

## Scores and the internet

“With freedom comes great responsibility”. Teachers and students work with scores every single day, yet few students understand how copyright works and where they can obtain legal, free public domain scores. The reality for teachers in small towns across the country is that local libraries do not have enough resources, and scores listed in a piano or theory syllabus are often not readily available even at university libraries. Therefore, too often the task of research falls to the busy teacher. But the internet offers hope as the amount of information available is constantly expanding, and there are some high quality websites. This article will focus in particular on the availability of scores on the internet.

Often, teachers are reluctant to use the internet, but we cannot afford to ignore such a helpful tool, or to allow students to get too far ahead of us technologically! Certainly there are mistakes to be found on webpages, but this can also be the case with traditional resources. Double-check your facts, as you would when doing any research. If you are nervous about giving out your Email address (if required on a site), then try setting up a free hotmail account or a second family account which you give out when required to log into certain sites.

What is a “public domain” score? Music that was written by a composer who has been dead for at least 50 years are considered in the public domain in Canada. So, why do we pay for pieces by Bach and Chopin? The company that re-creates a composition then has a copyright on that particular arrangement if it is unique in some way. Purchasing collections of scores is expensive for a student, and photocopying scores is illegal, but there are numerous websites that offer legal copies of public domain works.

When looking for information, such as on a particular piece of music, type the whole title into your search engine (such as Google) with quotation marks around the title so that the search engine does not look for each individual word, but rather the entire title. Remember to bookmark useful sites for future visits to save time, and that when typing in a website address, you do not usually need to put http:// as you can type www. then the page address, or URL. When searching for information within a webpage, press the control key (bottom left corner of the keyboard, marked “Ctrl”) and the “F” key at the same time, and a FIND window comes up. Type in a key word or number, such as “BWV 232”, or “Mass” or “Bach” to find the *Mass in B minor*.

The International Music Score Library Project was a repository of more than 15,000 musical scores that are in the public domain in Canada. It began in 2006 and shut down in October 2007 due to copyright issues pertaining to Universal Edition scores that are still under copyright in Austria. Clearly, copyright is a confusing and contentious issue.

Happily, the number of online digital music libraries is expanding, and since the data is accessible to everyone, you just have to look in the right places. These libraries, including the University of Chicago where I recently discovered Chopin’s complete works, are putting up digital images of scores onto their web sites. For choral pieces, try the free

Choral Public Domain library. It is a real treasure trove, particularly for earlier music (up to and including the Classical era). For operas, an excellent site that includes links to other sites is: [opera.stanford.edu/iu/librettim.html](http://opera.stanford.edu/iu/librettim.html). You can gain access to the entire operas, complete with a list of characters, a synopsis, and choices which allow you to go directly to a certain scene in the opera and print out what you need.

Another useful site is [www.sheetmusicarchives.net](http://www.sheetmusicarchives.net). Scores can be downloaded using the Adobe Acrobat program. If you don't have this program, you can obtain a free copy from the company – click on the icon in the bottom right hand corner of the page. The online scores prototype by Indiana University - <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/variations/scores/> - provides scores for operas, songs, orchestral, chamber music, and piano literature.

To view a list of websites that have public domain scores, visit <http://altrove.de/imsip/othersites.html> and for a wealth of piano scores, visit <http://www.allpianoscores.com/index.html>.

Some sites you need to subscribe to for scores, such as: [www.digitalmusiclibrary.com](http://www.digitalmusiclibrary.com). They charge \$49.95 US for a year, and you can view their catalogue before deciding to join. The choices are endless and you can make extensive personal use of the printouts (for playing at home, public performance, teaching purposes).

One of the most common mistakes students make is to mispronounce the name of a composer or piece of music. There are several wonderful sites to help with this, including the Virginia Tech Multimedia Dictionary ([www.music.vt.edu/musicdictionary](http://www.music.vt.edu/musicdictionary)) which has pronunciations for every definition, and the Opera Memphis home page ([www.operamemphis.org](http://www.operamemphis.org), go to “education”) which has pronunciations for opera names and composers.