

Researching the collections, conservation and, when necessary, restoration are essential tasks in a museum. The Music Museum has an area set aside where these works are carried out. A number of specialists study and restore the instruments, always with the aim of conserving them as well as possible and, in due course, displaying them to the public.

In musical instruments art as something-to-be-seen and something-to-be-heard merges. Inherent in this double function is a history and technology from the past, which transforms them into highly valuable documents requiring enormous care in their maintenance.

The work to be carried out in the workshop is dictated by the needs of the collection and musical instruments, individually or as a group. Instruments can be subjected to a variety of treatments: cleaning in a view to prevent later damage caused by impurities that accumulate on the surface or resulting from alteration in the materials that make them up, such as the corrosion of metal; minimal treatments that stabilise processes of alteration; without being intrinsically enhanced, the whole of the aesthetic aspect of an instrument can be recovered, with a view to photography or display. A process of structural repair can also be undertaken with a view to restoring the instrument's capacity to produce the harmonious sound that is essential to music.

It is during this process that annotations, small marks and hidden signatures are found, invisible without taking the instrument apart. All the information thus gathered is duly documented and recorded in the instrument's file for later use by researchers or to support our own work on the instrument.

As in other areas, each instrument is treated as an individual case. The basic principles are the same as those that rule every technique of conservation or restoration, that is to say, every act should be considered in terms of what information might be gained and what might be lost.