Requirements Documentation
Minimum Viable Interoperability 1.0
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1 Executive Summary

The Open Music Initiative (OMI) is a non-profit initiative of Berklee College of Music, composed of leading academic institutions, music and media industry organizations, creators, technologists, entrepreneurs, and policy experts who love and value music. The OMI was co-founded and launched by Berklee College of Music’s Institute for Creative Entrepreneurship (Berklee ICE), in partnership with Context Labs, IDEO, and the MIT Media Lab. Over 150 members now participate in OMI. Members own their own intellectual property (IP), and license it via open standard (preferred) or directly; OMI does not own the IP.

The initial goal of OMI was to identify gaps in the music ecosystem that, when corrected, would result in additional compensation flowing to music creators and contributors. Five technical Working Groups (WGs) were formed to identify unfulfilled business needs in the music ecosystem that could be addressed through the application of technology. The WGs were thematically subdivided and focused on Core Functions, Metadata, Identity & Security, Payments & Reporting, Ledgers & Architecture.

OMI and its working groups generated over 50 business use cases identifying a wide range of issues that could benefit from the collaborative OMI process. The group decided to focus first on the linkage between recorded work and composition based upon a consensus view that this is both a significant issue facing the industry and one that is achievable both in terms of technology and acceptance by the various stakeholders.

This document distills the subsequent discussions into the requirements to be achieved by the 1.0 OMI Application Programming Interface (API). The 1.0 API protocol and interfaces are described in the associated API specification, published under an open license. Related use cases, working group methodology, meeting notes and more are available in separate documents.
2 Introduction

The complex nature of copyright means companies operating in the music ecosystem must often track down a host of rights owners before they can legally operate their business. Identifying who owns which rights is non-trivial, and requires companies to associate recordings with musical works and contributors. Missing or incorrect associations between sound recordings and musical works frequently results in delayed or under payment to the music creators themselves. OMI members believe that solving this problem benefits the global music industry because it generates more revenue for content creators and lowers the barrier of entry into the licensed music ecosystem.

This document captures the requirements for a “Minimum Viable Interoperability” (MVI) API that provides a means for participants in the music ecosystem to share information about recordings, works, creators/contributors, and their relationships. Related use cases, working group methodology, and more, are available in separate documents.

This API requirements specification and its resulting API are intended to be used adopters to implement API endpoints, such as http://omi.<yourcompany>.com/

The first OMI API is intended to allow the linking of musical works (compositions) and sound recordings made from them so that, among other things, the associated creators can more easily be paid. The following required data associated with each has been identified as the Minimum Viable Data to be exchanged between consenting parties. This is sufficient to unambiguously define the specified work or recording. The optional data will assist in matching and will effectively be required in real-world situations.

In addition, data is needed to validate the source of the information above:

- Provenance data – verifiable data about who is asserting the data above is accurate
- Date of validity – when the data above was last known to be valid

The availability of APIs will facilitate exchange of data between consenting parties while allowing each party to maintain control over its data. Once a linkage has been validated for a recording, the market can build enhanced commercial products on top of it. If we succeed, OMI members will have joined forces at a foundational level to later compete again at a higher product level.
3 Requirements Background

The Open Music Initiative (OMI) has created this document to describe the essential elements of an API achieving the goal of Minimum Viable Interoperability as described above. It is focused on the OMI’s mission of “the development of open standards and innovation related to music, to help assure proper compensation for all creators, performers and rights holders of music.” The V1 API seeks to achieve this by defining an open protocol for the uniform identification and linking of recordings, musical works, and music rights holders and creators, while not encroaching into areas or activities that are outside of the OMI scope, e.g. “We are not building a database or a specific product.”

This Requirement Documentation 1.0 is meant to clearly state the “must have” elements crucial to achieve the above-stated goals. Additional features and “nice to haves” are business-driven decisions that should come from OMI members and others operating in the marketplace. The requirements document ultimately leads to an Application Program Interface (API) specification aimed at enabling industry wide interoperability. The API specification can then be tested via various Proof of Concept (POC) prototypes, to be continuously refined and iterated on.

3.1 The API Approach

A variety of architectures are in use or contemplated by participants in the music value chain. For example, there is a great deal of interest among OMI members in the use of blockchain technology to help address the music industry’s challenges. At the same time, existing label and DSP systems are built on traditional databases. Therefore it is critical to allow these participants to interoperate regardless of underlying technology. Such an ecosystem can be enabled by using Application Program Interfaces (APIs) to abstract away implementation details. APIs allow companies to interoperate while maintaining control and ownership of their data, and allow them to decide who to engage with and what data to exchange.

3.2 Linking Recordings to Works

To help achieve OMI’s stated mission of assuring “proper compensation for all creators, performers and rights holders of music,” OMI has identified the need to link recordings, musical works, and music rights holders and creators. The value of this is illustrated by this use case:

A complete list of ISWCs matched to recordings provided at an early point in the supply chain would provide a substantial boost when a label is first providing recording data to a digital partner (e.g., Amazon, Apple, Spotify, Tidal). It is sometimes a challenge to get a new DSP partner to pay in a timely and accurate manner - especially for the long tail. Providing a partner with compositional data matched to recording IDs can accelerate the process.

For example, a music distributor that licenses content from a music label usually needs to obtain additional rights from publishers or music rights societies on their behalf, but may not know from whom to obtain those rights. To solve this problem, the works associated with the recordings
and ideally the entities that oversee their licensing must first be identified. Addressing this gap in the music industry is crucial for licensing and royalty payments, both in their current form and in advanced future interlinked forms, e.g. derivative licensing.

In short, the global music industry lacks a readily accessible and trustworthy Linkage of Sound Recording to Music Works and Creators/Contributors. As an open initiative, OMI is well placed to create consensus around specifications intended to solve this problem.

### 3.3 Metadata Definition

Associating recordings, works, and contributors unambiguously requires identifiers for each component, and this identification depends on metadata sufficient to distinguish between entities when faced with similar alternatives. OMI defines metadata as textual information that describes and often travels with its subject. Metadata can describe any aspect of the subject and be used for any number of purposes, thus providing value to a wide array of stakeholders. The API should limit metadata requirements to only what is essential to achieve its goals.

### 3.4 Works vs Recordings

In order to understand OMI’s recommendations, it is imperative to have at least a base-level understanding of the component elements of music. It is beyond the scope of this document to fully articulate the necessary details surrounding copyright law and music business, and therefore this section is intentionally brief. We recommend that API implementers have an understanding of these elements. The following excerpt from the 2015 US Copyright Office Report “Copyright and the Music Marketplace” frames the discussion:

...a musical recording encompasses two distinct works of authorship: the musical work, which is the underlying composition created by the songwriter or composer along with any accompanying lyrics, and the sound recording, which is the particular performance of the musical work that has been fixed in a recording medium such as a CD or digital file. **Because of this overlap, musical works and sound recordings are frequently confused.** It is important to keep in mind, however, that these are separately copyrightable works.¹

**Songs have two components:**

1. **The musical work:** this is the underlying song itself (melody and lyrics); the ownership of the rights in it may be denoted by a copyright notice starting with © (although a © copyright notice on recorded music usually relates to the associated artwork rather than the musical work).

2. **The sound recording:** this is the fixation (recording) of a performance of the musical work in a form such as a download or any other tangible form (CD, vinyl, etc.); the ownership of the rights in it may denoted by a copyright notice starting with ®. The performer and/or his or her label typically own these rights.

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A single songwriter/performer who creates an original work of authorship, performs it and renders it in a tangible form would own both rights to the musical work and the sound recording. Until this songwriter/performer assigns these rights to another party, they have certain rights (which vary in their extent in different territories) over reproduction, distribution, display, public performance (including streaming and broadcasting), and creation of derivatives. These rights can relate to both the musical work and the sound recording. The copyright notice (for both © and ® cases) usually includes the year of first publication.

Typically, songwriters/lyricists and performers license or assign their creations to companies such as publishers and music right societies, and, labels respectively. These companies then license to third party music services and retailers, collect the associated revenue, and distribute it back to the original creators after taking a cut. Importantly, creators might license their rights to different companies in different territories. Some aspects of the revenue stream are handled by collective entities that are designated by the creator or appointed by national governments.

Thus, virtually every conceivable revenue stream or means of promotion of a music track maps back to these two elements: the party or parties who control the rights in the musical work and the party or parties who control the rights in the sound recording. Those parties are acting on behalf of the Musical Works Creators and Sound Recording Creators as defined below.

3.5 Identification of Musical Work Creators and Rightsholders

OMI recommends the term “Musical Work Creator(s)” rather than “Songwriter”, “Composer” or other terminology. Some rights may be owned or controlled by other parties who are termed Musical Work Rightsholders.

The identification of Musical Work Creators and Musical Work Rights holders involves, amongst others:

- The creators of the work: typically, the writers of the music and lyrics, together with any relevant pseudonyms/SKAs
- The related publishers/publishing administrators of the work and the territories for which they hold/manage rights
- The related Performing/Performance Rights Societies and the territories for which they hold/manage rights
- The Mechanical Rights Organizations, such as MCPS in the UK, STEMRA in the Netherlands and HFA in the US, and the territories for which they manage rights

Remixes, DJ sets, samples and medleys can make this identification complex. However, OMI believes that this issue is made addressable by the description of the component musical works.

3.6 Identification of Sound Recording Creators and Rightsholders

This term covers the parties involved in creating a sound recording from the performance of a musical work, and covers:
• The performers (featured, background)
• The relevant labels and the territories for which they hold/manage rights
• Producers (the individuals who guide the recording) or recording engineers who have contractual relationship with respect to the Sound Recording
• Entities that license, collect or distribute to/on behalf of the above (e.g. SoundExchange)

There are other parties who may need to be identified as associated with a sound recording, and it should be possible but optional to identify them, along with their role.

3.7 Metadata Requirements

For the OMI API specification v1.0, OMI is focusing on the necessary data to improve the matching of sound recordings with works. Specifically, the minimum set of data necessary to associate recordings, works, and creators/performers/contributors, and to disambiguate between them.

3.7.1 Disambiguation of Recordings

Identifying a specific recording that goes with a musical work will require additional metadata if the ISRC is not known by the requestor. Recording/work title and performer/creator information is often not enough to distinguish between different versions of a song. Popular artists will often release multiple versions of their own songs, such as the original version, remastered version, edited version, radio edit, dance remix, and so on. Sometimes covers songs sound nearly identical to the original. This data beyond artist & track is therefore useful for disambiguation:
• Featured/guest artist – on occasion versions of a track may vary based on the presence or absence of a guest or featured artist
• Version title – for example, differentiates between the original and remastered version
• Edited/Explicit indicator – if this is not part of the version title, it indicates the difference between the edited (aka “clean”) version and the regular explicit version
• Track length - duration of the song
• Recording copyright date – differentiates re-records that are otherwise indistinguishable.
• Album title – title of an album on which the recording appeared.

3.7.2 Recommendation 1: Metadata related to the musical work

OMI recommends that at least the following data should be made available in response to an enquiry about a musical work:
1. Title and any alternative titles of the musical work
2. Title and any alternative titles of the sound recording associated with the musical work
3. Names of the creators of the work along with identifiers, if available, e.g. ISNI, IPI, or IPN

In order to improve identification and facilitate payment, the metadata should also include:
4. Standard work identifiers, e.g. ISWC
5. Other work identifiers such as a “Provisional Work Identifier”, e.g. Audddly or others in development. Other options include a musical work’s PRO-code. (Note, in the absence of an ISWC, the work code of the PRO with the majority interest may be used as an
identifier for the work (but generally will not be interoperable with any other PRO-code identifying the same work). Where there is no PRO with a majority, the work code of the first PRO alphabetically can be used).

6. Publishers, if any, of the musical work
7. Contact information for the publishers
8. Territory in which work was created and/or registered
9. Collecting Society (Performance Rights Organizations) associated with the writers
10. Percentage of rights in copyright held by each writer, each associated/participating publisher, and the territory to which this applies (Note: these percentages are to be normalized to 100% totals, regardless of the way they are represented locally)

3.7.3 Recommendation 2: Metadata related to the sound recording

OMI recommends that at least the following data should be made available in response to an enquiry about a recording:

1. Title and any alternative titles of the sound recording
2. Version titles. Note that if the version title does not include an indicator for edited vs explicit when two such versions exist, this should be handled separately.
3. Names of featured and non-featured performers along with standard identifiers when available (e.g. ISNI)
4. Standard track identifiers, e.g. ISRC
5. Song duration
6. Copyright date associated with the (p) notice, or equivalent
7. Name of an album(s) containing the track, if the song was released on an album

In order to improve identification and facilitate payment, the metadata should also include:

8. Label(s) who have or have had rights in the sound recording and associated territories (where the indicated label is the legal entity that owns the copyright)
9. Other featured and non-featured contributors with role information (e.g. as described in the various performer and/or contributor role codes in the DDEX messages)
10. Contact information for performer(s) and label(s)
11. Territory in which recording was created and/or registered

Much of the metadata recommendations above have already been codified by others: DDEX (description and communication standards), ISO (identifying codes such as ISWC, ISRC etc), and others (CISAC for IPI, SCAPR for IPN etc.). These are dealt with in more detail below.

3.7.4 Recommended Identifier Standards

For data classification, OMI recommends existing data standards like ISRC, EAN/UPC, ISWC, IPI and ISNI. Whilst there are known issues with some identifiers, their use is in many cases deeply embedded within the music industry and OMI’s scope does not include ‘re-inventing’ identifiers. Therefore, OMI uses existing data standards and formats. DDEX will greatly influence the API since it is also deeply embedded in the industry. This extends to the definition of names for metadata terms (driving interoperability) and the structured assembly of such metadata for particular applications. DDEX is already widely used for communication between
OMI recommends the following identifiers (for MVI 1.0):

- **ISRC** is an ISO-specified code for recordings. One code per track. One track per code. Constant for the life of the track. No authoritative registry but growing lookup service run by SoundExchange.
- **ISWC** is an ISO-specified code for musical works. Authoritative registry. Note: At present, ISWC can only be assigned when all the authors in the work are identified by their IPIs. If one is missing then an ISWC cannot be assigned.
- **IPI** is a unique identifying number assigned on behalf of CISAC database to each Interested Party in collective rights management. It is used worldwide by more than 120 countries and three million right holders, and has about 98% penetration.
- **ISNI** is an ISO-specified identifier for parties in the creative sector including authors, composers, performers, publishers and distributors of creative works. As of February 2017, ISNI holds public records of over 9 million identities, of which 8.5+ million individuals and nearly 600,000 organizations.
- **EAN/UPC** is a GS1-specified code which is widely used in the delivery of music products both online and in the physical environment.

OMI recommends the use of simple terms specified in the DDEX data dictionary in its APIs. It also recommends that wherever possible the composite structures in the DDEX data dictionary should be used for interoperability with other industry functions.

### 3.7.5 Identifier Scheme

The identifier scheme must indicate the identifier type and is used to identify unique records in a set. This requirements documentation does not specify which standard(s) the OMI API will use. Further discussion is to be held whether to use different fields per identifier, URI/URN style (namespace + identifier) approach or another solution to (consistently) support multiple identifiers.

### 3.7.6 Data Provenance

In an ecosystem with multiple OMI-compliant APIs, data about a single song may be obtained from different sources. Multiple entities may make complementary or conflicting attestations about the data associated with a song. As data flows through systems, it may be normalized, updated, or otherwise changed. Therefore, metadata describing a particular song may vary depending on the source, so knowing the provenance of the data will be important. Determining which data to trust requires knowing who is asserting that given data is true, as well as when the attestation was made. This attestation needs to be verifiable to be meaningful.
3.7.7 Global Considerations
As a global initiative, OMI must support multiple languages and territorial differences in data (e.g. differences in artist name spellings). Data that varies by territory must be specified with sufficient detail so there are no mistakes. For example, dates should be in a defined format.

3.8 Architecture Recommendations
The OMI API is, by definition, intended to be architecture independent. However, the realities of business operation suggest the ecosystem would benefit from a number of high-level technological features including architectural flexibility, data privacy, and access control.

3.8.1 Architectural Flexibility
The OMI API should be designed to support multiple market architectures, whether federated, centralized or distributed.

This allows for data to be shared across multiple compliant OMI APIs when possible, but from a single source when required due to legal or business reasons.

Similarly, there is a great deal of interest among OMI members in the use of blockchain technology and the OMI API should be sufficiently flexible to allow systems built using either blockchain or traditional databases.

To highlight the necessity in flexibility we take blockchains -which have distributed architectures by design- as an example. From a data access and ownership perspective, blockchains can be thought of as centralized in that there is effectively a single source of truth among all parties using a given blockchain, but one that is implemented using distributed system protocols across many active database replicas.

3.8.2 Privacy/Data Access
Business and legal realities mean that parties may not provide all API requestors with equal access to data. It must be up to the data provider to determine levels of access associated with different data, in line with contractual or legal obligations. For example, a record label may only be able to provide information about pre-release tracks to licensed business partners.

Thus the API should allow for access control with an appropriate level of granularity. One way this can be accomplished is by providing a mechanism to securely identify the source of incoming requests, so the API data source can decide how to respond.
4 API Requirements

This section distills the discussion above into specific requirements for the OMI v1.0 API.

1. High-Level Requirements

1.1. The OMI API specifications shall enable the exchange of data linking recordings, musical works, and contributors, querying for subsets of this data, or asserting links between such data so that participants in the music ecosystem can, among other things, more easily pay the appropriate parties for the use of a given song.

1.2. The OMI specifications shall be architecture independent, such that underlying implementations can be built on top of traditional databases, distributed ledger technology, or alternatives.

1.3. The OMI API specifications shall not require a centralized administrator to function, though business or legal requirements may dictate that certain functions in the ecosystem (such as the assignment of identification codes associated with static information) are centralized.

1.3.1. To offset the lack of a central authority, the API specifications shall include information that can be used by recipients to judge or research the accuracy of the obtained data.

1.4. OMI specifications shall not define who gets access to any particular API implementation. Access or usage limitations on data originating from an API implementation shall be handled at the business or contractual level.

1.4.1. To facilitate access or usage limitations, the OMI API specifications shall support secure identification of requesting entities.

1.5. The OMI API shall be designed for global use and support multiple spoken languages. The data format and serialization should support Unicode or other multi-character set functionality.

1.6. The OMI API specification will seek to leverage existing identifiers, metadata definitions, and hierarchies that are already widely used by the music industry (e.g. ISRC, DDEX)

2. High Level APIs to be defined within the OMI v1 API Specification

2.1. Discovery query – returns a list of the supported API calls from the set below. This is the only mandatory query

2.2. Query for a subset or complete set of objects from a catalog – Used to get a portion or entirety of a catalog. For example, used to get the complete catalog of recordings controlled by a record label.

2.3. Query for recordings given a work – Used to find the recordings associated with a given musical work.

2.4. Query for works given a recording

2.5. Query for recordings/works given partial metadata

2.6. Query for contributor given a recording/work

2.7. Query for a work/recording given a contributor

2.8. Attestation of a link between a recording and work (i.e. this recording goes with this work)
2.9. Attestation of a link between a contributor and a recording or work
2.10. Register a Recording
2.11. Register a Work
2.12. Register a Contributor

3. Metadata to identify recordings
3.1. Identifiers
   3.1.1. The widely-adopted track-level ISRC identifier shall be used as the primary way to identify recordings.
   3.1.2. For disambiguation purposes, alternative identifiers may additionally be provided (e.g. MusicBrainz IDs). Where multiple identifiers can be used, the identifier scheme shall indicate the identifier type.
3.2. The API shall require use of at least the following data, which shall be made available in response to an enquiry about a recording:
   3.2.1. Title and any alternative titles of the sound recording
   3.2.2. Version title (e.g. “Radio Edit” or “Extended 12” Mix”)
   3.2.3. Edited/Explicit indicator if not part of the version title
   3.2.4. Primary recording artist with standard identifiers when available
   3.2.5. Featured or guest artists, if present, with standard identifiers when available
   3.2.6. Track length
   3.2.7. Copyright year, associated with the (p) notice
   3.2.8. Associated record label from the (p) notice
   3.2.9. Name of an album containing the track, and associated EAN/UPC if the song was released on an album
   3.2.10. ISRC
3.3. Optional metadata – To help with recording disambiguation and facilitate payment, the following optional metadata may be provided
   3.3.1. Labels and associated territories
   3.3.2. Other non-primary contributors with identifiers and role information
   3.3.3. Contact information for performer(s) and label(s)
   3.3.4. Territory in which recording was created and/or registered

4. Metadata to identify works
4.1. Identifiers
   4.1.1. When available, ISWC shall be used as the primary way to identify musical works
4.2. The API shall require use of at least the following data, which shall be made available in response to an enquiry about a musical work:
   4.2.1. Title and any alternative titles of the musical work
   4.2.2. Title of the sound recording associated with the musical work
   4.2.3. Any alternative titles of the sound recording associated with the musical work
   4.2.4. Musical Work Creators along with creator identifiers if available (ISNI, IPI, etc)
   4.2.5. ISWC, when available
4.3. Optional metadata – To help with works disambiguation and facilitate payment, the following optional metadata may be provided
4.3.1. Publisher(s) if any of the musical work, including the publisher’s IPI.
4.3.2. Contact information for the publishers
4.3.3. Territory in which work was created and/or registered
4.3.4. Collecting Society (Performance Rights Organizations) with which the writers are affiliated
4.3.5. Percentage of rights in copyright held by each writer, each associated/participating publisher, and the territory to which this applies (Note: these percentages are to be normalized to 100% totals, regardless of the way they are represented locally)
4.3.6. Other work identifiers such as a “Provisional Work Identifier”, e.g. Auddly or others in development, or a musical work’s PRO-codes. Where multiple identifiers can be used, the identifier scheme shall indicate the identifier type.

5. Metadata to identify contributors
5.1. Identifiers
  5.1.1. ISNI shall be used as the primary way to identify contributors.
  5.1.2. Alternative identifiers such as IPI, IPD, MusicBrainz ID, or others may additionally be provided or used when an ISNI is not available and their provision is encouraged to assist with disambiguation. Where multiple identifiers can be used, the identifier scheme shall indicate the identifier type.
5.2. The API shall require use of the minimal set of data needed to disambiguate different but similar contributors, such as:
  5.2.1. The common performer or contributor name
  5.2.2. Unique Identifier (e.g. ISNI)
5.3. Optional metadata – To help with works disambiguation and facilitate payment, the following optional metadata may be provided
  5.3.1. Aliases shall not be required since some contributors intentionally use different aliases for different roles. Aliases that would help for disambiguation or association purposes should be provided when available (e.g. Puff Daddy, Puffy, P. Diddy).
  5.3.2. Birthdate
5.4. When available, contributor identifiers should be accompanied by role information, and existing music industry role standards should be used (e.g. DDEX role codes)

6. Linked Data Verification & Validity
6.1. The API shall provide a mechanism to verify the provenance of the data provided (e.g. via https://w3c-dvcg.github.io/ld-signatures/)
6.2. The API shall provide a mechanism to identify the date when an attestation was made
6.3. The API shall provide a mechanism to assert the last date for which a data attestation is intended to be regarded as valid
6.4. The API shall provide a way to indicate the territory in which the data is relevant. For example, associated record label and release date may vary by territory.
6.5. The API shall optionally provide a mechanism to indicate confidence level of an attestation
6.6. The API shall optionally provide a mechanism to indicate how the link between the recording and work was established, e.g. via algorithmic metadata matching, a label or publisher verified match, etc.

7. Protocol

7.1. The API shall use an existing and widely adopted technology, e.g. JSON

7.2. The API shall support identification of the API version, so future versions can be supported, and requestors can determine the capabilities of a given API end-point.

7.3. The API shall be specified to ensure that it does not matter whether implementers are using traditional databases or distributed ledger technologies

7.4. The API shall not require contact with any central authority, but shall allow for distributed implementation. Note that business, legal, or other reasons may require that elements of the ecosystem are implemented centrally, but that shall be independent of the API specification.

7.5. The API shall support a mechanism to identify and authenticate the source of incoming requests (meaning the identity of the requestor) so that data providers can filter results per contractual, legal, privacy, or other requirements.

8. Privacy/Data Usage

8.1. Privacy of data is outside the scope of v1 and shall be handled through contractual relationships or extensions of the API.

8.2. Beyond identification of entities making API requests, access control on data (e.g. limiting information about certain tracks to certain requesting parties) is out of scope of the API and shall be handled at the contractual or API key level.