

# RCM Museum Strategy

2015-2020

The RCM Museum of Music includes and manages the historical collections of the Royal College of Music, with exception of all Library material. Its collections currently include:

- One of the three earliest public collections of musical instruments established in the UK and one of the earliest in Europe (est. 1884), including over 800 instruments spanning between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century and including unique pieces such as the earliest surviving stringed keyboard instrument (ca.1480), reputedly the earliest existing guitar (1581) and baryton (1647). Other key elements of the collection are an early harpsichord by Alessandro Trasuntino (1531), a cittern by Girolamo Campi (c. 1580), a virginal by Giovanni Celestini (1593), a chitarrone by Magnus Tieffenbrucker (1608), a Cithrinchen and a guitar by Joachim Tielke and one attributed to René Voboam and an ivory recorder and clarinet, respectively signed by Jacob Denner and I. Scherer.
- A collection of ca. 150 paintings, mostly portraits of musicians, among which are the standard portraits of Joseph Haydn (Thomas Hardy, 1791) and Farinelli (Bartolomeo Nazari, 1734) and classic paintings of Gaetano Pugnani, William Shield (Thomas Hardy, c.1790), William Boyce (Mason Chamberlain, attr., 1765-170).
- A vast collection (ca. 500 boxes) of musical photographs and prints, mainly 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including complete series of 'The organ club' and 'The Flute Collection'.

Ca. 25% of the musical instrument collection and 10% of the painting collection are on display in the Museum, while 90 more paintings are hung in RCM public areas. The rest of the collections is available upon request with a weekly turnover. The collections are also digitally available through the MIMO project ([www.mimo-project.com](http://www.mimo-project.com)), Europeana ([www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu)), and ArenaPAL commercial image library ([www.arenapal.com](http://www.arenapal.com)).

The collection received Accreditation from the ACE in 2009 and passed an accreditation return in 2013.

The importance of its collections and their relevance in the national and international context are shown by the number of publications and conference papers, both by RCM members and externals, that discuss particularly its instruments and paintings, as well as in the involvement in national and international projects and in the active role played in the main associations in the field of musical instruments museums and research.

## 1. Objectives

The objectives of the RCM Museum are to:

- Preserve, refine and expand a collection of musical instruments and iconography that is of national and international importance and relevant to the RCM.
- Engage the public – including users from within and outside the RCM, higher education institutions, children, special need visitors and higher – in the appreciation and understanding of the collection, both on site and through electronic resources.
- Promote the study, interpretation and understanding of the collections and, in general, support, promote and carry out research in the fields of organology and musical iconography.
- Participate in national and international projects relevant to the fields of organology and musical iconography.
- Expand its role as a national and international leading museum in the care and interpretation of music collections.

## 2. The RCM Museum in 2020

The Royal College of Music Museum in 2019 is located in its new premises at the hearth of the RCM. Since its reopening in January 2019 it is open to the public Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 to 18:00, with extended evening opening up to the start of concert performances, and attracts an average of 10-15,000 visitors per year, which come to see its interactive display, and attend artistic and cultural activities, many of which are organised in collaboration with RCM students and professors. It is a hub with high visibility within the RCM, raising its profile and increasing its public impact, and offers exciting possibilities for students to engage in a variety of public activities, giving them a public platform to experiment and showcase their projects and research. It closely collaborates with the RCM Library in the elaboration of projects, research grants, exhibitions and initiatives that showcase the variety and richness of the RCM special collections and their relevance both to the RCM teaching and to the general public.

Its collections are fully accessible either on display, in an on-site storage that is fit for purpose and online. Collections are regularly audited, checked and revised according to a clearly defined cultural plan that is discussed with fellow organisations in order to maintain a profile that is both relevant and unique in the wider national context. A continuous process of refinement and improvement of the collection is in place in order to guarantee that they are of the highest quality, representative, and inclusive and allow space for growth and refinement within the space available.

Activities include concerts, performed both in the gallery and in the adjoining performance space, that is secure and climatically safe for the historical collections, guided tours, initiatives with a special focus on families, children

from the age of 2, visitors with special needs (including deaf and blind people), some of them carried out in collaboration with other museums and institutions.

It is well aware of the importance of dissemination and of 'reaching out' to potential users and is primarily active on digital platforms and social networks, also through collaboration with the Marketing department. This includes the digitisation and public availability of its collections online, through the RCM Museum website and international aggregators, in a gradual process that is defined in a dedicated strategic document.

The museum has both an active research strategy, which it carries out both through the contribution of members of staff, PhD and DMus students and independent researchers and scholars, and through partnership with HE and research institutions and with other museums both nationally and internationally. It also involves undergraduate and Master students in its research activities organising workshops and informing regularly of the collaboration initiatives that are available.

It is well connected in the national and international networks of museums, research centres and specifically musical instrument collections and plays a leading role internationally thanks to its research output and proactive dissemination policy that includes its on-line presence, participation in and organisation of national and international conferences. Regular collaborations with HE institutions include visits and lessons that can be integrated in their curriculum.

Its workforce is balanced and sufficient to sustain the above initiatives and to foster further growth and includes a curator, an administrative assistant, a public engagement officer, a digital asset officer, and a part time conservator. This leads to a consistent effort in documentation and improvement of management structures, in good current and preventive conservation and in a gradual increase in the number of visitors up to the goal of 20,000 per year. Workforce also includes a number of trained volunteers that are sufficient for invigilation, and/or paid guards.

### 3. The RCM Museum in 2015

The Museum is housed in a purpose built gallery from the 1970s that is open to the public twenty hours a week (Tuesday-Friday, 11:30-16:30), and is otherwise used for RCM masterclasses, HP faculty classes and occasional public events. The space was secured for visitors of all ages, but presents irresolvable issues in accessibility, visibility and climate control.

Since Spring 2014 the Museum collections have been widened, adding to the historical musical instruments (with exception of those in the lending collection, which is managed by another department), but also works of art (including paintings and sculptures), iconographic material and memorabilia previously managed by the RCM Centre for Performance History. This allows a more consistent and uniform management of collections, both for their documentation and public availability. The collections are stored partly on site, and partly in two off-site facilities with weekly deliveries to the RCM. Many of the musical instruments require conservation and a programme in this direction has been started from those in playing conditions. The collection is relevant and

diversified and was recently audited, but it has reached capacity in the space available in the RCM and would benefit from a process of critical reassessment and rationalisation both to strengthen its identity and profile, and to consolidate and increase the information available.

Documentation of the various collections is inconsistent, since it was carried out according to different standards on the various parts of the collection before the merge. In some areas (particularly musical iconography apart from paintings) it is insufficient to meet accreditation standards. A documentation plan sufficient to maintain accreditation was carried out in 2015 and should be completed by 2018. Meanwhile, photographic documentation of the instrument and painting collections are being completed and digitisation of the remaining part of the iconography collections has started, partly with support from an external contractor. The bulk of the documentation is on paper files and difficult to access. Since several years the College purchased licences for AdLib collection management system, and the database is now beginning to be populated through a project that will require an estimate of two to five years. This is also generating content to develop the Museum's digital presence online: the current static webpage ([rcm.ac.uk/museum](http://rcm.ac.uk/museum)) offers basic information about the collections and events, but requires a thorough revision of contents and structure. It will also need to embed a search tool for public access to the collections' database, and this is currently being investigated while funds are sought for. In the meanwhile the first batches of records are now accessible through international aggregators such as MIMO ([www.mimo-project.com](http://www.mimo-project.com)) and Europeana ([www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu)) and through a commercial digital library which is in charge of licencing them for publication and external use ([www.arenapal.com](http://www.arenapal.com)).

The gallery is currently visited by about 8,000 visitors per year, 85% of which external to the RCM, which is likely to be its maximum potential under the current circumstances. Visitors from within the RCM are mainly students from the HP faculty, while the involvement with other classes is very limited. Likewise, the small use of the collections in the students' curriculum, and their very small exposure to the research opportunities offered are an issue that has not been solved. External visitors are mainly attracted by the many activities organised by the museum and in particular concerts (organised on an almost weekly basis and currently featuring mostly students from the HP classes), children workshops for families and schools (mostly led by RCM students in collaboration with Sparks), and special need visitors' focus groups. Further activities for the public include weekly guided tours on Wednesday afternoons and tailored guided tours for groups and HE classes and institutions. However, the latter would benefit from a more proactive approach that is being developed through contacts with HE institutions and cultural associations.

The Museum has also organised temporary exhibitions since 2003. While this is important to keep attention alive and encourage repeated visits, and in many occasions it allowed to display parts of the collections and activities that would have remained hidden otherwise, it fails to attract satisfactory numbers of visitors. A revision of the marketing, display and topics strategy is being undertaken and a first step to try a new approach culminated in the collaboration with Ben Uri gallery (April-August 2015). More generally, a systematic survey and consultation of visitors' and potential visitors is being carried out with support of an external consultant, to inform the development of the new Museum.

The Museum is involved in research, both attracting grants and producing publications, also through the individual work of members of its staff. While the past year has led to the successful exploration of several research paths

through collaboration with other institutions, no consistent research strategy is yet in place. This will also need to be coordinated with the general RCM research strategies, since the Museum's resources currently have space for very limited expansion in this direction.

The Museum staff is formed by 3.6FTE, including a full time curator, museum administrator and digitisation officer (2 years, Oct 2014-Sept 2016) and a part time Museum assistant. Regular maintenance of the keyboard instruments is carried out by an external technician four hours a week, while extraordinary conservation relies on external specialists selected on an *ad hoc* basis. Invigilation of the gallery relies on a group of volunteers.

## 4. Actions

### 4.1. GALLERY, COLLECTIONS AND COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

During three of the next five years, most of the RCM collections will be inaccessible to the public while the new Museum is being built. This time will be ideal to carry out the conservation and documentation required in view of the new display and to maintain accreditation. It will also allow a general reassessment of the collection, tied with the application for Designation and with the development of the new display and consolidation of the profile of the collection. It will also generate contents and the conceptual framework for the digital presence of the collections.

#### 4.1.1. Decant and store the collection safely

Ca. 650 instruments and 10 paintings will need to be removed from the current gallery and moved to a temporary off-site storage, while on-site storage becomes available. Various solutions are being investigated with the final goal of bringing back all collections on-site by 2019 at latest.

Action	Review Date	Teams
Check current offsite storage solutions and choose preferred one	By June 2015	Museum, Estates
Remove from display, pack and transfer to off-site storage ca. 650 instruments and 10 paintings	Dec 2015- Mar 2016	Museum, Contractors
Consider solution for medium term storage (merge in a single location, bring back to RCM)	By summer 2016	
Plan, organise and create on-site storage	Tbc	Museum, Estates, Contractors,
Move all instruments to on-site storage	Tbc	Museum, Contractors

#### 4.1.2. Carry out the documentation plan

See document 'Documentation Plan 2015-2018'. These procedures are necessary to maintain ACE Accreditation for the Museum.

Action	Review Date	Teams
Labelling and marking	June 2015- December 2017	
Cataloguing: Continue current cataloguing and digitisation project (instruments and portraits), check existing data and add information	By summer 2015 -spring 2016	
Seek funding for post to create an inventory of c. 30,000 photographs and prints from CPH and to digitise some or all of this collection.	end 2017 (post to start 2018)	
Boxes of material from Centre for Performance History - inventory to object level	end 2018- end 2019	
Cataloguing: transferring all documentation to AdLib	By end 2017	
Boxes of material from Centre for Performance History: inventory to object level.	By end 2018	
Carry out approved disposal procedure for any items identified as unsuitable for the collections.	By end 2018	

#### 4.1.3. Carry out conservation required on instruments that will be on display in the new gallery

Action	Review Date	Teams
Identify instruments to be conserved and write conservation report	By end 2015	
Fund-raise		
Identify conservators and agree conservation plan	By summer 2016	
Conservation completed	By end 2018	

#### 4.1.4. Rationalisation of the RCM Museum collections

Action	Review Date	Teams
Reassessment of the musical instrument collection		
Reassessment of the painting collection		
Reassessment of the other iconographic collections		
Identification of partners for long term deposit		
Definition and implementation of a deaccessioning plan		

#### 4.1.5. Maintain accreditation and apply for designation

Action	Review Date	Teams
Submit application for designation	By July 2015	
Revision of accreditation	Dec 2015- June 2016	
Second stage of designation process	By July 2016	
Revision of accreditation	Dec 2018 – June 2019	

#### 4.1.6. Improve digital presence of the Collections

A separate strategy with detailed articulation of the steps was approved internally.

Action	Review Date	Teams
Complete digitisation of paper material related to musical instruments	Sept 2015	
Complete photographic documentation of musical instruments (at least one photo per instrument)	Sept 2015	
Create records for the whole musical instrument collection in AdLib	Dec 2015	
Contribute all MI records to MIMO and Europeana	Dec 2015	
Check and integrate photographic documentation of painting collection	April 2016	
Digitise all archival material on painting collection	September 2016	
Contribute records to commercial digital library	Dec 2016	
Make material available on RCM website	Dec 2016	
Digitise iconography collection (engravings, etc.)	Jan 2017-...	
Make material available to the public		

#### 4.1.7. Plan and create the new display including multimedia

Action	Review Date	Teams
Select instruments and paths		
Develop contents		
Write texts		
Take photographs, recordings and videorecordings		
Develop multimedia		
Showcases and display		
Mounting		

#### 4.1.8. Plan and create the new on-site storage space

Action	Review Date	Teams
Revise list of instruments		
Explore storage solutions		
Transfer instruments		

### 4.2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

#### 4.2.1. Develop and implement an audience development plan

Action	Review Date	Teams
Carry out current visitors' assessment study		
Carry out visitors' and potential visitors' surveys		
Develop audience development plan		
Test solutions		
Implement plan		

#### 4.2.2. Create expectation and maintain public awareness

Action	Review Date	Teams
Discuss preliminary plan		
Develop and implement digital plans		
Develop and implements plans for pop up exhibitions and events		

#### 4.2.3. Plan and develop activity plan for the Museum after opening

Action	Review Date	Teams
Discuss preliminary plan		
Carry out consultation		
Approve final plan		

#### 4.2.4. Develop and implement a Marketing plan

Action	Review Date	Teams
Discuss preliminary plan		
Carry out consultation		
Approve final plan		

### 4.3. RESEARCH

#### 4.3.1. Develop a research strategy and define research profile for the Museum also with Library

Action	Review Date	Teams
Revise research potential of the Museum		
Write and approve research strategy		
Identify pilot projects		
Seek funding		
Carry out research		

#### 4.3.2. Intensify international collaboration with music museums

Action	Review Date	Teams
Continue and increase involvement in ICOM-CIMCIM		
Participation in COST Action		
Intensify focussed collaboration through international bids		

#### 4.3.3. Intensify national collaboration with other museums

Action	Review Date	Teams
Intensify connection with South Kensington Museum group		
Intensify connection with University Museum Group		
Intensify connection with ICOM-UK		

#### 4.3.4. Develop contact with HE institutions

Action	Review Date	Teams
Take contacts with potential partners		
Discuss collaboration		

#### 4.3.5. Investigate research potential in collaboration with RCM professors and students

Action	Review Date	Teams
Carry out consultation		
Test phase (max. 3 projects)		
Integrate collections in RCM curriculum		

#### 4.3.6. Support individual research

Action	Review Date	Teams
Identify research projects		
Agree research plan		
Submit deliverables		

### 4.4. Resources

#### 4.4.1. Staff development plan

Action	Review Date	Teams
To be discussed		

#### 4.4.2. Revise volunteer recruitment and gallery invigilation plan

Action	Review Date	Teams
Discuss preliminary plan		
Approve final plan		