Introduction

This presentation explains how library users may locate the section where their musical scores are shelved by color. This color-coding scheme allows the users to browse scores easily. The color is determined by instrument or type of ensemble. In particular, it shows how solo pieces (e.g., violin & piano) and concertos (full scores and piano reduction scores) are shelved in different sections.

How it all started...

The Library used 3M Resensitizer Model 764 to resensitize Tattle-Tape Security Strips. This machine is activated when an item slides in front of it. (Shown in the picture on right.) For some technical reason, it does not react to items bound in black; therefore, those items cannot be resensitized.

Most of our scores were bound in black. In order to resensitize the scores, we had to change the color of the spine. This process gave me the idea to color-code the scores by spine color.

Step 1: Determined what colors were available for the spine tape, that our library uses. There are 10 colors (except black, of course) available:

- Purple
- Blue
- Pink
- Green
- Red
- Yellow
- Black
- Brown
- Beige
- Green

Step 2: Assigned 9 colors according to instrument and/or genre.

- Purple: Piano
- Blue: Strings (Viola, Cello, Double Bass)
- Green: Violin
- Red: String Ensembles (including piano trios, etc.)
- Yellow: Brass
- Black: Percussion
- Brown: Woodwinds
- Beige: Teal
- Green: Viola, Cello or Bass

Step 3: Set a few rules for consistency.

Rule #1 - For concerto pieces, select a color according to its solo instrument.

- e.g.) Violin concerto ➔ Green
- e.g.) Mozart, Sinfonia Concertant for Violin & Viola ➔ Red

Rule #2 - If a piece has mixed instruments, select a color according to the first instrument appearing on full score.

- e.g.) Mozart, Trio for Clarinet, Viola & Piano ➔ Teal

Rule #3 - Select a similar buckram color for the cover of professionally bound scores.

- Violin ➔ Green
- Strings (viola, cello and bass) ➔ Blue
- Brass ➔ Red
- String ensemble works (including piano trios, etc.) ➔ Black
- Woodwinds ➔ Beige
- Percussion ➔ Brown
- Orchestral works ➔ Teal
- Vocal and choral works ➔ Yellow

From the LC Classification to the colors on the shelves

Here is an example of how the Library of Congress (LC) Classification is coded to the color-code scheme. (Shown in the picture below.)

Pros and Cons

- Easy to recognize how scores are organized.
- Easy to explain the organization of the scores to those who are not familiar with the LC classification and to foreign students.
- Easy to browse one class number which contains multiple instruments.

Example: M289 - Duets for 2 stringed instruments

Green ➔ Violin duets
Blue ➔ Viola, Cello or Bass duets
Red ➔ 2 mixed string instruments (violin & viola, violin & cello, etc.)

Sections for concerto with piano reduction scores

+ Shows how solo pieces (e.g., violin & piano) and concertos (full scores and piano reduction scores) are shelved in different sections.

Many students look for concertos with piano reduction in the solo piece section. Once the students realize concerto works are in a different section, they can easily locate them because of the spine color.

- This scheme may only work for a library with a small collection of scores.

- The choice of the colors are limited to those offered by the library supply vendor.

For the future...

While I worked on this presentation, I realized that I should have assigned a color for woodwind ensemble music. I found out that Gaylord offers bookcraft tape in light green. I may work on the conversion project this coming summer. I hope that this color-coded scheme will stand for years to come...

For questions and comments, please contact:

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