The order of instruments in subject headings

Music Cataloging at Yale [1] | Subject cataloging [2]

The order of instruments is by instrument family, then within each family:
The LC Subject Cataloging Manual instruction sheet 1917.5, Music form/genre headings: medium of performance, under 2. Solo instruments in headings: Order of solo instruments gives the following instructions:

Assign the names of up to nine solo instruments in the following order:
1. keyboard instruments,
2. wind instruments,
3. plucked instruments,
4. percussion, electronic, and other instruments,
5. bowed stringed instruments,
6. unspecified instruments,
7. continuo.

Within each category, give the instruments in alphabetical order with the exception of bowed stringed instruments; give these in score order, high to low, basing the order on the range of each instrument as described in standard music reference sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument family</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Order within family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keyboard (includes electronic equivalents)</td>
<td></td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harpsichord</td>
<td>For a more complete list of keyboard instruments, see Keyboard instruments [3]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organ</td>
<td>accordion and celesta are to be considered keyboard instruments for the purposes of subject headings. (Bandoneon, bayan, and concertina are also being considered a keyboard instrument.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piano</td>
<td>Continuo is given as the last element of the subject element rather than as a keyboard instrument.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accordion and celesta are to be considered keyboard instruments for the purposes of subject headings. (Bandoneon, bayan, and concertina are also being considered a keyboard instrument.)</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winds</td>
<td>Alphabetize the names before adding “s” for plural: use oboes (2), oboe d’amore not oboe d’amore, oboes (2) because “obo” (in the singular) versus “obo d’amore” alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwinds</td>
<td>For a more complete list of woodwinds, see Woodwind instruments [4]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flute</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oboe d’amore</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clarinet</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saxophone</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bassoon</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasses</td>
<td>For a more complete list of brasses, see Brass instruments [5]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horn</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trumpet</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trombone</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baritone</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuba</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plucked (includes electronic equivalents)</td>
<td>For a more complete list of plucked instruments, see Plucked instruments [6]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harp</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guitar</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lute</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mandolin</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drum</td>
<td>”Other” includes bagpipes, bandoneon, carillon, cimbalon, harmonica, hurdy-gurdy,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>celeste</td>
<td>alphabetical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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- gong
- marimba
- vibraphone
- xylophone
- zither, etc. Computer, electronics, synthesizer, and electronic instruments that do not have acoustic equivalents (e.g., ondes Martenot) also fall in this category. Non-musical instruments [7] (e.g., glass music, balloon, etc.) are included here.

For a more complete list, see M145-M175 in Class M.

Note: accordion and celesta are no longer considered percussion instruments for the purposes of subject headings.

For a more complete list of strings, see Stringed instruments [8]

Bowed strings

- violin
- viola
- cello
- double bass

Note: based on LC practice, the order of modern and early bowed string instruments is:
- » violin, lyra viol, viol, viola d'amore, viola, viola da gamba, violone, d'amore
- » pardessus de viole precedes viola d'amore
- » viola d'amore precedes viola da gamba
- » baryton is placed inconsistently in LC practice

Accordion and celesta previously were considered to be percussion instruments. The Library of Congress Cataloging Policy and Support Office Weekly subject heading list 13 (March 31, 2004) [9] reported the change in order of accordion in sh8594021 and Weekly subject heading list 17 (April 28, 2004) [10] announced the change in the subject authority record for celesta (sh85-21624) from "classified as a metallophone" to "regarded by New Grove as a keyboard instrument" and "played by the pianist."

violoncello/cello: On 2/21/13, The Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division announced that they will revise subject headings that include the word "violoncello" and "violoncellos" to "cello" and "cellos" and its derivatives (e.g., Violoncello makers, Violoncellists) to reflect RDA's preference for the word "cello."

"Other" instruments:
In LC class M175.A-Z, the following instruments are among those listed under "Percussion instruments. Other instruments":
- accordion, autopharp, bandoneon, dulcimer, harmonica, hurdy-gurdy, Jew's harp, musical saw

In LC class ML1083-1091, the following instruments are listed as "other":
- accordion, bandoneon, concertina, glass harmonica, hurdy-gurdy, Jew's harp, mouth organs (including harmonica)

Glass harmonica, hurdy-gurdy, and Jew's harp are consistently treated as "other":
sh 85109528 Quartets (Flute, glass harmonica, viola, cello)
sh 85109941 Quintets (Flute, oboe, glass harmonica, viola, cello)
97702161 Quintets (Piano, glass harmonica, percussion, violin, cello)
90755006 Quintets (Harpischord, recorder, trumpet, hurdy-gurdy, cello)
sh 85010975 Bagpipe and hurdy-gurdy music
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sh 87002867 Hurdy-gurdy and violin music
sh 85092265 Nonets (Clarinets (2), horns (2), hurdy-gurdies (2), violas (2), cello)
sh 86007666 Concertos (Mandola and Jew's harp with string orchestra)
sh2003010592 Mandola and Jew's harp music

However, accordion, bandoneon, and concertina are considered keyboard instruments in subject headings. In recent LC original cataloging (but not LC copy cataloging), LC consistently treats these instruments as keyboard instruments:
2005441595 Quintets (Bandoneon, piano, electric guitar, violin, double bass)
2005441519 Sextets (Bandoneon, piano, saxophone, guitar, percussion, double bass)
97702511 Octets (Accordion, piano, clarinet, flute, guitar, mandolin, percussion, double bass)
2005530240 Nonets (Bandoneon, piano, electric guitar, harp, violins (2), viola, cello, double bass)

Older LC original cataloging that was recently revised also follows this practice:
87752935 Trios (Accordion, piano, flute)
87752905 Trios (Accordion, piano, percussion)
87752935 Quartets (Accordion, piano, violin, cello)

Source URL: https://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/instr650

Links