

Introduction

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Introduction

The articles in this tenth volume of *Typography papers* were first essayed at 'Rencontres musicologiques de Valenciennes: "Le livre de musique au pochoir: techniques, répertoires, ateliers"', a symposium convened at the Musée des Beaux-arts, Valenciennes, on 23 and 24 May 2019.¹ The event was part of the 'Rencontres de Valenciennes' series organised through a partnership between the Institut de Recherche en Musicologie (IReMus, Paris), Direction régionale des affaires culturelles (DRAC) des Hauts-de-France, and Harmonia sacra (Valenciennes), an ensemble that performs and promotes baroque music. The subject of French stencilled music books (*livres de musique au pochoir*) came to the fore following earlier meetings devoted to baroque religious music in France and Belgium. The symposium brought together musicologists, book historians, and specialists in stencil work, and was the fruit of collaboration around Claude-Laurent François who has been instrumental in locating, documenting, and studying stencilled music books in France and stencilling equipment surviving in monasteries. His passion and generosity in sharing his discoveries have created vital awareness and knowledge among colleagues whose research was presented at the symposium.

Sources² and circumstances

Stencilled music books were made in France and throughout much of Catholic western Europe including present-day Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. They are attested in France from the middle decades of the seventeenth century and then elsewhere, too, throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, with isolated occurrences persisting even later. Such stencilling involved the composition of letters, words, and titles letter-by-letter and music notation note-by-note using sets of stencils made for this purpose, resulting in books in (typically) single copies. The origins of the practice remain obscure though early sources are suggestive. Rancé and Félibien (1678) memorialise Fr. Benoit Deschamps, a member of the Cistercian order at the abbey of La Trappe, who from 1669 until his death in 1674 made stencil letters for writing ('lettres de cuivre pour écrire'); the reference points to the monastic milieu where stencilled music books were commonly produced. Two decades later Des Billettes (c. late 1690s) introduces stencilling as

... a minor kind of printing that is very recent, and indeed scarcely dates back forty or fifty years, without us knowing who was the real inventor of it, as it may be that it was not the invention of any single person, merely being modelled on a way of working that was quite common for other purposes, but which had not (previously) been used for this same application. Thus each (workman) on his own account was able to take further a shared invention, and by sharing and exchanging their practices, this practice became as it were a new minor art, which has its merits, and is currently used quite frequently as having much grace and usefulness.³

Among the few presently known sources that describe the practice, emphasis is variously placed on how to make stencils and ink, on techniques of stencilling letters, texts, and music notation, and on other operations of book production. Given the relative novelty of stencil work of this kind, sources often lack specific terms. Thus,

1. The symposium was convened under the direction of Nathalie Berton-Blivet, Achille Davy-Rigaux, and Fabien Guilloux. Speakers (and their papers) included Claude-Laurent François ('L'image du pochoir dans le plain-chant'), Eric Kindel ('Stencil-making and supply in Paris in the 18th century'), Jean-Paul Montagnier ('La messe polyphonique au pochoir, 1775–80'), Marie-Luce Boschiero ('Les livres au pochoir dans la tradition cistercienne'), Laurent Guillo ('Quelques ateliers parisiens, XVIII^e–XIX^e siècles'), Nathalie Berton-Blivet & Alban Framboisier ('Les livres au pochoir pour les chapelles royales au XVIII^e siècle'), Suzanne Lemardelé ('Le trésor de la cathédrale de Beauvais'), Fabien Guilloux ('Les livres de chœur au pochoir de la cathédrale de Beauvais (1715–1810): essai d'inventaire'), and Achille (Cécile) Davy-Rigaux ('Présentation du projet "ValNum: Conservation et valorisation numérique des manuscrits musicaux du Trésor de la cathédrale de Beauvais"'). A workshop on stencil technique was presented by Eric Kindel accompanied by historical artefacts.

2. Citations that follow can be found in the selected bibliography, below, and in Kindel (2019). Here, the 'sources' referred to are primary.

3. '... une petite espece d'imprimerie fort recente, et qui a peine remonte a 40 ou 50 ans, sans qu'on en sçache le veritable auteur, comme peustestre n'en a telle pas pour un seul, ne s'estant originaiement formée que sur un travail d'ailleur asses commun pour d'autres dessins, mais dont on n'avoit pas fait la mesme application. Ainsi chacun de son costé à pu rencherir sur une inversion commune, et se prestant les uns aux autres leurs manieres, cela est devenu comme un petit Art nouveau, qui a son merite, et un usage presentement assés frequent, comme beaucoup de grace et d'utilité.' Des Billettes (c. late 1690s), p. 166.

stencilling is described by reference to writing, ‘écrire’ (or in Latin, ‘scribere’), or printing, ‘imprimerie’, while stencils are commonly ‘caractères’. The latter two terms are associated with (typographical) printing, a process and product to which stencil work was seen as having some correspondence. Later, specific terms for stencils arise through modifiers – ‘caractères en cuivre’ and ‘caractères à jour’. Early designations for stencilmakers are similarly general – ‘graveur’, ‘découpeur’, ‘faiseur’, or simply ‘ouvrier’ – their specific reference conveyed instead through context; later designations gain specificity in compounds such as ‘graveur en caractères à jour’.

The places where stencil work was done and its circumstances are inconsistently described in sources, or not at all, and so details must be discerned mostly from the works themselves or located in public or institutional archives. Scenarios place the work within the ecclesiastical milieux of monasteries, churches, or cathedrals, or outwith in the workshops of *maitres écrivains* or the homes of artisans working *en chambre*. Stencillers could therefore be members of religious communities (monks, nuns) or professionals (including musicians) contracted by chapters or fabrics to make stencilled books; among the latter, stencilling was probably or certainly only one constituent of their livelihood, among others. Stencilmakers, too, could be members of religious communities though it is difficult to determine at present how common this was. Instead, stencil-making, which involved some or considerable expertise in drawing and design, metal work, and engraving was likely the preserve of specialists who supplied those doing the stencilling – a likelihood that increases in light of the sophisticated letterforms and decoration found in many stencilled books. There are, nevertheless, instances of stencillers who possessed this expertise and made stencils themselves.

Stencilled books typically combined liturgy and music, though not always; some might contain liturgy or ritual that did not integrate music. Initially, music content was plainchant; latterly, some books contained polyphonic compositions. Most books served the communities that had them made and so included liturgy particular to that community and could be as modest or elaborate in their visual and material production as a community wished. In this respect, stencilled books did not compete with printing, which was more appropriate for generating multiple identical copies. In early examples and especially for sumptuous productions, a division of labour probably or certainly occurred between the stencilling of music (notation and text), decorating that involved virtuoso painting and illuminating, and the drawing of titles and initials. As decorating, titling, and making initials by means of stencilling increasingly displaced painting, illuminating, and drawing over the course of the eighteenth century, this division of labour seems to have mostly disappeared.⁴

Literature⁵ and scholarship

A literature of stencilled books and stencil-making commences around the turn of the nineteenth century. Early instances include notices and descriptions of stencilled music books, the names and situations of a few stencillers and stencilmakers, tantalising remarks about stencil-making, and attempts to explain the uptake of the

4. However, it is important to note ongoing exceptions where the production of books was carried out by individuals employing inventive, even idiosyncratic, mixtures of stencilling, painting, and drawing.

5. Here, ‘literature’ refers to sources that are secondary.

practice. Breitkopf (1801), Fischer (1801), and Sievers (1825) are each valuable commentators: Fischer is exceptionally detailed in his descriptions of stencilled music books; Sievers helpfully enumerates tools and equipment. All discuss work done outside France though Paris stencilmakers are praised by Breitkopf and Fischer. While subsequent notices occur over the following century, they are few in number, sporadic, and brief, offering little technical or contextual information. Thus, an awareness of stencilled music books and how they were produced was obscured and they were instead only occasionally cited, sometimes as a curiosity or a conundrum.

This in many respects was the starting point of O'Meara (1933), the first extended attempt to recover knowledge of stencilled music books, clarifying and expanding Fischer's account and sources. Notably O'Meara quotes the preface of a stencilled book made by U. Boddeart, which for the first time provides testimony of why the work was undertaken (Boddeart, 1755). Like Fischer, O'Meara focuses on the work of two individuals active at Mainz, the Carthusian stenciller Fr. Thomas Bauer (before 1720–c. 1780/1), and the stencilmaker Johann Claudius Renard (active c. 1730s–70s) who was originally from Liège and conducted stencilling workshops for religious communities in Mainz and the surrounding region. To O'Meara can be added subsequent studies – Gottron (1938), Rodrigues (1973), and Rosenfeld (1973) – which contribute more information about the production and diffusion of stencilled music books in this region and their liturgical and musicological circumstances.

Ironically, in France, where stencilled music books were probably produced in the greatest number, and where all (known) early sources of significance occur, there are few French contributions to a literature.⁶ This remained the case until the post-war emergence of the social sciences led to research focusing on workshops producing stencilled music books in the later seventeenth century, including for Notre-Dame de Paris (Vézin, 1969) and at the Hôtel royal des Invalides (Vanuxem, 1974). These studies, however, did not identify the contribution of stencilling to the books concerned. Instead, the groundwork for historically situated technical discussions of stencilled music books was laid after 2000 by historians of letterforms, typography, and graphic technique (Kindel, 2003, 2013; François, 2010), who through engagement with stencilled books, early sources, and surviving and reconstructed equipment were able to more securely describe processes of stencil-making and stencilling.

French musicologists and book historians who had previously focused on the history and production of typographical or engraved music books⁷ in turn directed their attention to stencilling in the context of research on the history of liturgical chant and its post-Tridentine sources (Guillo, 2021). Interest returned to books made for Notre-Dame de Paris⁸ and at the workshop of Les Invalides, while new research addressed books made for the Chapelle royale (Davy-Rigaux, 1997) and the royal convents of the Recollects (Guilloux, 2014). The latter study and others have highlighted the importance of male and female religious communities in the production of stencilled books including (in addition to Recollects) Cistercians (Boschiero-Trottmann, 2014), Noble Canoness of Maubeuge (Drèze,

6. While not listed in the selected bibliography below, at least two early French-language contributions can be cited: Hendrik Jansen, *Essay sur l'origine de la gravure en bois et en taille-douce, et sur la connaissance des estampes des xvi^e et xvi^e siècles*, vol. 2, pp. 34–41, 1808 (Paris: F. Schoell), which, though mostly derived from Fischer (1801), includes reference to the Paris stencilmaker, Pierre Denis Hertelle (successor to Jean Gabriel Bery), whose shop was located on the Pont-Neuf; and [Amboise Firmin-Didot], 'Typographie', in *Encyclopédie moderne, dictionnaire abrégé des sciences, des lettres, des arts ...*, nouvelle édition, publiée par MM. Firmin Didot frères sous la direction de M. Léon Renier, vol. 26, pp. 557–61, 1863 (Paris: Firmin Didot frères, Fils et Cie.), which, in the subsection, 'Patrons découpés', mentions the use of stencils to compose livres de plain-chant in their entirety 'as it was still done in a few German monasteries at the beginning of this [i.e., the nineteenth] century'.

7. See Michel Brenet (Marie Bobillier), 'La librairie musicale en France de 1653 à 1790, d'après les registres de privilège', *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, 6 (1904), pp. 1–31; Laurent Guillo, *Pierre I Ballard et Robert III Ballard: imprimeurs du roy pour la musique (1599–1673)*, Sprimont: Mardaga, 2003; *idem*, *Christophe Ballard, imprimeur-libraire en musique sous Louis XIV: avec un inventaire des éditions des Ballard de 1672 à 1715*, Turnhout: Brepols, Tours: Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance, and Versailles: Centre de musique baroque de Versailles, 2021.

8. A campaign to photograph the eight volumes of the Graduel de Notre-Dame, produced from 1669 onwards, was carried out in 2008–09 by Claude-Laurent François and Achille Davy-Rigaux, with the assistance of Jean Ritter, and presented at the École des Chartes on 28 May 2009. The volumes are now on deposit at the Bibliothèque nationale de France and available in digital format on Gallica.

2019), Benedictines of Calvaire (Berton-Blivet, Guilloux, Gurrieri, 2021), and Dominican nuns at Langeac (Davy-Rigaux, 2025).

Significance

The significance of stencilled music books is located both in their general character and their specific application to liturgy and its practice. Stencilling is one among several instances of book and document production methods that persisted or indeed emerged and flourished after the introduction of typographical printing. Some such methods, while unsuited to ‘mass’ production, nevertheless brought advantages to those who employed them. Stencilling – quasi-mechanical, combining attributes of manuscript and print – involved the use of relatively simple equipment capable of generating expertly formed, mono- and polychromatic letters, text, music notation, and decoration of many kinds. Such work could in principle be freely done by anyone, amateur or professional, who possessed the necessary stencils and associated tools and materials. This was similarly true of stencil-making, which as an extension of the engraving trade was not subject to regulation or guild control.⁹

In regard to liturgy and its practice, stencilling provided a means of creating books with content specific to particular religious institutions. The work could be carried out by individuals with limited training and modest skill, or by those possessing specialist skills and ability. Stencilling supported the relatively economical production of large and very large formats, which unlike the necessarily smaller formats printed typographically or by engraving, were well suited to worship spaces and their layout, allowing individuals or a choir to assemble around a book placed on a lectern to read and perform the plainchant. Large formats also imply that such books, prominently displayed, contributed decorative richness to worship spaces and the decorum of the liturgy. In their bespoke content they unified services specific to the important celebrations of the church or chapel (or indeed royal chapel) to which they belonged.¹⁰

For music notation, stencilling also brought advantages. Plainchant lends itself particularly well to the technique because neumes are variously formed from one of two solid shapes, a square (sometimes slightly curved) or a rhombus, and so are easy to stencil. They can be combined with other stencilled elements (stems, dots, accidentals, also clefs, bars, and so on) to form the notation as required.¹¹ Some notation was even produced using stencils specific to a religious order (the Cistercians; see Boschiero-Trottmann, 2014). Of significance, too, is stencilling’s contribution to the production of polyphonic liturgical books, which used figured notation or a mixed notation of figures and neumes. Here, however, the stencilling required manual pen interventions to complete the ‘breaks’ in the form of figures such as minims, semibreves, and other more complex signs to ensure their legibility.¹²

In these several respects the significance of stencilling and stencilled music books becomes clear. Distinctively located between manuscript and print, stencilling takes its place alongside handwriting, engraving, and typographical printing as a valuable technique of graphic production well suited to particular works and contexts.

9. However, the unregulated production and sale of what were probably stencilled works by at least one Paris maker was contested by the Académie de Saint-Luc; see this volume, p. 78.

10. In monasteries, on the other hand, where the use of books is also linked to the liturgical or devotional practices of a single person – particularly among nuns, who sometimes bequeath their books to subsequent generations – the use of stencils was adapted to smaller, generally portable formats.

11. Alternatively, other elements could be added manually with a pen, or amended if necessary, especially where breaks caused by a stencil might make these elements difficult to read. Staves were typically made with a rastrum though occasionally stencilled.

12. This is not the case with stencil letters composed to form text and other words and titles whose legibility is not generally compromised if their breaks are not filled in; see Kindel (2003; cf. 2013) and Francois (2010).

It joins a longer tradition of the medieval scriptorium, becoming partly secularised and promoted by monarchy while remaining responsive to needs and uses ranging from the plain and simple to the prestigious and luxurious. Culturally and artistically, as well as technically, stencilling makes contributions to histories of the book and of music production, dissemination, performance, and the connection of these to liturgy. And as awareness of stencilled books grows among librarians, archivists, and curators, such books add new dimensions to the holdings of institutional archives and collections and the scholarship they support.

This volume

The articles in this volume of *Typography papers* document stencilled music books made in France and those stencillers and stencilmakers involved directly or indirectly in their production. The books and individuals are located, in time, between the second half of seventeenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, mostly in Paris and the surrounding region. It was here, during this period, that such work became inventive, sophisticated, and often highly refined.

Laurent Guillo identifies the principal liturgical book stencillers active in Paris before and after the French Revolution and documents their lives and works. This is done through the assembly of biographies, the compilation of inventories of books and the stencils used, and descriptions of features characteristic of individual workshops. Together with remarks on the general circumstances of stencillers in Paris, their clients, and the contribution stencilling made to the totality of their working lives, Guillo demonstrates the professionalisation of liturgical book stencilling and the mastery of its practitioners.

Eric Kindel offers insights parallel to the work of stencilling in a survey of stencil-making in Paris across the eighteenth century, tracking its formation as an occupation in its own right, if one whose skills were a subset of engraving or partly cognate with other trades such as typefounding. Drawing on sources describing stencil-making and stencil work, on technical illustrations, advertisements, specimens, and death inventories, on stencil plates and stencil work, and on the lives of two exemplary makers, Louis Bresson de Maillard and Jean Gabriel Bery, Kindel provides a representation of stencil-making, its methods of work, commercial dimensions, locations, products, customers, networks, and trajectories.

Nathalie Berton-Blivet and Alban Framboisier discuss two series of luxurious liturgical books made for the Chapelle royale, the first produced by André Philidor and Philippe Guilbert Le Roy between 1701 and 1703, the second by Charles Saudemont and Jean-Baptiste Métoyen between 1756 and 1766. Berton-Blivet and Framboisier describe and compare the overlapping liturgical content of the two series, their production and use, and the biographies of those involved in producing them, some of whom were musicians of the king. Discussion extends to the enumeration and illustration of the expertly realised stencil letters and decoration. Concluding remarks raise questions about the production of the second series when the first remained perfectly preserved and clearly usable.

Jean-Paul C. Montagnier links the cessation of activity at the workshop of the Ballard family, which made and printed choirbooks typographically, with the emergence in France of stencilled choirbooks containing polyphonic masses. The study reviews the characteristics of these choirbooks, the sources drawn on to produce them, and their layout and function. Given the numbers of errors observed in them by Montagnier, he raises questions about their suitability for use in performance, and whether such stencilled music books were intended instead simply as a means of conserving a composer's works.

The articles, thus, provide a view of stencilled music books, the work of stencilling and stencil-making, and those individuals who did the work. They show how stencilling was adopted and adapted to serve monastic communities, churches and cathedrals, and the royal household and its institutions. In each context, the production of music books by stencilling proved to be an appropriate means to meet liturgical needs in the post-Tridentine period while serving programmes of decoration and display in places of worship. Such production in France offers an especially eloquent example. In documenting stencilling as a technique for producing music books in France, each article serves to guide researchers to sources, documents, and artefacts that support arguments for the technique's importance. The articles may further alert librarians, archivists, and curators to works of this kind and assist in identifying and describing their features. Meanwhile, the musicological concerns of several authors begin to fill gaps in the study of techniques of music production and presentation.

Inevitably a single volume is limited in what it can address and so suggests where more research is desirable. The study of stencilled music books demands, above all, an integration of disciplinary knowledge to better understand and interpret their many dimensions. Such integration would benefit descriptions of the whole work of stencilling, from commissioning and planning works, to the specification, acquisition, and making of stencils needed to realise them, to the operations of stencilling, to the use of books in their religious, musical, and institutional contexts. Equally, the focus of the present volume on books in France acts as a reminder that the stencilling of music books was a practice that spread throughout much of Catholic western Europe and beyond. Research that tracks the transmission or diffusion of stencilling and stencil-making knowledge and expertise across borders would be of considerable value. Beyond stencilled music books are more topics of interest, including the intersection of stencilling in ecclesiastical settings with secular work and the movement of styles and practices between these two contexts of graphic production.

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