

# Getting to Know the Petrucci Music Library: A Free Online Resource for Public Domain Music Scores

Presented by  
Dr. Robin H. Williams, University of New Orleans  
LMTA State Convention  
Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA  
October 15, 2010

## What is the Petrucci Music Library?

The Petrucci Music Library, also known as the International Music Score Library Project, is a project that intends to create a virtual online library for all public domain music scores. Launched in February 2006, the Petrucci Music Library now has over 72,000 scores and 4,000 composers represented. The site contains scanned public domain scores which can be downloaded and printed out for free. One way to view this site is to liken it to going to the library and checking out music for self study, only you can print it out right at home.

## How did the site become named the Petrucci Music Library?

**Ottaviano Petrucci** (18 June 1466 – 7 May 1539) was an Italian printer. He is credited in 1501 with producing the first book of sheet music printed from movable type, titled the **Harmonice Musices Odhecaton** (also called the Odhecaton), a collection of chansons. He also published numerous works by the most highly regarded composers of the Renaissance including *Josquin des Prez*. Petrucci was not the first to print music but he was the first to use movable type and not woodcuts. Thus it seems appropriate that the person credited with producing the first printed sheet music should also be honored by a 21<sup>st</sup> Century extension with printed scores accessible worldwide.

## How I do I find the Petrucci Music Library the internet?

There are two easy ways to find the online site:

[www.imslp.org](http://www.imslp.org) or

type the following into a web browser: **Petrucci Music Library**

## How do I use the Petrucci Library?

1. Go to the [imslp.org](http://imslp.org) site
2. Click on Petrucci Music Library
3. On the left hand side under “Browse Scores” click on ‘Composer Name.’
4. Select the alphabet letter corresponding to the last name of your composer
5. Find and click on your composer from the list
6. Start looking for the score and click on it
7. View the list of scores and choose the edition you want to open
8. Accept the disclaimer (sometimes this comes up and sometimes not)
8. View and print

## Is using this site legal?

Yes, all the scores are in the public domain, at least in Canada where the site is hosted. In addition, some modern composers have personally submitted their work for free download at this site. The site is designed so that when one tries to access a work perhaps not yet fully in the public domain, a notice will appear and you will not be able to download the score.

Canada has some of the least restrictive and easy to understand public domain rules and this is one reason it is hosted in Canada with two sites, one in Toronto and the other in Montreal. In its most general summary the Canadian law states that, “the copyright persists for the composer or other author (if any) for 50 years after his/her death.”

About 1 ½ years after its first launch, the library ran into copyright problems in the US and also Europe. It was forced to close the site between October 2007 and June 2008. The Petrucci Music Library (PML) has since gone back online but now blocks scores that have not also come into US public domain. US copyright laws differ from Canada’s laws because compositions are tied to the publication date and not the composer’s death.

## The US copyright rules divide into several categories:

\*\*As a general rule anything published in the US before 1923, regardless of the year of the composer’s death, is in the public domain. This means that some compositions by a composer may not yet be in the public domain in the US because they were published after 1923 even though the composer has been dead for 50 years.

For example, some of the works of Bartok are in the US public domain and some are not. Bartok died in 1945 (65 years ago) which puts all of his works in the public domain in Canada, but the works published after 1923 will not be in the public domain in the US. If you go to Bartok’s, “**Allegro Barbaro**” the disclaimer says: “It is *unlikely* that this work is in the public domain in the EU, or in any country where the copyright term is life+70 years. However, it *is* in the public domain in Canada (where IMSLP is hosted) and other countries where the term is life+50 years (like China, Japan, Korea and many others worldwide). As this work was first published before 1923, it is almost certainly public domain in the USA as well.” **Allegro Barbaro** was published in 1918 so it is in the public domain in the US. You can also see how the publisher info states that Universal, Dover and Schirmer are listed with the words ( reprint). They just reprinted the scores so they can’t claim to own the copyright. They did not make significant editorial changes.

However, if you try to download the **Mikrokosmos** you will find this: “This work *may not* be in the public domain in the US (due to first publication **after** 1922) or in the EU, or those countries where the copyright term is life+70 years. However, it *is* public domain in Canada (where IMSLP is hosted) and in other countries (China, Japan, S. Korea) where the copyright term is life+50 years. Because it is not in the US public domain there is an X and you cannot access the score. If you keep trying to accept the disclaimer anyway - then you get an error message.

\*\* The next category controls works published between 1923-1963. These works are in the public domain if the copyright has not been renewed or if it was published without a proper copyright notice.

I think Gershwin falls in this category. He died in 1937 (73 years ago) so in his music is in the public domain in Canada. However, the copyrights on most of his music have been renewed and the Petrucci Music Library has blocked the scores from its site. However, Gershwin IS in the public domain in Europe because of the life plus 70 year rule so you could use the European link to see his scores.

\*\* This category applies to works published between 1964-1977 and all of these works have been renewed automatically for a term of 95 years after first publication.

You will not find these works uploaded on the Petrucci Music Library.

\*\* All works published after 1978 are under copyright for life plus 70 years.

You will not find these works uploaded on the Petrucci Music Library.

\*\* Finally, there is the US copyright Restoration for Foreign Works published between 1923 and 1978. This applies to works that were formerly in the public domain, but have not yet reached the public domain in the country where they were first published. (Europe, for example, has a death plus 70 years rule). Any such works that were not in the public domain in their country of origin as of January 1996 are eligible for US copyright restoration.

One example can be found with the Prokofiev String Quartets. They were once in the public domain and sold as a Dover Edition, and now they were no longer in the public domain. Dover had to quit selling these works. I think the restoration law may have been applied. Prokofiev died in 1953 (57 years ago) so I am assuming that these works must have been published somewhere between 1923-1978 in Russia w/ a 70 year rule. Prokofiev moved back to Russia in the 1930s and remained there for the rest of his life. Some of his works are, however on the PML but they are typically works published before 1923.

### **Who is scanning and uploading the scores?**

Large libraries around the world are participating in the project including the Sibley Music Library at Eastman School of Music which has a grant of several hundred thousand dollars to scan scores.

Additionally, musicians and libraries around the world are also participating. There is a Contributor Portal that anyone can access, set up an account and upload a score. Once the score is approved as being in the public domain, it can then be uploaded to the library.

### **Is there an onsite place I can contact?**

The site is currently owned and operated by Project Petrucci, LLC. The physical address is in Edwardsville, IL: Project Petrucci, LLC; 205 S. Charles St.; Edwardsville, IL 62025

### **Can I view music not in the public domain in the US?**

Some works currently not available through the Canadian hosted Petrucci Music Library can be viewed and downloaded through the European online music library hosted in The Netherlands.

There are two ways to find the European link:

1. [www.imslp.eu](http://www.imslp.eu)
2. You can also find the 'EU Server Portal' by clicking the link at the bottom of the page at wikipedia.org site:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Music\\_Score\\_Library\\_Project](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Music_Score_Library_Project)

At the European hosted site when you click on the Petrucci Music Library link you then go through the system using the EU option. For example, works by George Gershwin can be found here.

### **How can I use the Petrucci Music Library and Naxos to find new music and composers?**

The Petrucci Music Library and [www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com) can be used together to help find lesser known works and composers. For \$19.95 per year one can buy a subscription to Naxos which allows full access to the entire catalog of classical works they distribute. First, I search for a composer who has caught my attention to see if there are any recorded CDs on Naxos. This will either give me a particular piece to look for at the Petrucci Music Library or will give me an idea as to the composer's musical style and whether I should read through some scores on my own. If I have found a particular piece, I set up the listening sample on Naxos. Then I download the score, and I play the audio sample and follow the score. If I like the piece, I download it and if it is in print, I then order it.

To help me find unusual composers, I refer to the John Gillespie text, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*, the Freundlich and Friskin book, *Music for Piano*, and the Maurice Hinson, *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*.

### **Can I become a Contributor?**

There is a contributor portal that is open to anyone interested in scanning and submitting scores for the project. For example, I am planning to submit compositions by the New Orleans composer, Giuseppe Ferrata who died in 1928 so I am certain many of them are in the public domain.. He founded the music department at Tulane University and many of his compositions are housed there. Though I am not very familiar with his music, I have been told by musicians who do know his music, that he composed many fine pieces. I would like for these works to be more easily accessible to musicians around the world.