ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS OF THE MUSÉE DE LA MUSIQUE

The Paris-based Musée de la musique keeps archives from luthiers and instrument makers. Several hundreds of these documents are now accessible online.


DIGITIZATION PROJECT

OVERVIEW

- 2 archive collections
  and a third in progress
- 220 registers
  and, very soon, 3,300 extra documents (mainly letters)
- 55,000 images
  and more than 70,000 at the end of the year
- 2 years of collaboration
  between the Museum and the Digital Library of the Cité de la musique
- 2 funders
  French Ministry of Culture and Communication
  Palazzetto Bru Zane – Centre de Musique Romantique Française (Érard, Pleyel & Gaveau archives only)

THE WEBSITE

French and English

Simple Browsing

Reading Supports

ONLINE COLLECTIONS

ÉRARD, PLEYEL & GAVEAU ARCHIVES

These archives detail the production of three companies which have left their mark in the history of the French musical instrument manufacturing from the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 20th century.

Recognized in France and abroad for the quality and innovation of their production (pianos, but also harpsichords, harps...), they also greatly influenced musical life in the past two centuries by opening venues which are, for some, still running such as the Salle Pleyel and the Salle Gaveau in Paris.

Documents from this archive collection hold information on instruments manufactured by these firms:

- Manufacturing processes and dates,
- Dates of sales,
- Distribution channels (clients, suppliers, intermediaries...)

GAND, BERNARDEL, CARESSA & FRANÇAIS ARCHIVES

These archives detail the daily life of great French stringed-instrument makers from 1816 to 1944.

Successors to renowned luthier Nicolas Lupot, stringed-instrument makers Gand, Bernardel, Caressa and Français played a key role in French musical instrument making history - with quality productions and interventions on prestigious instruments (Amati, Stradivari, Guarneri, etc.).

Their archives testify to their activities through accounts registers, letters and notes on instruments that went through their workshops. They hold precious information:

- Instruments descriptions (violins, viola, etc.)
- Activities (constructions, repairs, maintenance etc.)
- Networks (clients, suppliers, etc.)

Related articles:

- Workshop Supplies
  The name, price and quantity of instrument makers supplies can be known thanks to the archives.

- Instrumental Landscape in the 19th Century
  Reading the archives sheds light on the instrumental landscape back then (owners, state of preservation, etc.).

- Manufacturing Dates
  Manufacturing dates can be found via serial numbers.

- Networks
  The documents contain the names of buyers and intermediaries.

- Manufacturing Stages
  Manufacturing stages are very much detailed in Pleyel first workshop registers. For example, people involved in the manufacturing chain are listed by name and function.

- Restauration in the 19th Century
  This Crotchianon (Musée de la musique, n° E.978) was transformed in the 19th century into a guitar. Donated to the museum in 1883, it was restored by the Gand and Bernardel workshop to recover an appearance deemed accurate back then: sculpted lion's head, slanted bridge...