarly reference work to establish this information and stay with it throughout the cataloging process. I highly recommend *Baker's Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Nicolas Slonimsky. This single volume contains a wealth of information on composers (including nationality), and its single volume format will prove to be much faster and easier than leafing through the entire set of The New *Grove Dictionaries*, although that is also an excellent (and much more expensive) source.

As you establish preferred spellings, you may wish to make a list of common names to eliminate the need for you (or your staff) to keep looking them up.

While at first much of the information in this article may seem intimidating, the system suggested here is based on just a few simple concepts which are not difficult to master, either by experienced BDs or by responsible student assistants.

Taking the time to ensure consistency in title and composer formats for your computer files is, in the long run, a very wise investment, because it will help you to avoid more difficult and time-consuming problems in the future.

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