

## ***The University's other Instrument Collection***

Outsiders often wonder why we have two separately run collections of musical instruments in the University of Edinburgh. The reason for having two museums today is easy to discern - neither the galleries at St Cecilia's Hall nor the galleries at the Reid Concert Hall could, on their own, hold and properly display all the University's historic instruments. But this has not always been the case.

The University of Edinburgh was truly visionary when Professor John Donaldson started the teaching collection of old and exotic instruments and of acoustical apparatus soon after his appointment in 1845, and when he built the Museum Gallery adjacent to his Music Classroom (now the Reid Concert Hall). At this time there were few musical instrument museums anywhere, and Donaldson was the first to recognise the value of historic instruments in the university teaching of music.



*John Donaldson, Reid Professor of Music 1845-1865. The portrait by William Smellie Watson (1796-1874) was presented to the Royal Scottish Academy in 1849. It was given to the University of Edinburgh by Henry Houldsworth in 1863.*

Photograph: Joe Rock



ARNOLD MYERS

However, when the Raymond Russell Collection came to Edinburgh in 1964, the fortunes of John Donaldson's museum collection at the Reid School of Music were at their lowest ebb. Very little had been added since Donaldson died in 1865, and the old instruments were being crowded closer together in fewer and fewer showcases as the Reid Music Library holdings expanded and took over more of the original museum showcases for bookstock. Most of the acoustical apparatus had been moved to the Physics Department in 1931. Three of the early keyboard instruments at Reid School of Music (Falkener harpsichord, Baker Harris spinet and Dolmetsch clavichord) were sent to St Cecilia's Hall to join the Russell Collection.

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There remained, however, the nucleus of a collection of non-keyboard instruments, and Professor Sidney Newman responded positively to the suggestion of Graham Melville-Mason for re-establishing an instrument museum in the original gallery when the Music Library moved to Alison House. It was Newman's final enlightened contribution to organology when he secured the gallery, firstly for the Galpin Society's Edinburgh Festival loan exhibition in 1968, and then for the "Galpin Society Permanent Collection" from 1969. Under Melville-Mason's honorary curatorship many important instruments were added to the original John Donaldson Collection, including the Rendall Collection of woodwinds and Anne Macaulay's wonderful collection of plucked string instruments.



*The Music Classroom Museum, circa 1870.*

In 1980 management was returned by the Galpin Society to the University and the name "Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments" was given. (The same agreement transferred to the University ownership of the bible regals and the Rackwitz clavichord at St Cecilia's). By this time the Russell Collection was well established with its own Director, Curator and Assistant Curator, and with its focus on keyboard instruments.

On reflection, the rather disjointed development of the two collections may have been to everyone's advantage. Both collections have been driven forward by the enthusiasms of those

closely involved in specific areas of organology. St Cecilia's Hall, when opened as an instrument museum, could easily have housed all the hundred or so instruments of John Donaldson's Collection. Had this happened, it is most unlikely that EUCHMI would have grown the way it has and that the University would have established its current reputation for scholarship in the field of non-keyboard instruments.

The mission statement of EUCHMI (promoting the study of the history, construction and functions of instruments of music and ... the furtherance of research and the propagation of knowledge of instrumental history) is rather similar to that of the Russell Collection (both take their wording from the 1980 Galpin Society agreement). The differences in the ways in which the collections are run derive from museum management considerations where small items are displayed behind glass at one site with large freestanding items at the other.

The keyboard instruments at the Reid Concert Hall follow on from the historical period of the Russell Collection: they include nine pianos (the earliest c. 1822), four of which are from the Kenneth and Mary Mobbs Collection. Only the euphonicon is currently on display.

There is no doubt that the Reid Concert Hall and St Cecilia's Hall museums of instruments, which have always worked well together, are each the stronger for the vigorous good health of the other.

*Teaching music students at the Reid Concert Hall Museum, February 2004.*



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and  
conservation'*