

**CLASSIFICATION. MUSIC AND  
BOOKS ON MUSIC: M: MUSIC;  
ML: LITERATURE OF MUSIC; MT:  
MUSICAL INSTRUCTION AND  
STUDY**

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**O. G. SONNECK & HERBERT PUTNAM**

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

# CLASSIFICATION

## MUSIC

AND

## BOOKS ON MUSIC

M: MUSIC

ML: LITERATURE OF MUSIC

MT: MUSICAL INSTRUCTION AND STUDY

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## PREFATORY NOTE

(FIRST EDITION.)

It is estimated that on March 31 of the current year the Library of Congress possessed a collection of about 375,000 volumes and pieces of music, 5,000 books and pamphlets of the literature of music, and 6,000 books, pieces, etc., of musical theory and instruction. While the Library of Congress has during the last few years purchased thousands of volumes, the bulk of the collection consists of copyright deposits. As these include many works not needed in research libraries, the Library of Congress finds itself confronted by problems peculiar to itself, in addition to those confronting libraries developed wholly by systematic purchase.

In planning, testing, and perfecting a scheme of classification for use in the Music Division of the Library of Congress this had constantly to be borne in mind. As a matter of course the scheme, at least so far as it concerns music proper, took a form leaning toward the classified catalogues of publishers, and somewhat different from the schemes adopted by the notable American and European libraries. But care was taken to profit by the experience of these. In its present form the scheme embodies many valuable suggestions of the Chief classifier of the Library, Mr. Charles Martol, besides such modifications as he considered necessary in conformity with the arrangement of other classes of books in the Library.

The subdivisions may at first sight appear rather close, or here and there to imply a distinction too fine and perhaps a little troublesome in application; but it seemed wiser to be too minute than too broad, especially as even the collection of books about music is increasing at an exceptional rate. However, book and scheme will clash at times, no matter how expanded or compressed the classification may be. In such cases the conflict may often be settled by a judicious compromise. Where it can not, the scheme will have to be amended, for the minds of authors will ever drift into channels unforeseen by the classifier, and the best scheme will soon become fossil unless adjusted to the uncontrollable current of literature.

To date, this classification has been applied to some seven or eight thousand volumes, etc., illustrating the history and theory of music, and to more than 150,000 volumes and pieces of music.

O. G. SONNECK  
*Chief, Division of Music*

HERBERT PUTNAM  
*Librarian of Congress*  
*Washington, April 1904*

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## PREFATORY NOTE

(REVISED EDITION.)

This scheme of classification, first published in April, 1904, has been applied to more than half a million items ranging from "bone playing" methods to theoretical incunabula and compositions for twenty-four violins. It was not expected that the scheme would stand the strain of such an unprecedented test without opportunity for improvement either by correction, cancellation, addition, differentiation, or by a clearer statement of intention. Not all improvements that suggested themselves were adopted. Occasionally the merits of an improvement would have been quite out of proportion to the labor involved of reclassifying, etc., thousands of publications in a section supposedly finished. In general, this second edition of the scheme incorporates only such improvements as were found to be imperative, advisable, or practicable. That the future will call for many minor improvements, is more than probable, but it is hoped that the vital parts of the scheme will be affected thereby as little as heretofore.

The advantages of a judicious scheme of classification of a library's musical resources for the intercourse between book, librarian, and reader are obvious. A judicious scheme will take into account the present or anticipated future resources of a library not only, but still more its type. Thus, the music collections of a conservatory will naturally call for a scheme of classification somewhat different from that of a mainly musicological collection, or again of a large public library like ours with an appeal both to the general reader and the scholar. By virtue of its custodianship of copyright deposits and its policy of organic development the Music Division of the Library of Congress faces more numerous and more varied problems of classification than any other musical library, at least in America. The claim is not that we have to solve, for instance, all the problems of classification that would confront the librarian of a large conservatory who would have to consider first of all the needs of the students of different instruments, etc., in relation to the different grades of instruction, but clearly we have very many problems in common with practically every type of musical library.

So many indeed, that though this scheme was devised primarily for the needs of the Library of Congress, other institutions might wish to adopt it with such modifications as their own needs would suggest. The expert classifier can not fail to notice that the scheme, while planned for expansion, practically indefinite and beyond the

present needs of even such a huge collection as ours with its almost eight hundred thousand volumes, pamphlets, and pieces, easily permits also of contraction because the subject matter was classified organically and, as it were, from the bird's-eye view. A classifier of fair talent and skill could without much difficulty "telescope" our scheme into a suitable instrument for any collection of any size, by canceling unnecessary subdivisions, by substituting subdivisions needed for his special purposes, and by rearranging at his convenience the sequence of certain entries. He might then adopt the notation, i. e., the class numbers, etc., in our scheme bodily, regardless of the gaps that would result in the class numbers from cancellation of subdivisions, or he might (that would be easy) devise a scheme of notation of his own, naturally more condensed than ours, but, of course, still elastic enough for expansion and insertion. Whatever scheme a musical librarian devises, this he ought always keep in mind—a scheme of classification is not a class or subject catalogue, though a helpful substitute in the absence of such a catalogue or while it is in the making.

To those who might wish to profit by our accumulated experiences it is suggested that "early" music does not lend itself always or readily to the same principles of classification as music of our own times. For instance, where in "early" music does chamber music stop and orchestral music begin? By stretching one's terminological conscience, a way out of such a dilemma generally will appear, but occasionally it is blocked, with the result that the classifier must resort to measures quite likely to arouse the opposition of the historian. Though force of circumstances compels adherence to our present practice of dealing with "early" music, I have reached the conclusion that in the interest of all concerned it would have been better to have formed a separate group of "early" music and books on music. This method would have permitted a classification within the group so devised as, without undue elaborations, to take into account the special problems presented by such material, problems often absent from or different in "current" music and music literature. It is here not the place to outline such a scheme. That must be reserved for an occasion when I expect to propose a standard scheme of classification (simpler than ours though based thereon) adapted to public musical collections of more normal size and scope than ours.

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*Chief, Music Division*

HERBERT PUTNAM  
*Librarian of Congress*  
*Washington, March 13, 1917*

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MUSIC

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