

– Call for Papers –

MAHILLON AND HIS TIME

Musical instruments between industrialization and geopolitics

*A joint conference on the occasion of the centenary
of the death of Victor-Charles Mahillon (1841-1924)*

*The Galpin Society (Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, Oxford)
& the Musical Instruments Museum (Brussels)*

Founder of the ‘Instrumental Museum’ of the Royal Conservatory in Brussels, member of a prominent family of musical instrument makers, writer on the manufacture and acoustics of musical instruments, developer of an influential classification system... each affirms Victor-Charles Mahillon’s central position in organology. Mahillon was working in a period when the coextensive industrialization and colonial expansion of Europe deeply reshaped the global economics and politics. At the organological level, this led to the growth of manufacture on an industrial scale, to the opening of worldwide routes for the acquisition of musical instruments and to sharing of information and experiences through exhibitions, publications and correspondence.

Marking the 100th anniversary of his death, the Galpin Society and the Musical Instruments Museum are organizing a joint conference in Oxford (28 June 2024) and Brussels (5-7 July 2024).

MAHILLON AND HIS TIME

THE MATERIALITY OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS DURING THE LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURIES

28 June 2024, Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, Oxford

The Oxford part of the conference will be held on Friday 28 June at the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments at the University of Oxford during the 4-day conference of the Galpin Society (27-30 June 2024) whose overall theme will be “Materiality and the Meaning of Musical Instruments”. Aspects of materiality were of great interest to Victor-Charles Mahillon who simultaneously addressed instrument making (especially winds), acoustics, and collecting/documenting instruments from all over the world. The growth of industrial processes during the late 19th century was a determining phenomenon in musical instrument manufacture by the Mahillon firm and its competitors.

For the Oxford conference, the organizing committee invites submission for 20-minute papers, 10-minute work-in-progress papers, and poster presentations focusing on the following themes:

- 1. Industrial instrument making in the nineteenth century: innovation, management, international competition**
 - Nineteenth-century innovation and technology in instrument design and manufacture
 - The development of industrial processes in 19th-century instrument making
 - International competition among makers
- 2. Acoustics of musical instruments: the contributions of Mahillon and his contemporaries**
 - The understanding and development of acoustics
 - The application of acoustical and technological advances

Presentation should be in person by the author (or one of the named authors). Abstracts of papers (300 words maximum) and a biography (no more than 100 words) are invited for the Oxford conference, to be submitted by the 15 January 2024 by completing the form at bit.ly/music-materiality

MAHILLON AND HIS TIME
THE MUSICAL DISTANCE IN TIME AND SPACE DURING THE LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURIES

5-7 July 2024, Musical Instruments Museum, Brussels

The Brussel part of the conference will be held on 5-7 July at the Musical Instruments Museum in Brussels. Victor-Charles Mahillon demonstrated a strong interest in instruments beyond his own musical culture: early, folk, and non-Western. The widely adopted evolutionary model of his time, which viewed other cultures as evidence of former Western culture, had a major influence on his collecting policy. Mahillon's collection of non-Western instruments was not the result of a mere penchant for exotism, but went hand-in-hand with his acquisition of early Western instruments. Mahillon's ambition to assemble and document a universal collection shaped his acquisition criteria and procedures, and his research. His multi-faceted study of instruments drew on acoustical science, technological experience, archaeology and cultural history. He attended international exhibitions, built a network of contacts and conducted an extensive correspondence with contemporary organologists. He pioneered the copying of non-Western and historic instruments as a means to better understanding as well as making the collection more complete. Mahillon's own classification system (1877, last version 1908) results from a complex interaction between his personal observations and external influences (Linnaeus, Tagore, *Nāṭya-shāstra*, etc.). During the same period, numerous other collectors became interested in "distant" musical instruments. Each developed specific collecting policies in line with their personal intellectual background and their individual position within the major geopolitical changes of the last quarter of the 19th century. Colonial expansion, commercial growth, scientific exchanges and diplomatic outreach determined new networks, new access to information, new underlying concepts and new organological paradigms.

The organizing committee invites submission for 20-minute papers and poster presentations focusing on the following issues:

- 1. Musical instruments and the systems of thought in the late 19th and early 20th centuries**
 - Evolutionism, universalism, classificatory sciences, etc.
- 2. Collecting strategies for musical instruments remote in time or space**
 - The building of networks (scientific, private, diplomatic, politic, international fairs)
 - Factors determining the character of instrument collections (relations between collectors, producers, and intermediaries; selection criteria, etc.)
 - Copies of instruments (from antiquity, early Western, rest of the world)
- 3. Interpreting musical instruments remote in time or space**
 - Sources for the knowledge of distant cultures (archaeology, reports, recordings, scores, etc.)
 - Performance and experimentation on instruments from distant cultures
 - Intellectual representation and interpretation of instruments (terminology and classification before 1914)

Presentation should be in person by the author (or one of the named authors). Abstracts of papers (500 words maximum) and a biography (no more than 100 words) are invited for the Brussel conference, to be submitted by the 15 January 2024 at MahillonBrussels2024@mim.be

Scientific committee

Cassandre Balosso-Bardin (KUL), Anne-Emmanuelle Ceulemans (MIM / UCLouvain), Ignace De Keyser (MRAC), John Koslovsky (KUL), Alice Little (Oxford / Bate collection), Arnold Myers (University of Edinburgh), Fañch Thoraval (MIM / UCLouvain), Saskia Willaert (MIM)

