

**The Practice of Editing Music: History, Challenges and New Directions
(1500-1900): a two-day symposium in honour of Professor Graham Sadler**

will be hosted by

**Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (Birmingham City University, UK) on
Friday 30th and Saturday 31st October 2026.**

CALL FOR PAPERS

The production of critical and performing editions of music is central not only to the discovery of neglected composers and their repertoire but also to the greater understanding of well-known composers, their works, and their performing practices. However, the editor can often face numerous and varied challenges. Many of these are overlooked in modern scholarship and, if left unaddressed, will have far-reaching consequences for this discipline. This two-day symposium (from which a publication in the form of an edited volume is planned) aims to explore the diverse ways in which editors are solving complex problems across a range of repertoires and address the challenges that digital editing technologies both solve and create, whilst situating the whole discipline of editing in its historical context.

The organising committee invites proposals for:

- individual papers of 20 minutes in duration (followed by questions and discussion)
- lecture-recitals of 30 minutes in duration (followed by questions and discussion)
- themed and round-table sessions of 90 minutes in duration, including discussion
- poster presentations

on any aspect of producing critical and/or performing editions of music in repertoire from (c.1500–c.1900). We plan to have strands on digital editions and the history of critical editing practice. All presentations must be given in English. Examples of potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- aspects of the history of critical editing;
- the value of *Urtext* approaches to editing and the training of modern-day performers in the use and evaluation of sources;
- the parallels between editing texts and music and how editorial practice from both disciplines can inform each other;
- making the distinction(s) between performing and critical editions, and mitigating the challenges concerning the type and volume of contextual information to include in performing editions;
- methods for determining the degree of editorial intervention required;
- the challenge of creating ‘an’ edition where multiple sources of a work exist, methods for prioritising these sources and reporting these in the editorial method;
- solving editorial problems that are specific to certain repertoires or genres or where a composer’s practices are inconsistent within a work;
- approaches to constructing critical notes, including methods for describing music notation concisely, consistently, that is not anachronistic, and that can be understood by a non-specialist reader and/or a reader without access to the original source material;

- techniques and processes for the reconstruction of missing or incomplete source material and methods for showing and reporting this unobtrusively;
- identifying the composer's intent where aspects of compositional style and/or notation may be idiosyncratic or appear 'in error';
- the future of critical editing using digital technologies to support the resolution of many of the problems and challenges raised above, whilst identifying the challenges the use of this technology creates.

The committee actively encourages doctoral and early-career researchers to participate. All doctoral students should include a letter of recommendation from their supervisor. We have several bursaries to support travel and accommodation for doctoral students. Please do get in contact if you would like to discuss this.

Individuals may submit one proposal in the form of an abstract of not more than 250 words (individual papers, lecture-recitals, poster presentations), or not more than 350 words (roundtable sessions). For lecture-recitals you should attach the repertoire and a sample recording. An individual may both submit a proposal to present a single paper and be named as a contributor to a roundtable session (but not to lead that session).

You should email your proposal (as a pdf, and as described below) to

PracticeofEditing@bcu.ac.uk. Please use the subject line **Practice of Editing - Abstract**.

Two versions of the proposal should be attached; the first should be anonymous, and include the title and abstract only; in the second, the abstract should be preceded by the following information:

- Name
- Institution (where applicable)
- Postal address
- E-mail address
- Phone number
- Presentation type (paper, lecture-recital, round table, poster)

The content of this second attachment (personal details and abstract) should also be pasted into the body of the email, in case of transmission problems.

Doctoral students only: a letter of recommendation from a supervisor must be included as a third attachment and submitted as a .pdf.

The deadline for receipt of abstracts is **midnight (UK time) on Friday 29 May 2026**.

All submissions will be acknowledged on receipt. If you experience any problems with making your submission, or have any questions in the meantime, please email Adrian Powney directly (Adrian.Powney@bcu.ac.uk).

RBC Programme Committee Members

Adrian Powney (Chair), Carrie Churnside, Chris Dingle, Helen Roberts, Sían Derry, Jamie Savan, Shirley Thompson.