

Researching the collections, conservation and, when necessary, restoration, are essential tasks in a museum. The National Music Museum has a space dedicated to this kind of work. Part of the team studies and restores the instruments, with the aim of conserving them as well as possible and, in due course, displaying them to the public.

Musical instruments are at the meeting point of art as something seen and art as something heard. This double function means a past of history and technology that turns these instruments into highly valuable documents that require enormous care in their maintenance.

The needs of the collection and musical instruments, both individually and as a group, are what decides the work that is done in the workshop. Instruments can be subjected to a variety of treatments: a cleaning focused on preventing degradation caused by impurities that build up on the surface or by changes in the materials (like the corrosion of metal); minimal interventions to stabilise the alteration processes; and a recuperation of their appearance with the purpose of photographing or even displaying it.

There can also be a structural repair to restore the instrument's capacity to produce the harmonious sound essential to music. It is during this process that annotations, small marks and hidden signatures are often found, invisible without taking the instrument apart. All the information gathered is documented and recorded in the instrument's file for later use by researchers or as support for other interventions.

Each instrument is viewed as a unique case. The basic principles are the same as those that rule every conservation or restoration technician: every action should be considered in terms of what information might be gained and what might be lost.

<http://www.museudamusica.imc-ip.pt> - Museu da Musica 2009. Todos os Direitos Reservados