

Thank you Professor McDonald for asking me to present a short piece on the Conservatoire's archives and research collections. You must forgive me, I'm afraid the archive is currently in a state of undress; the collections and search room are in the process to being moved, and consequently I'm afraid I don't have any goodies with me to let you have a look through yourselves. But with any luck I can talk with enough fervour and furious intensity that the objects about which I am speaking will be conjured before your very eyes without the need to blow the dust off them.

The Conservatoire was founded as the Glasgow Athenaeum in 1847, however our archive was only formally constituted in 2011, so although Jeff is 169 years old, I'm not quite five yet. Before then, it's fair to say we didn't exactly curate our history as secrete it in cupboards, under floorboards and up chimneys, and my first job was to find out what we had, and perhaps more importantly *where* we put it. The joy of these past few years has been finding out quite how much of our history we have in fact preserved; and we have done that thanks to the kind auspices of interested parties who have carefully squirrelled away programmes, prospectuses, publications and photographs, and any number of other words beginning with P, which have built to form a remarkably complete resource.

So enough of the hyperbole - what have we got?

One of the early discoveries was the evidence of our opening soiree, on the 27th of December 1847, which boasted Charles Dickens in the chair. Our very first Board of Governors minute books, which are written in the most lustrous copperplate, pick up the story, and tell us that Dickens was in fact our second choice of speaker. Our first was Lord Morpeth, who, at the time, was working under Lord John Russell as First Commissioner of Woods and Forests, so we got a lucky escape there.

Dickens' speech was given in our original premises on Ingram Street opposite what's now the Gallery of Modern Art. We've moved a couple of times since then, otherwise you'd all be treated to the view of the Duke of Wellington with a traffic cone on his head this evening. What perhaps some of you won't know, however, is that our original entrance survives in the form of a disembodied arch at the west entrance to Glasgow Green. Next time you see it, think of the names who have passed through that archway. Charles Dickens. Ralph Waldo Emerson. Frederick Chopin. Bram Stoker. Buffalo Bill. Sir Henry Irving. Me.

It had long been forgotten in our history that Dickens actually signed our book of strangers - that's a visitor's book to you and I - and it's one of the pleasures of rooting about in archives that one can encounter finds like these almost on a weekly basis. His signature, like his opening speech, was very much larger than the lines printed to contain it and we'll come back to that thought in a minute.

Another early discovery was a chap who rejoiced in the name Henri Verbrugghen. At the time when we had the pleasure of his company, we had moved to our "new" premises on the corner of Buchanan Street and what was then St. George's Place, now Nelson Mandela Place, and Verbrugghen had been recruited to the newly formed Glasgow Athenaeum School of Music. It wasn't until the 1890s that we began to specialise in this area; previously the Glasgow Athenaeum had been considered something like a finishing school for the moral

improvement of the citizens of Glasgow. We perhaps realised that we were backing a loser there and so chose to establish a distinct music school with staff drawn from around the world.

A graduate of the Brussels Conservatorium, Verbrugghen helped to cement the European style conservatoire education that Alan Macbeth, our then Principal, sought to establish for his new music school. This was the first of its kind in Scotland and only the second in the UK after the Royal Academy. It's fun to think that the next oldest, the Royal College of Music, is actually 35 years our junior, not that I'm casting nasturtiums.

Verbrugghen's reputation as a violinist (bear in mind that this is the person who gave the UK premiere of Sibelius' *Violin Concerto in D minor*) and his formidable reputation as an educator and orchestral leader in Glasgow led to his invitation, in 1915, to found the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music (now simply the Sydney Con). Whilst he was at it, he accidentally founded the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

There's still a Verbrugghen Hall in the Sydney Con, and there's a Verbrugghen Street in Canberra. He was a major figure in the antipodes, he's remembered widely, and he made his name and forged his career here in Glasgow. We're not great at celebrating our own, but in 2015 the Sydney Con produced a centenary publication which draws heavily from Verbrugghen's story in our archive.

It isn't all chaps, however. It is important to note the strong role of women in the Glasgow Athenaeum's history and development. I promised we would come back to him, and Charles Dickens, in his opening speech, said

I am happy to know that in the Glasgow Athenaeum there is a peculiar bond of union between the institution and the fairest part of creation. [by which he means women] I understand that the necessary addition to the small library of books being difficult and expensive to make, the ladies have generally resolved to hold a fancy bazaar, and to devote the proceeds to this admirable purpose; and I learn with no less pleasure that her Majesty the Queen, in a graceful and womanly sense of the excellence of this design, has consented that the bazaar shall be held under her royal patronage. I can only say, that if you do not find something very noble in your books after this, you are much duller students than I take you to be. The ladies-- the single ladies, at least --however disinterested I know they are by sex and nature, will, I hope, resolve to have some of the advantages of these books, by never marrying any but members of the Athenaeum. It seems to me it ought to be the pleasantest library in the world.

Now it is well known these days, if it weren't then, that Dickens was a bit of a naughty one but that's a little racy for 1847 wouldn't you say? However the important point is that women had equal use of the Glasgow Athenaeum and its facilities from the very beginning, whereas the London Athenaeum only began admitting women in 2002. I'll say that again: 2002!

We don't have to look very far to see the benefits to this institution of this policy. Again at the very founding of the Glasgow Athenaeum School of Music we find a piano teacher in our staff list by the name of Emma Ritter-Bondy. In 1891 Madame Ritter-Bondy became Professor Ritter-Bondy, the first professorship awarded by the Glasgow Athenaeum School of Music –

an award which, as a higher education institution, it had every right to make. Now this is interesting; our first ever professor was a woman. That ought not to be remarkable, but it is.

If one were to look through the BBC Radio 4 Women's Hour archive, one might find the following assertion:

1913 Caroline Spurgeon is appointed Professor of English Literature at London University, making her Britain's first female professor.

I don't know about you, but I feel a letter coming on. We can beat that by twenty-two years.

Some of you may be aware that the Conservatoire has been giving thought recently to its new strategic plan and the development of our offer to students and the wider communities we support as we move forward. One of the key pillars of this is our commitment to equality and diversity, which is given real traction and foundation by acknowledging this vitally important, criminally overlooked part of our history. It shows that we mean what we say.

These three vignettes of history are signal flairs which light a corner of our past, and are more fully illuminated by careful reading of our archival records. We are very privileged to look after stories such as these; we are custodians of a rich heritage which looks much further than just our own institution's history.

It might be of interest to know that our archive also looks after the collections of a number of external parties as acquisitions and as deposits. In 2014 the world's oldest surviving music hall, the Britannia Panopticon on Argyle Street, deposited their archive with us for our curation. Their scrapbooks formed the backbone of our 'History of Variety Entertainment' exhibition earlier this year. We also have deposited with us the papers of the BBC Scottish Symphony Club and the Solar Bear archive charting the creation of their flagship deaf apprentice scheme.

When papers are deposited, it means we curate them and look after them to museum standard, but the depositor retains ownership. The benefit to us is that they are publically accessible collections which I can draw on for exhibitions, which can be researched and which our students and staff can utilise for educational purposes. The benefit to the depositor is that their material will be curated to professional standards, and will be catalogued and stored appropriately. That said, the vast majority of our extrinsic collections, those which have come to us from furth of the building, are donated, and we have quite literally over 100 linear metres of shelving dedicated to these.

We're really lucky in the UK because we're remarkably overpopulated with odd people who collect all sorts of things, some of which is actually pretty interesting. Our archive's collection policy states that the Conservatoire is interested in acquiring materials and records in all areas of performance art, particularly - but not exclusively - those with a geographical pertinence to Scotland and the city of Glasgow. I know it says that because I wrote it.

The extrinsic collections cover a wide range of performance disciplines including classical music manuscript collections, programmes (many of which are hand-annotated by critics), stage designs, dance scores (that's things like choreographic notations and movement maps),

historic and contemporary musical instruments, manuscripts of plays and poetry and historically significant props and costumes.

A few well known names include the Jimmy Logan Collection, Frank Spedding's original music manuscripts, the papers and programmes of the Glasgow Bach Choir, the original manuscript compositions used at the coronations of Queen Elizabeth II and King George VI, the Howard & Wyndham ballet archive and many more.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Conservatoire's unique position as a centre of excellence for brass research, supported by incredibly rich world-class collections in this field. The Robert Minter Collection of largely seventeenth and eighteenth-century manuscripts of rare and obscure trumpet repertory is one of the largest collections of its type in the world. The Friedel Keim Collection of correspondence with the world's trumpeters brings us his original research, including original photographs of Louis Armstrong no less. The Enderby Jackson Collection preserves the archive of the nineteenth-century Crystal Palace Brass Band Championships. The Edward Tarr Collection includes over one-hundred original urtext editions of brass music together with the research used to create them and the Reine Dahlqvist Collection charts the history and evolution of the trumpet. Are you dizzy yet?

All of this research material is underpinned by the vast John Webb Collection of modern and historic musical instruments, mostly brass. John Webb was an instrument collector and maker, and he had some real gems in his collection. We have one of only three trombones made by Adolph Sax (the chap more famous for inventing the saxophone), as well as a twelve keyed serpent which would make your eyes water. The Webb Collection added to John Wallace's gift earlier this year of his collection of trumpets and those instruments we already had takes the inventory up to nearly 1000 items.

Antithetical to many archive services, students and staff are permitted to borrow these instruments for the purposes of research and performance. They're a living collection and they're no use gathering dust. There's something quite special about playing old music on the instruments it was intended to be heard on; the sound is quite different. You can learn a lot from it and that sort of performative research is exactly the kind of thing our archive is here to enable.

I'm going to round up quickly by talking about one of our newest acquisitions; the Erik Chisholm Collection. Chisholm was a composer first and foremost, and his music is extremely interesting historically because his is the first voice to bring the Scottish, and particularly the Gaelic, idiom into classical music. He wrote a piano concerto which employed many of the scales and evolutions associated with piobaireachd, a ballet called the *The Hooded Crow* and a sonata called *An Riobain Dearg*, amongst others. His archive contains a number of unsung treasures, quite literally when one looks at the manuscript of his unperformed opera on *The Importance of Being Ernest*.

Perhaps the most arresting series within the Chisholm Collection is his correspondence with the innovative composer Sorabji, who spent a lot of energy trying to establish a homosexual love affair with Chisholm through his letters, but which (sadly for him) was unrequited.

The current archival exhibition, *Chasing a Restless Muse*, showcases the newly acquired Erik Chisholm Collection, and will run until the end of the year. You can find it in the glass display area outside the Ledger Room on the third floor, between the library and the Stevenson Hall. Look out for the lock of Sorabji's hair sent to Chisholm in the 1930s.

I know I've spoken for quite a while and I don't want to labour the point. These collections, and many more besides, are primary sources which are open to the public, but remain largely untapped – they've got lots of stories to share with us. I say largely untapped, but when I visited the Glasgow School of Art archives recently they shared their usage statistics with me and it turns out we get more than three times the amount of enquiries that they do, so that's encouraging, and testament to the richness and pertinence of the collections for which I am lucky to be responsible on this institution's behalf. So, given that, maybe Dickens needn't have worried - we're not dull students after all.

Thank you.