



AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) PhD Studentship

The Music Collection of Paul Hirsch (1881-1951): The Collecting Practices of a German-Jewish Emigré to England in the WWII Period

Start date: 1 October 2025

Application Deadline: Friday 25 April 2025, 12 noon UK time

Interviews will take place online on Thursday 15 May 2025

Royal Holloway, University of London and the British Library are pleased to announce the availability of a fully funded Collaborative Doctoral Studentship from 1 October 2025 under the [AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership Scheme](#).

This project will investigate the history and provenance of Paul Hirsch's music collection—one of the world's most significant private music libraries at the time of his escape from Germany to the UK in 1936. The student will investigate how Hirsch built his collection and how it acted as a salon and sanctuary for intellectuals in Frankfurt, within the context of other collections that the Nazi regime targeted and which were subsequently relocated, dispersed, or destroyed during the 1930s and early 1940s.

This project will be jointly supervised by Professor Stephen Rose and Dr Simone Gigliotti at Royal Holloway, University of London and by Dr Loukia Drosopoulou and Mr Chris Scobie at the British Library. The student will spend time at both Royal Holloway and the British Library and will become part of the wider cohort of AHRC CDP funded PhD students across the UK.

Royal Holloway and the British Library are keen to encourage applications from a diverse range of people, from different backgrounds and career stages, and particularly welcome those currently underrepresented in doctoral student cohorts.

The Research Project

The industrialist and amateur musician Paul Hirsch amassed one of the largest and most significant private music libraries in the early 20th century. His collection of over 18,000 items spans all music genres and time periods from the 15th to the 20th centuries. It is particularly rich in printed music of the 16th and 17th centuries, early treatises of music theory, early editions of Mozart's works, printed

editions of operas, and illustrated and decorated editions. Until the mid-1930s, Hirsch's library was based in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, where it provided a haven for musicians, scholars and persecuted individuals. His library then evaded the fate of confiscation experienced by c.460 libraries of Jewish collectors in Nazi Europe, being transferred to Cambridge and then purchased by the British Museum in 1946.

This project examines the lives of Hirsch's library, including his collection building and the stories of people connected with his library in Frankfurt. The research questions include:

- Collection histories: What journeys of acquisition and dispersal are found in Hirsch's collection? How and where did he buy music from other collectors? What do these purchases show about his priorities and the value given to historic music in the early 20th century?
- Inclusivity and access: How did Hirsch's library foster a musical worldview counter to the nationalist, antisemitic musicology in German universities in the 1930s? How did his collection act as a resource for students and a salon for concerts and intellectuals?
- Safe haven: How did Hirsch's library offer refuge for Jewish musicologists in Germany such as Kathi Meyer and Peter Epstein? Can this model of the library as a sanctuary inspire libraries in today's climate of geopolitical instability?
- Valuing cultural heritage: After Hirsch's library was relocated to the UK, how was it reassessed relative to emerging knowledge of the Nazis' destruction of libraries and books? What insights arise by comparing Hirsch's library with other relocated collections such as The Wiener Holocaust Library, or the post-war work of the Offenbach Archival Depot to reconstitute plundered books?

The project will include a review of research on libraries and collecting in the 1920s/30s and on Nazi cultural policy, antisemitism and the impact on persecuted German-Jewish collectors. The student will investigate the provenance of selected items in the Hirsch collection through bibliographical evidence on the books themselves and analysis of invoices, letters and auction catalogues. This work will also give insights into how rare music was acquired and valued in the 1920s/1930s. Analysis of letters and visitor books in the Paul Hirsch Papers will enable a study of library visitors and usage, and how the library fostered cultural life such as the internationalist exhibitions of music curated by Kathi Meyer in 1927.

Project outputs will include a thesis on Hirsch's collecting in the context of the Nazi fate of German-Jewish libraries; and enhanced catalogue records for selected items in the Hirsch collection, noting their provenance history. The student will be encouraged to use digital mapping tools to visualise the formation, usage and movement of Hirsch's library. They will also develop public engagement events such as a recreation of one of Hirsch's library concerts or a digital reconstruction of the spaces of Hirsch's libraries and the exhibitions it sponsored.

Benefits and Opportunities

The successful candidate will be registered with the [Department of Music at Royal Holloway](#), with supervision provided by specialists from the Music and History Departments. The Music Department

is ranked no.1 in the UK for the quality of its research (Complete University Guide 2022-25, based on the results of the 2021 Research Excellence Framework). We have a vibrant and supportive community of around 50 postgraduate students, with fortnightly research seminars, regular shared lunches, reading groups, co-mentorship groups and postgraduate study days. The student will also benefit from seminars and training sessions held across the School of Performing & Digital Arts and the School of Humanities at Royal Holloway, including workshops in the digital humanities and geo-humanities. Generic training and support are provided by Royal Holloway's Doctoral School, such as workshops in research ethics, project management and writing techniques, plus a regular Doctoral Conference.

At the British Library, the student will become part of a dynamic community of collaborative doctoral researchers and benefit from staff-level access to the Library's collections, resources and in-house training and development opportunities. CDP students also benefit from a dedicated programme of CDP Consortium events delivered in tandem with the other museums, galleries and heritage organisations affiliated with the AHRC CDP scheme, designed to provide CDP researchers with the knowledge, networks and skills to thrive in their future careers.

This collaborative PhD studentship offers the opportunity to combine academic training with practice-based experience and research behind the scenes of a major cultural institution. This is a unique opportunity to gain a wide range of transferable research skills, which may include curatorial skills, such as provenance research; cataloguing; delivering research findings to a wide range of audiences via public talks, events, and social media activities; analysing, visualising and interpreting quantitative or geo-located data; and other transferable skills.

Details of Award

The PhD studentship can be undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis; however, international students requiring a student visa will have to take this degree on a full-time basis.

AHRC CDP doctoral training grants fund studentships for 4 years full-time or part-time equivalent up to a maximum of 8 years. AHRC CDP doctoral training grants also make provision of funding for student development activities to help the student extend their wider skills portfolio and improve their career prospects.

The award pays tuition fees up to the value of the full-time home UKRI rate for PhD degrees. The **indicative fee level for Research Council studentships for 2025/26 is £5,006**. Should an international student be selected, as the successful recipient of a UKRI studentship they will receive a fee award from the University covering the difference between home fees and international fees.

The award also pays full maintenance for all students, both home and international students. This stipend is tax free, increases slightly each year, and is the equivalent of an annual salary, enabling the student to pay living costs. The UKRI Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2025/26 is £20,780. An additional London Weighting allowance of £2000/year will be applied for this studentship. In addition, the successful candidate will receive a CDP maintenance payment of £600/year.

Further details on UKRI funding for doctoral training can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

In addition, the successful student will be eligible for an additional research allowance courtesy of the British Library, up to £1,000 per financial year or part-time equivalent, for the duration of the project.

Eligibility

This studentship is open to both Home and International applicants.

To be classed as a Home student, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have settled status, or
- Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have indefinite leave to remain in or enter.

Further guidance can be found here based on revisions to [Training Grant Terms and Conditions for projects starting in October 2025](#).

Applicant Information

Applicants should have or expect to receive a Masters-level qualification in a relevant discipline or equivalent experience in a professional setting. Relevant disciplines include, but are not limited to, Music, History, Library Studies, Museum Studies and Modern Languages. Equivalent experience might include, but is not restricted to, a strong track record of employment in a library, museum, or heritage institution with responsibility for relevant archival research, collections curation, and/or public engagement activity. This experience should include skills in research and scholarly writing, demonstrated via written work totalling 7,000–10,000 words to be submitted with the application.

Collaborative doctoral students are expected to spend time at both Royal Holloway and the British Library.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate an interest in the museums, galleries, archives and library sector, and potential and enthusiasm for developing skills more widely in related areas. Applicants should be able to meet the following essential criteria:

- Knowledge of subject area (e.g. European history or music history of the early 20th century)
- Ability to read music notation
- Reading ability in German (intermediate level / B1)
- Experience of working effectively in a team towards shared goals
- Experience of working independently on large-scale projects
- IT skills in standard Microsoft Office applications

The following criteria are desirable:

- Experience of working with primary sources
- Interest in, or experience of, the digital humanities

Applicants must satisfy the standard UKRI eligibility criteria. For further information please see:

<https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/>

How to Apply

Royal Holloway and the British Library are keen to encourage a wide range of applicants from different backgrounds and particularly welcome applications from Global Majority students and other groups currently underrepresented in doctoral student cohorts.

We will hold a webinar on Friday 21 March 2025, 3pm-4pm, to give more information about the project and the application process. A recording of the webinar can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSJRHXgDJ44>

To apply for this studentship, you must submit an online application via [Royal Holloway's Applicant Portal](#) by 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 25 April 2025. **Applications received after this date or that omit the requested information may not be considered.**

The application form will ask the following questions, which you should answer as follows:

- Course of study: PhD Music
- Enter the names of your proposed supervisors: Stephen Rose and Simone Gigliotti
- What is the title of your research? - The music collection of Paul Hirsch (CDP with British Library)
- Is this an advertised research project - tick 'yes'
- Where was this research project advertised - enter 'Royal Holloway website'
- Have you agreed with your supervisor that you do not need to provide a research proposal - tick 'yes'
- How are you paying your fees – select 'Royal Holloway scholarship'

You must then upload the following documents:

- CV (maximum 4 pages)
- Personal statement (maximum 1500 words) addressing the following:
 - Why you want to work on this project;
 - How this project builds on your previous studies and experience;

- Areas of the project proposal you are particularly interested to develop;
 - Awareness of relevant scholarship on this topic and its broader context.
-
- Completed [Selection Criteria Form](#) showing how you meet the essential and desirable criteria listed above.
 - Degree certificates and transcripts of study already completed and, if possible, transcript to date of study currently being undertaken
 - Evidence of English language proficiency if applicable and evidence of German language proficiency (e.g. transcript of formal study or summary of your German studies)
 - In the reference section please enter the contact details of two academic referees
 - Sample of written work: a total of 7,000–10,000 words of academic prose or equivalent (e.g. exhibition catalogue, professional reports, policy documents)

Applications that lack any of these documents may not be considered.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an online interview on Thursday 15 May. We ask all applicants to complete a voluntary EDI monitoring form [here](#). All responses are anonymous.

Informal Enquiries

If you are interested in applying, you are welcome to contact the following for an informal discussion about this opportunity:

Stephen Rose, stephen.rose@rhul.ac.uk

Loukia Drosopoulou, Loukia.drosopoulou@bl.uk