

Lute music anthologies at risk of leaving UK

- Export bar is to allow time for a UK gallery or institution to acquire the manuscript
- Worth £214,200, the extensive and important manuscript can help us understand how music was shared in the 17th century

An early 17th century manuscript of Italian and French lute music is at risk of leaving the country unless a UK buyer can be found.

Worth over £200,000, the manuscript is described as one of the most extensive and important sources of lute music of the early 17th century, containing 89 unidentified pieces that had never been seen before.

Instrumental music was hugely popular during the period with many in the middle class keen to enjoy musical performances. Creating anthologies was a valuable way to preserve and share music by composers who didn't have enough pieces to publish volumes of their own.

The rich and cosmopolitan anthology will contribute to people's understanding of how cultures flourished across national boundaries, despite the hardships and restrictions of the Thirty Years War.

Arts Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said:

Lute music is a vital part of our artistic heritage and there is much this anthology can teach us.

This fascinating manuscript could be described as a 17th century streaming platform thanks to its ability to allow music by brilliant composers to be shared across Europe.

I hope a buyer comes forward to save the piece for the nation.

The Minister's decision follows the advice of the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest](#) (the Committee). The committee agreed the manuscript was vital to understanding how music spread throughout Europe during the 17th century, as well as how it was produced and replicated.

Committee Member Peter Barber said:

Little research has recently been done into this large and handsomely bound manuscript album of early lute music. Fascinating and evocative, it includes work, among many others, both by the English composer John Dowland and by a brother of Galileo. The volume promises to shed much light on the circulation of music,

particularly lute music, the role of music-making, and the dance, in western Europe while the Thirty Years War was raging in the early and mid-seventeenth century. One third of the music, amounting to 89 pieces, is not to be found anywhere else. Thoroughly pan-European, the volume was assembled by a German, mainly written out in the French style and contains music from many lands.

The volume also has research value because of its association with the musical instrument-maker Arnold Dolmetsch (1858-1940). Dolmetsch was the leading figure associated with the early twentieth-century revival of the performance of early music using instruments of the time. The album formed part of the collection that he assembled and his annotations suggest that he particularly valued it. Dolmetsch lived most of his life in, and was particularly associated with, England, where the largest remaining part of his music collection is still to be found. The album's research value might therefore be more fully exploited, if it were to remain in the United Kingdom.

The Committee made its recommendation on the grounds the manuscript's departure from the UK would be a misfortune because it is of outstanding significance for the study of 17th century lute music.

The decision on the export licence application for the manuscript will be deferred until 13 June 2022 inclusive. At the end of the first deferral period owners will have a consideration period of 15 business days to consider any offer(s) to purchase the manuscript at the recommended price of £214,200. The second deferral period will commence following the signing of an Option Agreement and will last for three months.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the manuscript should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.
2. Details of the manuscript are as follows: A manuscript (ca. 15 x 18 cm) of 285 leaves containing some 320 lute pieces in French lute tablature. The contents were likely compiled and inscribed by or for its owner in the first half of the 17th century in South Germany / Austria. The paper is generally in good condition, with no tears, and only minimal staining. The watermarks have been studied to a certain extent and a crown surmounting a double-headed eagle over a shield enclosing the letters MB[?] can be recognised. It is suggested that the binding is the work of the Federnelkenmeister ('carnation master') from Cologne, who was active up to 1619. Two clasps with later straps have been added later.

3. Provenance: c.1905 at a Zurichbookseller's shop (in his 1935 work *Par la révolution, la paix*, Romain Rolland describes seeing the volume there thirty years earlier); Max Kalbeck (1850-1921), acquired 1895 from Antiquariat L. Liepmannssohn, Berlin: see RISM B VII, and also J. Wolf, *Handbuch der Notationskunde* (1919), vol.2, p.109; thereafter owned by Arnold Dolmetsch(1858-1940) and thence by descent.
4. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by the Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.
5. [Arts Council England](#) is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Its strategic vision in *Let's Create* is that, by 2030, England should be a country in which the creativity of everyone is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. ACE invests public money from the government and the National Lottery to support the sector and deliver the vision.
6. Following the [Covid-19 crisis](#), ACE developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90 per cent coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. It is also one of the bodies administering the government's unprecedented £1.96 billion Culture Recovery Fund.