Comparison of Music Databases

IIMP, RILM, Music Index, RIPM and (BMS).

- RILM, RIPM, and BMS focus on scholarly publications: there are fewer reviews and fewer extraneous citations.
- IIMP and The Music Index index huge quantities of reviews – almost half of their respective collections are reviews.

IIMP International Index to Music Periodicals (one of 43 Proquest databases)
IIMP claims to have indexed back to 1874, although 70% of their citations come from contemporary indexing (post-1995). It includes more popular sources than the other indexes. Where there is no link to full text the remainder of articles indexed have no abstracts. IIMP is the easiest for the researcher to access full-text, because it runs through its own interface. An advanced search engine allows useful narrowing of search results. It covers very few foreign language titles.

The following 3 databases may be searched simultaneously through the EBSCO interface:

RILM Repertory of International Music Literature (Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale)
Indexing and abstracts from 1967-present with links to full text when available. RILM is the most scholarly index with the best abstracts, steering clear of reviews (unless extremely substantial), and indexing an array of writings: journals, festschriften, theses, dissertations, facsimiles, books, etc. and has the most comprehensive coverage of foreign language sources, claiming to include citations of 215 languages.

The Music Index
Covers from 1973 to the present online, but as a print index goes back to 1949. It includes more pedagogical sources than the other indexes and is often useful for its sheer size. There are no abstracts. It has reasonable, but not terribly large coverage of foreign sources (mostly English - it claims 22 languages from 40 countries). The Print Index is in the Mat Store.

RIPM Retrospective Index to Music Periodicals (Répertoire International de la Presse Musicale)
Covers specifically the 19th century, with the entirety of their catalogue falling from 1800-1950, thus the indexing for that century is quite a bit more dense than from IIMP. It indexes one journal at a time completely and comprehensively for the entire 150 year coverage of the index (or whatever portion of those years the journal actually existed). It does not, include abstracts, but has the occasional editor's annotations.

BMS online Die Bibliografie des Musikschrifttums (English interface)
Covers from 1986 and indexes predominantly articles, festschriften, congress proceedings, facsimiles etc in major European languages. It is the smallest index (600 journals, adding 10,000 citations a year). It includes an eclectic mix of scholarly sources not available to other indexes. It does not index dissertations.

Oxford Bibliographies under O in A-Z Databases combines a comprehensive encyclopedia and a traditional bibliography for easier online research. Each article, written and reviewed by top scholars in the field, is rich with citations and annotations, expert recommendations, and narrative pathways to find further related literature.