

Recording medium of performance for musical works (RDA 6.15)

[Music Cataloging at Yale](#) [1] ? [Preferred titles](#) [2]

Changes to this document that reflect recent updates to RDA are in process but are not complete

Medium of performance is the instrument, instruments, voice, voices, etc., for which a musical work was originally conceived.

[Instrumental music: one performer to a part](#) | [Individual instruments](#) | [Accompanying ensembles with one performer to a part](#) | [Music for orchestra, string orchestra, or band](#) | [One or more solo instruments and accompanying ensemble](#) | **Vocal music:** | [Solo voices](#) | [Choruses](#) | [Accompaniment for songs, Lieder, etc.](#) | [Indeterminate/unspecified medium](#)

(6.15.1.2) Sources of information

Take information on medium of performance from any source.

(6.15.1.3) Recording medium of performance

Record the medium of performance by applying these instructions, as applicable:

- instrumental music intended for one performer to a part (6.15.1.4)
- instruments (6.15.1.5)
- accompanying ensembles with one performer to a part (6.15.1.6)
- instrumental music for orchestra, string orchestra, or band (6.15.1.7)
- one or more solo instruments and accompanying ensemble (6.15.1.8)
- solo voices (6.15.1.9)
- choruses (6.15.1.10)
- indeterminate medium of performance (6.15.1.11).

Record medium of performance as a separate element, as part of an access point, or as both. For instructions on recording medium of performance as part of the authorized access point, 6.28.1.9-6.28.1.11.

If there is more than one part for a particular instrument or voice, record the number of parts.

Exception:

If the term percussion is used (6.15.1.4), record the number of players if there is more than one.

Use *continuo* for a thorough bass part whether it is named as basso, basso continuo, figured bass, thorough bass, or continuo, and whether the individual instrument or instruments of the continuo are specified or not.

For guidelines on recording details about the medium of performance, apply the instructions for medium of performance of musical content at 7.21.

Best practices for music cataloging [3]: If giving the medium of performance as a component of an access point, routinely also give medium of performance in a [382](#) [4] field. For other works, give medium of performance in a [382](#) [4] field if readily ascertainable.

[Instrumental](#) music

(6.15.1.4) Instrumental music intended for one performer to a part

Record each instrument by applying the instructions at [6.15.1.5](#) and [6.15.1.11](#)

Exceptions:

- If there is more than one percussion instrument, and the names of the individual instruments are not specified by the composer in the original title, use percussion.
- If the medium includes a continuo part, record the name of the part (6.15.1.3)
- If the medium includes instruments acting as an accompanying ensemble, record a term for the accompanying ensemble (6.15.1.6)

Best practices for music cataloging [3]: There is no limit to the number of medium elements recorded, either as components of access points or in [382](#) [4] fields.

[\(6.15.1.5\) Instruments](#)

When recording an individual type of instrument, use a term in a language preferred by the agency creating the data whenever possible.

LC-PCC PS: Use a term in English whenever possible.

Best practices for music cataloging [3]: Follow LC-PCC PS

Descriptive Cataloging Manual (DCM) Z1, 382, Medium of performance: Best practice: Record the medium of performance using RDA terminology when available.

If a required term is not listed in RDA, use a term from a controlled vocabulary, such as LCSH.

Use the following list of terms as a guide:

- ° cello *or* violoncello (LC-PCC PS: LC practice: **cello**)
- ° cor anglais *or* English horn (LC-PCC PS: LC practice: **English horn**)
- ° **double bass** (not bass viol or contrabass)
- ° double bassoon or contrabassoon (LC-PCC PS: LC practice: **contrabassoon**)
- ° **harpichord** (not cembalo or virginal)
- ° **horn** (not French horn)
- ° kettle drums *or* timpani (LC-PCC PS: LC practice: **timpani**)
- ° **viol** (for sizes of viola da gamba other than bass)
- ° **viola da gamba** (not bass viol or gamba)
- ° **viols** (for viols of different sizes)

LC-PCC PS: Use the following instrument names: cello, English horn, contrabassoon, timpani.

LC-PCC PS: LC practice: In applying RDA 6.15.1.5, if a composer wrote works for or including various keyboard stringed instruments such as harpsichord, piano, or clavichord, use the one that predominates in the composer's works of a given type of composition in all preferred titles for works of that type. If no predominant instrument is apparent, use the term "keyboard instrument" in the medium of performance element.

6.15.1.5.1: Number of hands:

For one instrument, specify the number of hands if other than two:

- piano, 1 hand
- piano, 3 hands
- keyboard instrument, 4 hands
- marimba, 8 hands

For two or more keyboard or mallet (marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, etc.) instruments, specify the number of hands if other than two per instrument.

- piano (2), 3 hands
- pianos (2), 8 hands

[6.15.1.5.2: Pitch and range of instruments :](#)

If considered important for identification and access, record the designation of key in which an instrument is pitched and/or terms indicating the range of an instrument.

Optional omission:

- ° a) the designation of the key in which an instrument is pitched
- ° b) terms indicating a range *alto*, *tenor*, *bass*, etc.
 - » **Best practices for music cataloging** [3]: If deemed useful for identification and access, give specific

ranges of instruments, etc. in a note

[6.15.1.5.3: Alternative instruments:](#)

Record the names of alternative instruments.

[6.15.1.5.4: Doubling instruments:](#)

Record the names of doubling instruments.

Optional omission:

- ° Omit doubling instruments.

Examples:

violins (2), viola, cello

strings

piano, violin, viola, cello

horns (2), violin, viola, cello

timpani, tom-tom, snare drum

bassoon, violin, viola, cello

piano, flute, clarinet, marimba, violin, cello

flute, harp, violin, viola, cello

piano, flutes (2), clarinets (2), oboes (2), horns (2), trombones (2), bassoons (2), trumpets (2)

harpsichord, Jew's harp, violin, viola, cello

piano, flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, percussion, violin, viola, cello, double bass

celesta, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, harp, violin, viola, cello, double bass

° Celesta is considered a keyboard instrument and is given first

organ, trumpets (4), horns (4), trombones (4), baritone, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp

flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, violin, viola, cello, double bass

flute, oboe, saxophone, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, percussion, harp, violin, viola, cello, double bass

flutes (8), oboes (6), clarinets (6), bassoons (6), horns (6), trumpets (6), trombones (6), tuba, timpani, percussion

celesta, harpsichord, piano, piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinets (3), English horn, saxophone, bassoon, contrabassoon,

trumpets (3), trombones (2), flügelhorn, horns (2), baritone, tuba, glockenspiel, harp

[\(6.15.1.6\) Accompanying ensembles with one performer to a part](#)

For an accompanying ensemble with one performer to a part, record the appropriate term for the instrument or family of instruments followed by the word *ensemble*

The ensemble consists of:

the **same** instrument or from the **same family** of instruments

Record:

record the appropriate term for the instrument or family of instruments followed by the word *ensemble*

° *guitar ensemble, string ensemble*

instruments from **two or more families** of instruments

instrumental ensemble when a more specific term is not available

Alternative: For an accompanying ensemble with one performer to a part, record the appropriate term for each instrument of the accompanying ensemble instead of the name of the ensemble.

[\(6.15.1.7\) Instrumental music for orchestra, string orchestra, or band](#)

Record an appropriate term from the following list:

- ° **orchestra** (use for both full or reduced (chamber) orchestra)
- ° **string orchestra**
- ° **band**

Don't list the individual instruments.

Disregard continuo when it is part of an orchestra or string orchestra.

The [Library of Congress Medium of Performance Thesaurus for Music](#) [5] (LCMPT) gives scope notes for "orchestra" and "string orchestra":

- **orchestra:** a large ensemble consisting of bowed string instruments and some combination of wind and other types of instruments, or such an ensemble whose relative size is not specified. For a small orchestra so specified, use chamber orchestra.
 - ° Keep in mind that the terms in the LCMPT are intended to be used in field 382 of MARC 21 bibliographic records, and not necessarily in the medium of performance of authorized access points. "Chamber orchestra" is not used in authorized access points.
- **string orchestra:** an orchestra consisting solely or primarily of string instruments.
 - ° Use "string orchestra" even when there are keyboard, percussion, and/or plucked instruments. It is the presence of one or more wind instruments that would define the ensemble as an orchestra.

[\(6.15.1.8\) One or more solo instruments and accompanying ensemble](#)

Record the term for the solo instrument or instruments and the term for the accompanying ensemble, in that order.

° For the solo instrument(s), follow [6.15.1.4-6.15.1.5](#) and [6.15.1.11](#)

° For the accompanying ensemble, see [6.15.1.6-6.15.1.7](#)

LC-PCC PS: For an accompanying ensemble that has only one performer to a part, use the word "ensemble" preceded by the appropriate qualifying term (e.g., "string ensemble," "jazz ensemble," "wind ensemble") in the part of the medium of performance element that follows the solo instruments.

Best practices for music cataloging [3]: Follow LC-PCC PS.

[Vocal music](#)

[\(6.15.1.9\) Solo voices](#)

Record an appropriate term from the following list to identify a type of solo voice:

- ° **soprano**

- **mezzo-soprano**
- **alto**
- **tenor**
- **baritone**
- **bass**
- other terms as appropriate (e.g., *bass-baritone*, *countertenor*)

If no specific voice types or ranges can be ascertained for two or more solo voices of different ranges, record an appropriate term from the following list:

- **mixed solo voices**
- **men's solo voices**
- **women's solo voices**
- other terms as appropriate (e.g., *children's solo voices*)

For compositions that include solo voice(s) with chorus, record only the appropriate terms for the chorus ([6.15.1.10](#)) and the accompaniment, if any.

[\(6.15.1.10\)](#) **Choruses**

Record an appropriate term from the following list to identify a type of choral ensemble (two or more performers to a part):

- **mixed voices**
- **women's voices**
- **men's voices**
- **unison voices**
- other terms as appropriate (e.g., *children's voices*)
 - » [Best practices for music cataloging](#) [3]: other commonly used terms: *equal voices*, *treble voices*

[\(6.15.1.11\)](#) **Accompaniment for songs, Lieder, etc.**

If:

- the work is not in a "popular" idiom

and

◦ the preferred title for the work consists solely of the name of a type, or of two or more types, of composition for solo voice (e.g., *Lieder*, *Mélodie*, *Songs*)

and

◦ the voice is accompanied by anything other than a keyboard stringed instrument alone,
record the name of the accompanying instrument(s) or ensemble (following [6.15.1.3](#) to [6.15.1.9](#)), followed by the word *accompaniment*.

Examples:

flute accompaniment

violin, piano accompaniment

flute, electronics accompaniment

piano, clarinet, viola accompaniment

clarinet, viola, cello accompaniment

violins (2), cello accompaniment

orchestra accompaniment

RDA doesn't cover what to do when the voice and instruments are equal in the ensemble. Current practice is to name all the instruments (following [6.15.1.3](#) to [6.15.1.6](#)) but don't add the word *accompaniment*.

Examples:

high voice, flute, oboe, vibraphone, violin, cello

medium voice, violin, piano

voice, flutes (2), clarinet, trombone, violin, viola, cellos (2)

If such a work is not accompanied, record *unaccompanied*.

[\(6.15.1.13\)](#) **Indeterminate medium of performance**

If the specific medium of performance, or any part of it, is not stated in the resource or other source, record that part of the medium of performance as follows, in this order of priority:

Recording medium of performance for musical works (RDA 6.15)

Published on Yale University Library (<https://web.library.yale.edu>)

RDA	Medium indicated by the composer or Record: available from any other source:	
6.15.1.1 3.1	one family of instruments or voices (6.15.1.10), or a collective term for other media	the family, collective term, etc. ° <i>plucked instrument, chordal instrument, bass instrument, keyboard instrument</i>
6.15.1.1 3.2	only the range or general type of instrument or voice	the range or type ° <i>low instrument, treble instrument, melody instrument, male voice</i>
6.15.1.1 3.3	some parts of the medium are indicated and other parts are unspecified or are indicated as unspecified or a similar term	the individual parts of the medium as instructed at 6.15.1.4-6.15.1.12 ° use <i>unspecified</i> or a similar term, as appropriate. ° <i>unspecified instrument</i>
6.15.1.1 3.4	no medium is indicated and two or more such works by the same composer have the same preferred title	the number of parts or voices ° use <i>voices</i> to indicate both instrumental and vocal parts ° <i>voices (3), voices (5-6)</i>
RDA	Medium is not indicated by the composer and is not available from any other source:	Record:
6.15.1.1 3.5	no medium	<i>unspecified</i>

Source URL: <https://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/medium>

Links

[1] <http://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music> [2] <http://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/preferred-titles> [3] http://bcc.musiclibraryassoc.org/BCC-Historical/BCC2015/RDA_Best_Practices_for_Music_Cataloging_v1.1-150217.pdf [4] <http://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/MARC382> [5] <http://classificationweb.net/LCMPT/>