



## Special issue: **Paper and Copyists in Viennese Opera Scores**

### **Editorial Introduction**

**Martin Eybl**

University of Music and Performing Arts, Department of Musicology and Performance Studies

[eybl@mdw.ac.at](mailto:eybl@mdw.ac.at)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2605-933X>

**Abstract:** The research project *Paper and Copyists in Viennese Opera Scores, 1760–1770* (duration 2021–2025, funded by FWF, [P 34188](#)), to which the following articles relate, aimed to study the making of music manuscripts: it focused on the production of opera scores written by professional Viennese copyists. It continued the work of its predecessor project *Cultural Transfer of Music in Vienna, 1755–1780* (duration: 2014–2018, funded by FWF, [P 26456](#)), so that the two projects and the resulting website completely cover Viennese opera scores from the period from 1760 to 1775. The manuscripts stem from the Imperial collection and beyond. Besides opening an option for dating manuscripts, observations on the material structure of the music manuscripts and the distribution of scribes and paper offer insight into the practice of manuscript production in Vienna, especially concerning the cooperation of copyists, the use of paper, the staff ruling, and the book binding. The studies in this special issue of *Musicologica Austriaca* operate within this field.

### **1. Material Studies: Artifacts as Sources**

The study of material objects has a long tradition in musicology. The field of organology developed a system for classifying musical instruments, focusing on their construction and history. Further material sources include stage sets and theater costumes, wax cylinders with music recordings, gramophones, conducting batons, and music stands, all of which have been collected, preserved, exhibited, and eventually researched. In philologically oriented source studies, scholars examine the structure, origin, and dating of musical manuscripts and prints with the aim to determine the value of a source for the edition of works. Autographs hold a special place in this context; the

collecting of autographs, old manuscripts, and prints also forms the historical background from which the scholarly study of musical artifacts emerged.

In doing so, musicology has contributed to material culture studies, even before the name of the new discipline was established. These studies developed in the 1990s, driven by strong impulses from disciplines that often work without textual evidence, such as archaeology, anthropology, and ethnology.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, musicology has adopted approaches from material culture studies.<sup>2</sup> When it comes to sheet music, however, such an approach shifts the research perspective: manuscripts and prints, which were primarily supposed to serve the transmission and dissemination of musical texts (in a broader sense), are now examined for their material composition. Further, these artifacts are understood as the results of cultural practices and serve as sources of information for which we have little or no written evidence: Where did the paper for the scores come from? Who was involved in the production of the paper, the music copying, and possibly even the binding of the book? How did the producers cooperate? Additionally, the perspective of material culture studies highlights how many people and different professions were involved and why these artifacts were considered valuable.

## 2. The Collections

Collecting opera scores was a customary practice for the Viennese court as an institution, as well as for individual members of the imperial family, spanning several decades throughout the eighteenth century. This tradition of collecting reached its first peak with Emperor Leopold I's (1640–1705) so-called "Schlafkammerbibliothek" ("Bibliotheca cubicularis"). 524 volumes from this collection containing music of various genres, have been preserved to the present day.<sup>3</sup> The subsequent emperors also ensured that the scores of operas performed at the imperial court were collected and preserved. From the era of Empress Maria Theresa (1717–1780), opera scores have survived in close succession, and her daughter Archduchess Elisabeth (1743–1808) curated her own collection.<sup>4</sup> Between 1760 and 1775, these works included compositions from the genres of *opéra comique*, *opera seria*, and *opera buffa*. With the death of the Hofkapellmeister Florian Leopold Gassmann (1729–1774) and the dissolution of the Italian troupe at the Burgtheater in February 1776, the passion for collecting at the Viennese court seems to have waned, only to be revived under Emperor Franz II/I (1768–1835) and his wife Marie Therese

(1772–1807).<sup>5</sup> The collections mentioned were not always housed in one location but ultimately found their way, through various paths, to the Austrian National Library, where they are still preserved today. Only the collection of Archduke Rudolf (1788–1831) from the early nineteenth century, which also contained many opera scores, is now mostly held in the archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien*.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. The Project

The research project *Paper and Copyists in Viennese Opera Scores, 1760–1770* (duration 2021–2025, funded by FWF, [P 34188](#)), to which the following articles relate, aimed to study the making of music manuscripts: it focused on the production of opera scores written by professional Viennese copyists. It continued the work of its predecessor project *Cultural Transfer of Music in Vienna, 1755–1780* (duration: 2014–2018, funded by FWF, [P 26456](#)), so that the two projects and the resulting website completely cover Viennese opera scores from the period from 1760 to 1775. The manuscripts stem from the Imperial collection and beyond.

Today (January 2025), the *Paper & Copyist* website provides information on 168 scores contained in 376 volumes. The information includes details about the paper used, the copyists involved, and the material composition of the manuscripts. The data is digitally accessible and linked to [RISM](#) and the [Bernstein Portal](#), a hub for information about paper and watermarks. Two scores were created in 1759, and two after 1775. The remaining 164 scores date from the period 1760–1775, constituting all the identified scores from that timeframe to date. Most of these manuscripts have remained in Vienna since their creation or were returned there after being held in various Austrian cities. Others have been dispersed: the collection of Archduchess Maria Carolina (1752–1814) went to Naples, while the collection of her brother, Elector Maximilian Franz (1756–1801), ended up in Modena. Today manuscripts from the possession of Saxon Electress Maria Antonia Walpurgis (1724–1780) are housed in Dresden and Leipzig, those of the Esterházy princes in Budapest, and those of Count Giacomo Durazzo (1717–1794) in Turin.

## 4. Dating Manuscripts

In musicology, the study of paper and copyists has usually been related to questions of dating. Hundreds of works by Haydn, Gluck, and other Viennese composers are known solely from contemporary copies. These sources written by professional copyists normally remained undated; determining the chronological position of the works and the value of each source is difficult. This is why more than thirty years ago the Hungarian musicologist László Somfai, in his programmatic essay “Die Wiener Gluck-Kopisten: Ein Forschungsdesiderat,” called for a catalog of “Viennese copyists from about 1750 to 1770” to be developed from a “systematic examination” of Viennese opera scores.<sup>7</sup>

The *Paper & Copyists* database provides such a catalog and serves as a basis for dating music manuscripts from Vienna written by professional copyists. If a copyist present in the database is found in other manuscripts, their Viennese provenance is very likely. The paper for these manuscripts was used for less than two years on average, so identifying the paper in undated manuscripts from Vienna enables a fairly accurate dating, and even more so when paper and copyists are combined. Rather than relying on any single element, it is the combination of elements that provides the most valuable clues for dating. The project employs various types of combinations: those of copyists working together, of paper types used simultaneously, and of copyists using specific types of paper. If the same combination recurs in other sources, it is quite likely that the source was temporarily connected to the reference source in the *Paper & Copyists* sample. The copyists [WK71H](#), [WK71K](#), and [WK71P](#), for instance, appear only twice in the *Paper & Copyists* sample together with the papers [P3](#) (Gaudenzio Fossati) and [P9](#) (Valentino Galvani), namely in two scores from 1771: [Sacchini\\_10070](#) and [Piccinni\\_17813](#). If the combination of all five elements (or even just four of them) is found in an undated manuscript, it is likely to date to the same year.

*Paper & Copyists* followed the heuristic assumption that the opera scores were produced close to the date of their first performance in Vienna. Where the combination of copyists and paper did not match the other manuscripts from the same year, the score had to be re-dated.<sup>8</sup> In some rare cases, scores were produced for performances that were canceled subsequently for various reasons.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that they were already written allows for an even more precise dating of all scores in general: it can be assumed that, as a rule, the scores were completed before the first performance.

## 5. The Special Issue

Besides opening an option for dating manuscripts, observations on the material structure of the music manuscripts and the distribution of scribes and paper offer insight into the practice of manuscript production in Vienna, especially concerning the cooperation of copyists, the use of paper, the staff ruling, and the book binding. The studies in this special issue of *Musicologica Austriaca* operate within this field.

Martin Eybl and Konstantin Hirschmann describe the journey of the music paper from its primary production site in Toscolano on Lake Garda to its point of use ( [“From Toscolano to Vienna: Production and Transalpine Trade of Venetian Music Paper”](#)). They discuss the location of the paper mills and their watermarks, examine the staff ruling by the *rigatori* in Venice, and gather the limited information we have so far about the paper trade to Vienna.

In her contribution, [“Typically Viennese? On the Production and Design of Opera Scores Written by Professional Copyists in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Vienna”](#) Christiane Maria Hornbachner focuses on various details that distinguish scores from Vienna, including the design of the covers, the layout of the title pages, staff ruling, layer arrangement, and the highly standardized writing style. A central part of the contribution is devoted to the biography and writing style of Theresia Ziss, the most important copyist in the sample of manuscripts examined in *Paper & Copyists*.

In her chapter on [“Collaborative work processes in copyist workshops in mid-eighteenth-century Vienna,”](#) Constanze Marie Köhn also addresses Ziss, now as the head of a workshop, alongside the heads of the two other workshops identifiable in the *Paper & Copyists* sample. She examines the professional practices of copyist workshops, detailing their staff, division of labor, quality control methods, and provides annotated lists of scores attributed to these workshops.

In [“Salieri's \*Locandiera\* and its Viennese versions: A codicological examination,”](#) Emilia Pelliccia compares several Viennese sources of the opera. After its premiere in 1773, the piece was modified in certain details in 1782 for a new

series of performances. These changes are barely reflected in the printed libretti but are much more evident in Salieri's autograph and a manuscript copy of the opera, where an analysis of the papers reveals an older and a more recent layer.

Through a detailed examination of handwriting and paper, staff ruling, and the material structure of the volumes, these studies analyze otherwise unavailable information. Archival sources and statistical data further complement the findings. The articles shed light on a field of practices for preserving and disseminating music that was instrumental in enabling the resounding success of Italian operas and French *opéras comiques* in late absolutist and Enlightenment-era Europe.

## Notes

1. For an overview of the field and its history see Chris Tilley et al., eds., *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2006); Anette Caroline Cremer and Martin Mulsow, eds., *Objekte als Quellen der historischen Kulturwissenschaften: Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung*, Ding, Materialität, Geschichte 2 (Köln: Böhlau, 2017); Lu Ann De Cunzo and Catharine Dann Roeber, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, Cambridge Handbooks in Anthropology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
2. For example, in the book series "Material Cultures" published by Routledge, musicological volumes have also appeared in recent years: Michael Fleming and John Bryan, eds., *Early English Viols: Instruments, Makers and Music*, Music and Material Culture (London: Routledge, 2019); Andrea Lindmayr-Brandl and Grantley McDonald, eds., *Early Printed Music and Material Culture in Central and Western Europe*, Music and Material Culture (London: Routledge, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429342844>; Floris Schuiling and Emily Payne, eds., *Material Cultures of Music Notation: New Perspectives on Musical Inscription*, Music and Material Culture (London: Routledge, 2024).
3. For the collection and its history see Josef Gmeiner, "Die 'Schlafkammerbibliothek' Kaiser Leopolds I.," *Biblos: Beiträge zu Buch Bibliothek und Schrift* 43/3-4 (1994), 199-211; Greta Haenen, "Die 'Schlafkammerbibliothek' Leopolds I.: Privatsammlung eines kaiserlichen Komponisten," *Die Tonkunst* 12 (2018), 123-131; Stefan Engl, "Von der Schlafkammer übers Mauerloch in den Prunksaal und in die Stadtpalais – Eine kurze Geschichte der Musiksammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek am Beispiel des *Pomo d'oro*," in *Ad fontem musicae. Thomas Leibnitz zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Stefan Engl and Andrea Harrandt (Wien: Hollitzer, 2020), 15-32. A catalog of the collection from the early nineteenth century has been preserved: Verzeichniss jener Musikalien aus der Privat-Sammlung weil: Allerhöchst. S. M: Kaiser Leopold I., welche sich gegenwärtig noch in dem k. k. Hofmusikgrafenamts-Archive befinden, 1825, A-Wn Mus.Hs. 2478.
4. Martin Eybl, "Die Opern- und Ariensammlung der Erzherzogin Elisabeth von Österreich (1743-1808): Musizierpraxis im Kontext feudaler Bildungs- und Repräsentationskonzepte," *Die Musikforschung* 68/3 (2015): 255-79; *ibid.*, *Sammler\*innen: Musikalische Öffentlichkeit und ständische Identität, Wien 1740-1810* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2022), 179-205.
5. For the so-called Emperor's Collection of Emperor Franz, which likely owed significant portions of its content to the collecting efforts of his wife Marie Therese, see: Ernst Fritz Schmid, "Die Privatmusiksammlung des Kaisers Franz II. und ihre Wiederentdeckung in Graz im Jahre 1933," *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 25 (1970), 596-99; John A. Rice, *Empress Marie Therese and music at the Viennese court, 1792-1807* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 14-15.
6. Susan Kagan, *Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven's Patron, Pupil, and Friend. His Life and Music* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1988). For the collections of further family members see e.g. Elisabeth Reisinger et al., *The Operatic Library of Elector Maximilian Franz: Reconstruction, Catalogue, Contexts* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 2018); Elisabeth Reisinger, *Musik machen – fördern – sammeln. Erzherzog Maximilian Franz im Wiener und Bonner Musikleben* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 2020); Klaus Pietschmann, "Die Opernklavierauszüge in der Musikaliensammlung Ferdinands III. von der Toskana," *Die Tonkunst* 8 (2014), 205-16.
7. László Somfai, "Die Wiener Gluck-Kopisten – ein Forschungsdesiderat," in *Kongreßbericht Gluck in Wien, Wien, 12.-16. November 1987*, ed. Gerhard Croll and Monika Woitas, *Gluck-Studien 1* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1989), 178-82, at 178-79.

8. Scores without connection to the Viennese premiere of the opera include [Blaise\\_18766](#), [Bonno\\_2991-F2](#), [Bonno\\_25.6.1](#), [Fischietti\\_18064](#), [Gassmann\\_17775](#), [Hasse\\_18663](#), [Philidor\\_17897](#), [Salieri\\_157](#), [Scarlatti\\_10004](#), and [Scarlatti\\_17849](#). The abbreviation for specific scores, used in *Paper & Copyists* connects the name of the composer with the main part of the call number.
  
9. The performance of Giuseppe Bonno's *L'Atenaide, ovvero Gli affetti generosi* ([Bonno\\_18235](#)) was cancelled in August 1762 due to a miscarriage suffered by Isabella, the wife of Archduke Joseph. The performance of Christoph Willibald Gluck's *La corona* ([Gluck\\_10123](#), [Gluck\\_17782](#), [Gluck\\_27.4.4](#)) was scheduled for October 4, 1765, but was canceled due to the sudden death of the emperor. See Martin Eybl, "Die verschwundene Musikaliensammlung der Erzherzogin Elisabeth von Österreich," in *Die Frau als Gönnerin: Kulturvermittlung, Repräsentation und Fördernetzwerke in der frühneuzeitlichen Habsburger Monarchie*, ed. Lilla Krász and Brigitta Pesti (Wien: Praesens, 2023), 239–51, at 240, notes 5 and 6.