

## GLOBAL MUSIC RESEARCH IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY: ASIA'S MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP REPRESENTED IN RILM

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The bibliography of the Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale (RILM) was conceived as a global resource from its beginning in 1967, providing access to scholarly literature on music regardless of its origin or language. However, this idealist vision of RILM's founder Barry S. Brook (1918–1997) was difficult to implement fifty years ago. In many countries music scholarship was in its infancy or did not exist at all, and communication with many other countries was slow and laborious. As a result RILM started representing global music scholarship with bibliographic contributions from national committees in just thirty-three countries. Among them, Japan and Israel were the only Asian countries, and Japan is one of very few national committees that has been contributing bibliographic records and abstracts to the RILM database continuously since then.

The first office of the Japanese RILM national committee was established by Nomura Yoshio (1908–1994), the distinguished musicologist, who was at the time the musicology department chair at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music and president of the Japanese Musicological Society (1971–1976). He was the committee's chair until 1973. For a period of time the committee was located at the Nanki Music Library, but since its closing in 1978, it has been hosted by the Musashino College of Music in Tokyo. Currently the RILM national committee is chaired by Itoh Tatsuhiko, with Sekine Toshiko as the general secretary (since 1989), and records/abstracts are produced by a team of contributors. In 1973 the committee established the *Ongakubunken Mokuroku* (音楽文献目録; Bibliography of music literature in Japan), published annually, which serves as the basis for contributing records to RILM's global bibliographic database, *RILM Abstracts of Music Literature*. *RILM Abstracts* currently includes about 12,000 bibliographic records for publications from Japan going back to 1936.

At the IAML conference in Como in 1984, the Japanese committee, and the ethnomusicologist Tsuge Gen'ichi in particular, made a significant proposal for the revision of RILM's classification system to better accommodate the music history of Asian traditions. Tsuge's criticism was valid and an outcome of a more nuanced view on the periodization of global music cultures than the Western-centric approach supported by Barry Brook and the editors at RILM's International Office in New York. Tsuge's proposal initiated a significant discussion among the members of the IAML Cataloguing Commission, but as Japan was the only Asian country concerned with the periodization of Asian music history, it was not sufficiently appreciated. It took twenty more years until Tsuge's suggestions were reconsidered and implemented in a new way.

From these early years when scholarship was mainly local, the bibliographic needs of the academic community have shifted; scholars and performers today look for quick access to universal resources and knowledge on all music topics. Fifty years ago, Korean or Chinese journals used to be read in Korea or China, and in Asia RILM was used mainly for discovering European and American literature on Western music. Now Western academic institutions have more and more need to discover Asian content too. On the one hand, American and European universities are building overseas campuses with students from all over the world. Students at these universities are working on the most diverse topics, yet libraries nowadays do not have sufficient funding to build encyclopedic libraries that could provide instant and comprehensive access to the vast literature needed by students with such broad interests. On the other hand, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students more and more frequently study music at

American and European universities and conservatories. Italian conservatories sometimes have more students of bel canto coming from China and Korea than from Italy. Although these students will happily learn how to sing Verdi's arias in Italian, studying the dramaturgy of Verdi's operas from Italian literature is a more difficult task. Therefore, their teachers will need to find literature that is easier for them to comprehend, be it in Chinese, Korean, or in any other language. Librarians serving these students will be helped significantly by browsing English-language indexes in order to find the relevant literature in languages they cannot read. In today's research environment, we have the ability to find the literature we need through full-text collections of periodicals and e-book, and by borrowing books through interlibrary loan services. In such a new research environment, when literature on any given topic becomes overwhelmingly large and unwieldy, tools for finding material and filtering out unnecessary noise are more important than ever. This is where RILM's original role as a global finding aid for literature on music becomes more important than ever.

During the 1990s RILM made the first attempt to expand its coverage of music literature published in Asian countries, including Taiwan (714 records total to the present), Hong Kong (556 records), and South Korea (4,159 records). In October 2006 RILM started systematically indexing literature published in China. Music studies in China made significantly advances during the 1980s and 1990s, and it became critically important that *RILM Abstracts* embrace this corpus of literature too. Currently the RILM International Office in New York receives between 500 and 600 records every month from its group in Beijing, making China the largest national contributor to the database. Most of the current music periodicals in China started publication immediately after the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, and the main titles among them have been retrospectively indexed from the beginnings of their runs. RILM is now making plans for adding information for publications from India and South-East Asia to the bibliographic database.

The increase of the Asian material in RILM has required several adjustments to its protocols that make bibliographic records more user-friendly both in Asia and in the West. Since the beginnings RILM has transliterated all non-roman writing systems following the recommended standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). With the large inflow of material published in Asian languages, RILM has adjusted the database to display bibliographic records and abstracts bilingually in the original language/script and in English. Proper names and other specific music terms have their equivalents in both the roman alphabet and in the original language/script. Indexing practices are being continuously revised in order to better reflect the content and improve its discoverability, requiring – among other changes – the creation of a number of new headwords to facilitate better search results. For example, for *xiqu* genres (戏曲, Chinese opera) RILM has developed a list of seventy-two specific genres.<sup>1</sup> More recently RILM has started to work on developing a comprehensive multilingual music thesaurus and ontology, which will eventually include Asian concepts and terms equivalents.

Finally, RILM's aim to accurately represent global music scholarship has required adjustments in its hiring practices. The enormous variety of indexed material calls for on-staff expertise and specializations in the widest spectrum of music cultures and traditions as well as a superior knowledge of local publishing networks and practices. With this in mind, RILM's editorial core in New York includes specialists from fourteen countries (Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, Croatia, Germany, Italy, South Korea, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Portugal, Ukraine, Slovakia, and the United States), and it is constantly broadening the range of countries, depending on the direction of the newest music scholarship.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bibliolore.org/2018/02/19/rilm-broadens-indexing-of-chinese-dramatic-genres/>