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# Documenting the Violin Trade in Paris: the Archives of Albert Caressa and Émile Français, 1930-1945

Carla Shapreau, Jean-Philippe Échard, Christine Laloue

► **To cite this version:**

Carla Shapreau, Jean-Philippe Échard, Christine Laloue. Documenting the Violin Trade in Paris: the Archives of Albert Caressa and Émile Français, 1930-1945. Jane C. Milosch; Nick Pearce. *Collecting and Provenance: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Rowman & Littlefield, pp.189-204, 2019, 978-1-5381-2756-8. hal-03636503

**HAL Id: hal-03636503**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03636503>**

Submitted on 13 Apr 2022

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# Collecting and Provenance

A Multidisciplinary Approach

*Edited by Jane C. Milosch and Nick Pearce*

Smithsonian Provenance Research Initiative, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.,  
and the University of Glasgow  
in association with  
Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD  
*Lanham • Boulder • New York • London*

Managing Editor: Johanna Best, Smithsonian Institution  
Project Editor: Andrea Hull, Smithsonian Institution

The views and opinions expressed in the articles herein are the views of the individual authors and should not be construed as representing the views of the editors or their respective institutions.

Published by Rowman & Littlefield  
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.  
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706  
www.rowman.com

6 Tinworth Street, London SE11 5AL, United Kingdom

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Available**

ISBN 978-1-5381-2756-8 (cloth : alk. paper)  
ISBN 978-1-5381-2757-5 (pbk. : alk. paper)  
ISBN 978-1-5381-2758-2 (electronic)

 The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Cover image credits: top to bottom, left to right

Un-named but explicitly labeled exotic lycaenid “Captus in Horto Regio dict: Kensington Garden. 4 May 1773. T.P.Y.” Photograph, E.G. Hancock, courtesy of The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

*Mask.* Tompienne (Dan artist). Ca. 1965. Wood, pigment, metal, feathers. H × W × D: 29 × 24.5 × 8.5 cm (11 × 9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.). Gift of the Estate of William Siegmann in memory of Philip Ravenhill. 2012-11-2. Photograph by Franko Khoury. National Museum of African Art. Smithsonian Institution.

Ritual grain server (gui) with square base and masks, dragons, and birds, Early Western Zhou dynasty, ca. late 11th-early 10th century B.C.E. China, bronze. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Purchase — Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1938.20.

Edouard Verreaux. *Lion Attacking a Dromedary*, 1867. Taxidermy group (life size). Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh.

*Reliquary.* Gilded copper, rock crystal, glass, and parchment. French (?), ca. 1175-1200 (rock crystal); early 19th century (setting). Overall: 13<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (35.2 × 32.1 × 15.8 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.813). Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.813) Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photograph by Thomas Vinton.

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# Chapter 13

## *Documenting the Violin Trade in Paris, 1930–1945*

### The Archives of Albert Caressa and Émile Français

Carla Shapreau, University of California, Berkeley,  
Jean-Philippe Échard and Christine Laloue, Musée de la musique, Paris

A large number of Nazi-era spoliations in France involved musical instruments. Confiscations began soon after the German Occupation of Paris on June 14, 1940, and were carried out by two divisions of the Nazi Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR)—the *Sonderstab Musik*, which was tasked with the confiscation of musical material culture, and *Möbel Aktion*, an ERR division that confiscated the contents of homes of Jews who had fled or who had been deported.<sup>1</sup> German musicologist and head of the *Sonderstab Musik*, Dr. Herbert Gerigk, set up his office in Paris on August 17, 1940.<sup>2</sup> By September 1940, the *Sonderstab Musik* had begun targeted seizures of musical instruments.<sup>3</sup> Before shipment to Germany, looted musical instruments were stored in the Austerlitz and Bassano depots, the Palais de Tokyo, the Louvre, and other locations.<sup>4</sup> Relevant evidence of looting is referenced in historical records, including, but not limited to, records of the *Sonderstab Musik*,<sup>5</sup> claim files housed in the archives of the Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, summarized in the *Répertoire des biens spoliés en France durant la guerre 1939–1945* and its supplements,<sup>6</sup> files in the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris, and in captured German and other records in the US National Archive.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that those persecuted during the Nazi era may have engaged in both sales and purchases under duress, involving the liquidation of instruments into cash for emigration, as well as the purchase of instruments as a vehicle to convert cash into moveable property that could be taken out of Europe. Transactions made under duress with persecuted individuals would have been considered void after the war and may still be considered illicit today, depending on the specific facts and the applicable law.



## **Current State of Research on the French Market for Musical Instruments in the Nazi Era**

Scholars and institutions are currently engaged in provenance research regarding French art market transactions during the Nazi era, as illustrated by international conferences and publications,<sup>8</sup> research programs,<sup>9</sup> and a report commissioned by the French Ministry of Culture.<sup>10</sup>

Musical instruments, as a category of cultural heritage artifacts, require specific skills and knowledge for provenance and authenticity analysis, in part, in light of unique techniques and materials utilized by instrument makers in many nations over centuries. Such analysis requires access to and an understanding of a disparate array of historical records. This area of research has been explored through conference papers,<sup>11</sup> publications,<sup>12</sup> and research programs.<sup>13</sup> Some national processes have resulted in the evaluation of Nazi-era musical instrument claims and resolutions. For example, Austria's Commission for Provenance Research is conducting a systematic review of wartime acquisitions by the Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente in Vienna. Some restitutions have resulted,<sup>14</sup> and Germany's Limbach Commission issued a recommendation in 2016 involving a 1706 Giuseppe "filius Andreae" Guarneri violin.<sup>15</sup>

This study explores the trade and circulation of violins<sup>16</sup> in Paris during the Nazi era through the lens of one major violin workshop, Albert Caressa and Émile Français. Focusing on the business records for this violin firm provides an important opportunity to connect instruments with owners, hopefully enhancing the available data for this field of research. We have examined questions of provenance, considering each instrument's creation and its owners and possessors (buyers, sellers, dealers, performers, teachers, and institutional and individual collectors), and focused on attribution, description, geographical considerations, and market value. This study also addresses the methodological approach to analysis and interpretation of such archives.

### **The Importance of Violin Provenance**

Early studies in the history of violin-making primarily focused on attribution through observations of technique, materials, and stylistic characteristics of instruments of the past.<sup>17</sup> These observations, together with labels found inside the sound boxes (often indicating the maker's name, city, and year of making) resulted over time in the assessment of makers' working periods and the identification of schools and dynasties of makers.<sup>18</sup>

Parallel to this emerging field of expertise, the trade in antique and other used violins developed in the nineteenth century and *luthiers* (makers of stringed instruments<sup>19</sup>) took on new roles. As they began to serve as makers, experts in tonal adjustment and instrument setup, repairers, suppliers of accessories, and dealers, they developed a central role as intermediaries in transactions between musicians, amateurs, and collectors. Instruments made by Stradivari, the Guarneris, and the Amatis were and are among the most highly valued.

In addition to the fame of the instrument's maker and its state of conservation, provenance has become an important facet of the instrument's history that may increase or decrease its economic value. The celebrity of a past owner, such as Niccolò Paganini, can increase the cultural, heritage, and market values of an instrument. Locating, analyzing, and interpreting documentation of provenance in order to reconstruct a sequence of ownership and possession is an important part of research for historical violins. However, readily accessible historical records and information are often lacking, and primary sources are scattered internationally in private and public archives.

Most instruments of the violin family do not bear a manufacturer's serial number, in contrast to instruments produced by larger-scale companies, such as pianos, which are usually stamped on the frame. Such serial numbers have made it possible to identify and restitute pianos looted during the Nazi era.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, historical descriptions of instruments are rarely unambiguous: The description "A violin, Antonio Stradivari, Cremona 1721" may correspond to 10 authentic Stradivari violins made that year that are still known,<sup>21</sup> or to thousands of fakes, forgeries, copies, or inexpensive mass-produced instruments.

Evidence of a violin's provenance is related to authenticity analysis, and is relevant to confirming valid ownership. Therefore, the question of provenance is of crucial importance in the context of Nazi-era transactions.

### **Sources: The Archives of Caressa and Français between 1930 and 1945**

A rare opportunity to study the provenance of instruments of the violin family is offered through analysis of a unique collection of records authored by the Parisian violin dealers Albert Caressa, and later by Émile Français, who directed a Parisian violin-making workshop from 1938 through 1981.<sup>22</sup> Their business records are part of a larger archival collection from this workshop and its various successors, which was founded in Paris in 1796 by Nicolas Lupot.<sup>23</sup>

These records were split apart in the twentieth century and are today housed in two national collections: the Musée de la musique in Paris and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. Émile Français's son, Jacques Français, took the US portion of the records with him to New York presumably for use in his violin business, Jacques Français Rare Violins, Inc.; the precise timing and sequence of this records transfer from France to the United States is unclear. Jacques set up his New York violin shop in or about 1948, which continued until his retirement in 1994. The records today in the Musée de la musique were donated by the Français family after the 1981 retirement of Émile Français and presumably never left Paris. Upon Jacques Français's death in 2004, he bequeathed a portion of his New York violin firm records and his specialized library to the Smithsonian Institution "for its general use and purposes." Jacques Français "felt strongly he wanted the materials to be available to everybody."<sup>24</sup> This study seeks to bridge the transatlantic archival gap in this collection, providing analysis and a portal into the world of violin commerce during the prewar and World War II period.

While many informative records from the Caressa and Français workshop have been preserved, including ledgers, notebooks, journals, and other documents, others are missing, including intermittent ledgers and notebooks, correspondence files, certificates of authenticity (with minor exception), tax-related documents, records settling the annual state of instrument stock and debts (which exist for earlier periods), and records regarding employees and apprentices. Record keeping seems less organized beginning in mid-1938. Albert Caressa retired in May 1938 and passed away on February 17, 1939, replaced by Émile Français.<sup>25</sup>

It is possible to study the purchases and sales of antique and other used instruments by the Caressa and Français workshop, since its business ledger (accession number in the collection of the Musée de la musique: E.981.8.29), cataloged as *Registre: Achat, réparation et revente d'instruments et d'archets*, is available for the 1920-1944 period.<sup>26</sup> Supporting and additional records and information are contained in the notebooks cataloged as "Sales Books" for the years 1937-1938, 1941-1942, 1943-1945 (which continue through 1972), "Receipts," and other historical records.<sup>27</sup> The Sales Books, more informal than E.981.8.29, identify contacts, clients, dates, instruments

(some with inventory numbers, many with vague or ambiguous descriptions), prices, and in some instances commissions. The accounting ledger, *Journal: Exportations* (E.981.8.30) gives insights into the general business of the workshop and how its various activities categorically impacted its economy.<sup>28</sup> Additional information on this topic can be found in the payment and money transfer ledger (E.981.8.7).<sup>29</sup>

## **Clientele**

Caressa and Français had a French and international clientele, who are identified in the workshop records. Business ledger E.981.8.29 documents purchases by the workshop and its sales of antique and other used instruments. Entries are chronological, one line per instrument, each given an incremental inventory number associated with the workshop's purchase (and possibly consignment) (figure 13.1). There are four sections in the ledger for violins, violas, cellos, and bows respectively.<sup>30</sup> The title, last name, city (if not Paris), and country (if not France) are usually indicated for both the seller and the purchaser of each of these instruments. Sometimes the street address is indicated. These dates of purchase and sale by the workshop confirm changes of ownership and are thus crucial provenance evidence.

A noticeable change in record keeping occurs in July 1938. Prior to this date, information regarding the date, price, and seller's name was systematically entered in the ledger E.981.8.29 (123 entries for violins purchased between 1930 and June 1938). But most entries after July 1938 do not state the date of purchase by the workshop or the price it paid the seller, whose identity is intermittently missing. For the violins alone, after the middle of 1938, the date is systematically missing (about 170 violins), the price is missing for most of them, and fourteen of them have no information at all regarding provenance. At this stage, it is uncertain whether this change in record-keeping methodology was due to Émile Français's new leadership of the workshop in 1938 and his less systematic approach to recording purchases, an intentional omission of information, the economic and political environment in this period, or to some other cause.

## **A Change in International Clientele during the Occupation of France**

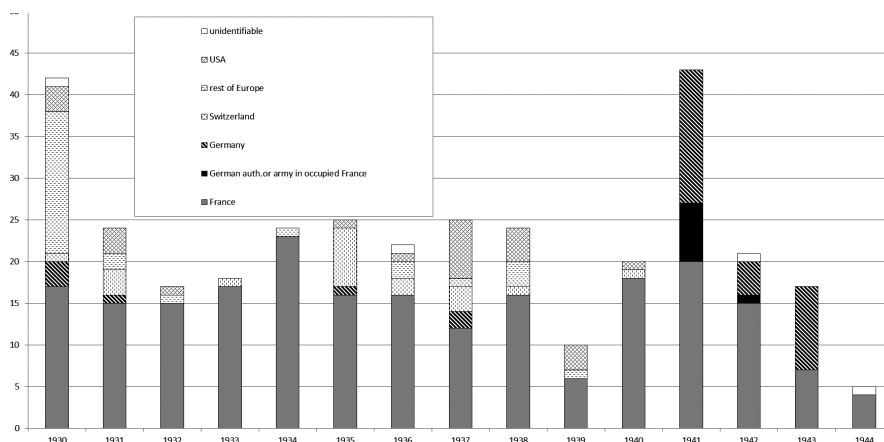
Most of the clientele in the Français records involve French customers, but there are also many international clients, and a quantitative analysis of workshop sales to clients is possible based on the review of the two ledgers E.981.8.29 and E.981.8.30. These ledgers reflect a spike in sales to those from Germany during the Occupation of France (figure 13.2).

From 1931 to 1944, there is a strong decline in the number of instruments sold, according to the two ledgers E.981.8.29 and E.981.8.30. This may be due to the difficult global economic context in the aftermath of the Great Depression. An even stronger decline occurs in 1939, certainly due to the beginning of the war and the invasion of Belgium and France by the German army.

Sales increased notably after 1939, and peaked in 1941 (see figure 13.2). That year, as well as in 1942 and 1943 to a lesser extent, the records reflect sales to German clients, including German authorities, occupation armies in France, and individuals in the military. Finally, the year 1944 shows a drop in sales with only five instruments sold over the entire year, according to ledger E.981.8.29. This decline in sales could be understood, in part, within the context of a French economy that had suffered after a four-year period of war and Occupation with shortages of food, clothing, fuel, industrial raw materials, energy, the basic supplies of commerce, and other hardships.<sup>31</sup>

Caressa and Français historically engaged in a significant volume of repeat business with violin dealers in France and internationally before the German Occupation but sales to those in Allied nations were cut off during the Occupation. A few violin dealers who appear in the Français ledger E.981.8.29 and in the Sales Books also appear in the records of the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda and other German Nazi-era records as suppliers to the Reich. These dealers include Fridolin Hamma in Stuttgart (discussed in a case study below) and Peter Vogelweith in Strasbourg, and to a lesser extent Emil Herrmann, who operated in New York with an agent in Berlin.<sup>32</sup>

VIOLONS				VIOLONS				
NUMERO D'ORDRE	AUTEURS	DATES D'ACHAT	VENDEURS	PREL D'ACHAT	PREL DES REVENUS	DATES DES VENTES	PREL DES VENTES	ACHETEURS
69.5	S. Montagnon & Fils 186	15 Sept 51	Fabre & Fils	25,000		15/09/51	25,000	M. Hamma & Co Stuttgart
69.6	J. B. Dubois 180	30 "	...	10,000		15/09/51	10,000	M. Hamma & Co Stuttgart
69.7	R. G. Dubois 180	30 "	...	10,000		15/09/51	10,000	M. Hamma & Co Stuttgart
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**Figure 13.2.** Number of antique and other used violins and cellos sold by year according to the residence of clientele as indicated in ledger E.981.2.8.29, Musée de la musique, Archives of Caressa and Français.

The records studied indicate that Peter Vogelweith was an occasional customer of Français's workshop. He is mentioned regarding three instruments in the 1941–1942 Sales Book, which may reflect sales or potential sales, and he is listed as the buyer of seven violins on November 12, 1941, for a total of 84,000 francs. Vogelweith supplied instruments to the Sonderstab Musik and assisted this ERR division in late 1943 and 1944.<sup>33</sup> In a letter of November 6, 1943, Gerigk, head of the Sonderstab Musik, notes the planning of a meeting with leaders of the French musical instrument industry, with Vogelweith in the mix.<sup>34</sup>

The Sales Books for 1941–1945 and ledger E.981.8.29 include apparent discussions or transactions with various members of the German army and other German customers. These clients include the Oberkommando de la Wehrmacht abteilung Inland (OKW), which appears to have purchased six cellos on April 23, 1941, all identified by price and inventory number. These apparent sales to the OKW do not appear in ledger E.981.8.29.

Additional possible sales appear to have been made to the Dienststelle L. 20-651<sup>35</sup> and to Dr. Rudolf Rahn, German ambassador to Paris. According to ledger E.981.8.29, Rahn purchased two violins from Français in February 1941: a 1735 Andrea Castagneri violin and a 1786 Simon Straub violin for 10,000 and 8,000 francs respectively.<sup>36</sup> Different possible sales to Rahn are entered in the Sales Books on December 27, 1941: a Pietro Guarneri of Mantua violin and a d'Alleglio violin, for 400,000 and 4,000 francs respectively.<sup>37</sup> Five instruments were apparently sold to other German troopers or officers—including Commandant Behrendt, and Lieutenants Riesch and Strauch—between February 1941 and February 1942.<sup>38</sup>

Additional German customers included: “Mr. Gessner Kammer Berlin Orchestra (Benda)”; “Mr. Below Hans—Orchestre de Berlin (Benda) ami de Mr. Gessner”; Officer Dannehl of the German Army; *chef Marine allemande* Faessler; Werner Kopp of Berlin; Heinrich Leesmeister and Walter Möritz of the Berlin State Opera; Professor Friedrich Risch of Speyer; Captain Schweitzer; Lieutenant Staffeus and Dr. Schmid, stationed in Rouen at the “Sodaltenheim” [*sic*],<sup>39</sup> and others.<sup>40</sup> Many of these apparent purchasers seem to have acquired multiple instruments. Often there are inconsistencies between the Sales Books and ledger E.981.8.29, raising questions about the nature of these documents.

## The Violin Trade

Like every workshop dedicated to violins, Caressa and Français were involved with several activities, including the sale of accessories, adjustments and setups, repairs and restorations, and appraisals. They were also active in the market for antique and other used instruments. This latter activity—the trade of used instruments—is of particular interest in the context of this study. Indeed, Caressa and Français, during the process of expert appraisal of an antique violin, may have attributed the maker, its date, and/or city of manufacture differently than prior experts based on their connoisseurship and evolving scholarly opinions. Provenance researchers must take into account the added layer of complexity that the same instrument may have been described differently by varying experts, sources, and through different time periods.

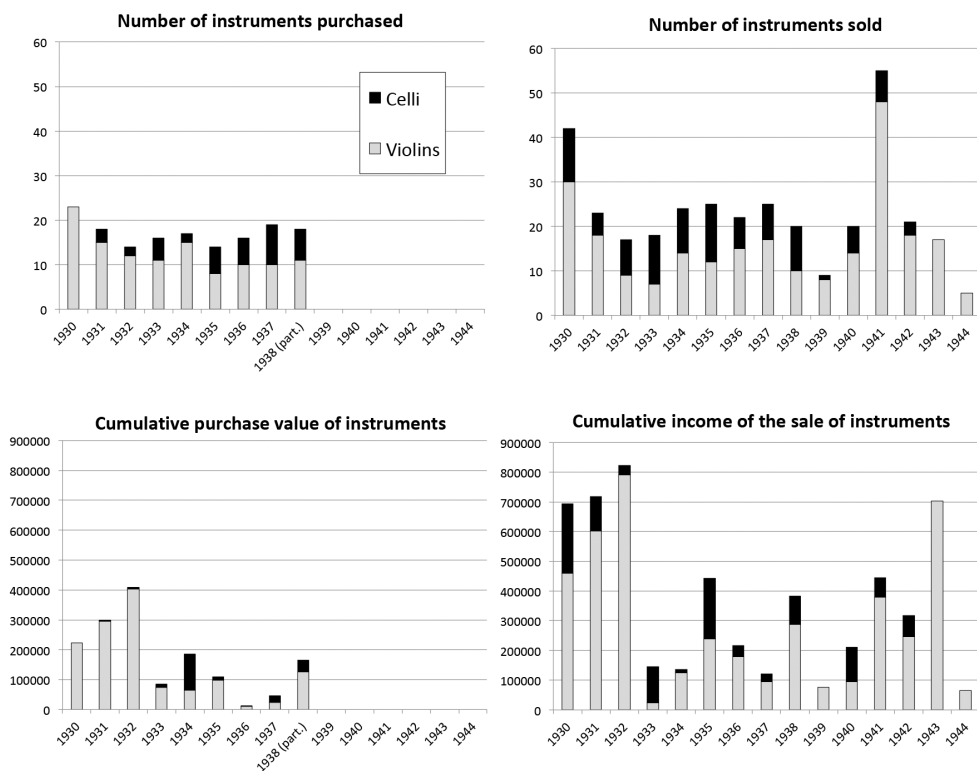
The ledger E.981.8.29 contains information regarding the trade in rare and used violins, violas, cellos, and bows. The study of this ledger focuses on all violins and cellos purchased or sold in 1930 through the end of this ledger in 1944, which represents a total of 541 instruments.<sup>41</sup> Since there are no date entries for workshop purchases after July 1938, it is not possible to analyze purchases on an annual basis after 1938. The workshop bought, received, accepted on consignment, or acted as an intermediary for 14 to 23 violins and cellos per year between 1930 and 1937. Whereas this number is quite consistent and stable, the corresponding cumulated value of the instruments shows a strong decrease in 1933 (figure 13.3, bottom right). The value of these instruments was clearly above 600,000 francs until 1932, but it reaches only 80,000 francs in 1933, and stays below 200,000 francs thereafter (figure 13.3). It is probable that the French market for leisure objects such as musical instruments, especially highly priced instruments, was more impacted by the effects of the global Great Depression than other consumer markets.

Even though there was a sharp increase of instruments sold in 1941, these were on average less valuable instruments than those traded in the early 1930s. Additional analysis of the trade by maker, school, purchase and sale values, and other factors beyond the scope of this study may result in additional information, including assessment of whether transactions occurred at fair market values, or not.

As for the possibility of definitive identification of instruments, it will rarely be possible with only the instrument description in ledger E.981.8.29. Instruments made in the nineteenth century by Vuillaume, Gand & Bernardel, Gand & Bernardel frères, and by Caressa & Français are notable exceptions, since these workshops generally used handwritten serial numbers on the labels. When such instruments appear in the ledger, they were generally identified also by the serial number. The conjunction of information—a date, an instrument described even vaguely, and an owner—represents precious data in terms of provenance.

## Challenges of Interpretation

The nature of the studied archival records, including the meaning of written entries and their omission, raises serious questions of interpretation. Analysis may depend on cross-referencing records from the same or different collections, or with other evidence. For example, the Sales Books utilized by this workshop from approximately 1937 through 1972 (the notebook for 1939–1940 is missing), raise concerns about meaning and intention. The purpose itself of these notebooks is not explicit. Titled with a general indication of a time span (e.g., “1937 1938”), the Sales Books mention instruments described by the maker’s name, date of entry, prices (sometimes in

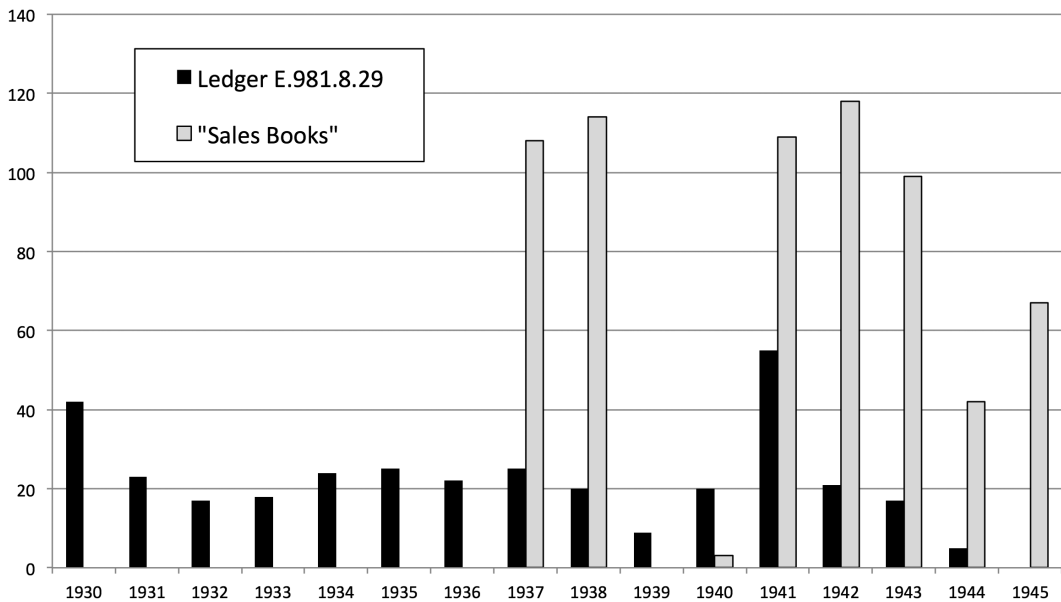


**Figure 13.3.** Antique and other used violins and cellos purchased and sold by the Caressa and Français workshop between 1930 and 1945, as indicated in the ledger E.981.8.29, Musée de la musique, Archives of Caressa and Français: number of instruments purchased (top left) and sold (top right), cost of the purchases (bottom left) and income of the sales (bottom right) in francs.

code), and at times instrument inventory numbers, instrument date, calculations, commissions, and a client address. The entries in these Sales Books appear informal.

Ledger E.981.8.29 raises additional questions—why did Émile Français omit dates, prices, and intermittent client names for instruments that came into the workshop for sale from mid-1938 through the end of this ledger in 1944?<sup>42</sup> Should partial or missing information be interpreted as careless, or as intended to obscure transactions in these troubled times? Infrequently, there are entries with erased fields or later postdated inscriptions, raising additional concerns about interpretation.

In addition, there are significant and unexplained inconsistencies and ambiguities in and between Caressa and Français’s traditional purchase and sale ledger, E.981.8.29, and the more informal Sales Books (figure 13.4).<sup>43</sup> One example of these disparities is the Dérivaux case study discussed below. It may be that the Sales Books in some instances contain draft notes, offers, or proposals and do not represent realized transactions, while other entries appear to document completed sales. Français may have kept formal and informal business records during the Occupation. Caressa and Français’s abbreviated and incomplete attribution notations result in further challenges to interpretation. These references draw on their expertise in authentication and may or may not have been correct at the time, or by contemporary standards.



**Figure 13.4.** Volume of the dated sales of violins and cellos indicated in the ledger E.981.8.29, Musée de la musique, Archives of Caressa and Français, and in the Sales Books, Français Archive, Smithsonian Institution, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

The incomplete primary sources and the questions these records raise lead one to be cautious about drawing conclusions. What is clear amid these imperfect and uncertain sources is that they contain information regarding provenance, authenticity, values, geographical demographics, and the wide network of people involved. Such records in public collections are exceedingly rare, and their analysis has led to some new discoveries, with further investigation warranted.<sup>44</sup>

## Case Studies

### *Hamma and Company, Stuttgart*

Entries for violin dealer “Mr. Fridolin Hamma” or “Hamma à Stuttgart” in ledger E.981.8.29 reflect sales of 26 instruments to Hamma by Caressa and/or Français from 1930 to 1945, only two of which appear in the Sales Books. The Hamma and Caressa and Français workshops had a long history of professional relations since at least the beginning of the twentieth century. These business relations were interrupted during World War I,<sup>45</sup> but began again after the war with international trade in instruments and collaborative work on a publication following a 1937 exhibition in Cremona.<sup>46</sup> Hamma engaged in both purchases and sales with Caressa and Français, including what appear to be many valuable Italian instruments between 1928 and 1930. The Musée de la musique keeps documentation showing that one of the Hammas was a very close friend of and partnered with Émile Français, as we can see from a letter from Fridolin Hamma in Stuttgart to Émile Français, dated November, 23, 1938, which states:

Dear friend Emile. Thousand of thanks for your pleasing letter and I am happy to hear that we have real friends in the disagreeable times we are having currently. All the laws and paragraphs [*sic*] mean the death of the tradesman. When it will change, everybody tells us now how we must *not* do our lutherie



trade but nobody tells us now how we *are allowed* to do our trade, because if one wants to follow all these laws and paragraphs, it's better closing one's shop. . . . Forward my warmest greetings to Lulu, your sons, but also to your father and your step-father, and tell them that I think more than ever to the merry and free long-gone times. Hugging you / your friend Fridolin.<sup>47</sup>

How did the war modify these professional and friendly relations? During the war, we see in ledger E.981.8.29 that 23 violins were sold by Émile Français to the Hamma workshop between February 1941 and July 1943. Among these, the names of the prior owners were entered in the ledger on 15 occasions.

It should be noted that in November 1943, German records show that the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda made plans for stringed instrument acquisitions in Paris. Planning discussions included the possibility of using violin dealer Fridolin Hamma as a purchasing agent in Paris, or alternatively using musicians of Radio Paris as the direct purchasers in order to conceal the identity of the Propaganda Ministry as the true buyer.<sup>48</sup> After November 1943, no sale of instruments by Français to Hamma is recorded in the studied Français records.

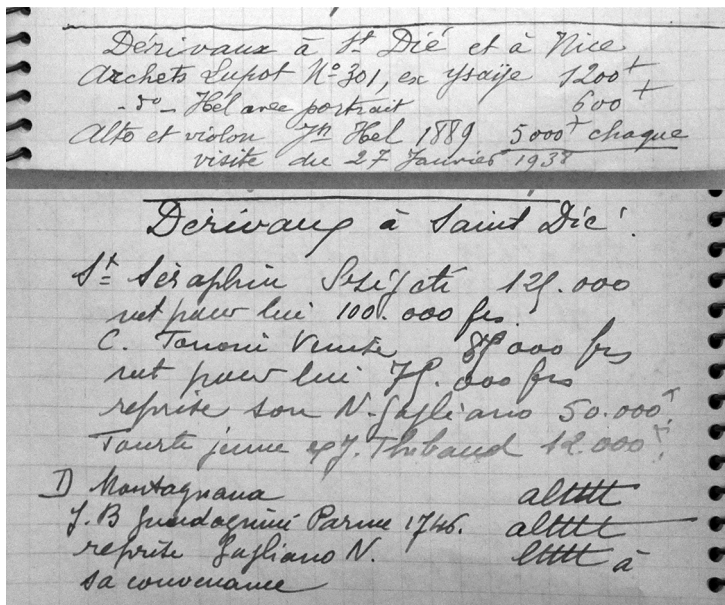
Historical records confirm that Fridolin Hamma procured instruments of the violin family for German orchestras that were funded by the Third Reich. For example, he acquired 67 stringed instruments for the Reich Bruckner Orchestra and his invoices for May and June 1944 state, in part: "We sell to you in the name and by order of the Reich Ministry for Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, Berlin . . ." <sup>49</sup> The provenance of most of these instruments is presently unclear. Records that have been located to date, which are incomplete, do not contain a match between the 26 instruments acquired by Hamma from Français listed in ledger E.981.8.29 and the instruments referenced in Hamma's May and June 1944 invoices to the Reich Bruckner Orchestra. However, a July 8, 1944, letter from the Bruckner Orchestra manager to Hamma confirms that the Caressa & Français firm had prepared certificates for instruments that had been provided to the Bruckner Orchestra but had been lost, suggesting, but not confirming, transactions may have occurred.<sup>50</sup>

### **Marie and René Louis Dérivaux**

A client named Dérivaux from St. Dié, Vosges, is listed in Français ledger E.981.8.29 on May 12, 1938, for the purchase of a 1761 Johannes Gagliano violin. In contrast, there are 11 entries in the 1937–1938 Sales Book for Dérivaux, eight instruments and three bows (figure 13.5). Marie Dérivaux reported to the French government that Germans confiscated nine of her violins and violas during the Occupation. Her undated theft report is today found in the archives of the Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères with detailed instrument descriptions<sup>51</sup> and these losses were published in 1948 in the *Répertoire des biens spoliés en France durant la guerre 1939–1945*.<sup>52</sup> Two of the stolen instruments, a violin and viola by Joseph Hel both dated 1889, appear to match instruments entered by Français in his 1937–1938 Sales Book under the name Dérivaux (but not found in ledger E.981.8.29). These Dérivaux entries seem to confirm that the Sales Books reflect actual sales, at least in part. These records also provide an important source of evidence regarding provenance and authenticity for these still missing instruments.<sup>53</sup>

### **Violinist Charles Cyroulnik and Professor Jules Boucherit**

Amid the sales entries in the Français records are many stories that warrant further investigation, which might shed additional light on Français's activities and intentions during World War II. One



**Figure 13.5.** 1937-38 Sales Book entries for Dérivaux. Source: The Jacques Français Rare Violins Inc. Archive, Smithsonian Institution, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

striking example includes Français's business dealings with Jewish violinist Charles Cyroulnik (1923-2003) during the German Occupation of France.

Cyroulnik studied violin at the Conservatoire de Paris with violin professor Jules Boucherit. After the German invasion of Paris, Jewish violin students were prohibited from continuing their studies at the Conservatoire in September 1942.<sup>54</sup> Jules Boucherit rescued his Jewish students, Serge Blanc,<sup>55</sup> Charles Cyroulnik, David Erlih, Lionel Gali, Ivry Gitlis, Michel Schwalbe, and Denise Soriano, by hiding them from the authorities and continuing with their violin studies until Liberation. They reportedly lived in Bourron-Marlotte, about 75 km south of Paris, in a villa made available to Boucherit by pianist Magda Tagliaferro, who had fled to South America. These brave acts won Boucherit the award of Righteous among the Nations.<sup>56</sup>

The Français business records confirm that Émile Français conducted business during World War II with Boucherit and Cyroulnik. He sold violin supplies to Cyroulnik on a regular basis from November 1940 through the Liberation of Paris. Ledger E.981.8.29 states that Français sold Cyroulnik an eighteenth-century Florentine violin by Giovanni Battista Gabrielli in 1941 for 31,700 francs.<sup>57</sup> This entry does not appear in the Sales Book for 1941-1942. The Sales Books contain entries for Jules Boucherit and his apparent purchase of eight instruments, some rare, in 1941, 1943, and 1944, four with the notation "pour lui-même" (for himself).<sup>58</sup> None of these Sales Book entries appear in ledger E.981.8.29. It seems likely, although unconfirmed, that Français understood that it was dangerous for Cyroulnik to make wartime trips between Bourron-Marlotte and Paris to buy violin supplies from Français.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter is the first attempt to systematically analyze the business records of a major European violin dealer in order to link prewar and World War II trends involving the movement of instruments geographically with the related political and economic evidence. By reuniting this record collection through analysis, one obtains a rare view into the stream of international commerce involving instruments of the violin family during the 1930–1945 period in Paris. The records reflect possible evidence of provenance, authenticity, and valuation of rare violins and contribute to an understanding of the social, economic, geographical, and political landscapes and also the network of experts, dealers, musicians, teachers, collectors, suppliers, and others in the world of violins.

The business records of Caressa and Français reflect a complex landscape of transactions filled with rich information, ambiguity, omissions, and conflicts, and these gray areas raise many questions. For example, why did Français omit significant purchase date and price entries in ledger E.931.8.29 after July 1938 through Liberation? Why are the business ledgers created by Caressa or Français inconsistent with the Sales Books for the period under study? For instruments with questionable provenance in the Français records, can further provenance evidence be found? For the many still missing instruments of the violin family confiscated during the Occupation, what additional provenance research can be accomplished through analysis of dealer and other historical records?

The many questions that remain require further investigation. But this study, which has rejoined the Caressa and Français workshop records in the Musée de la musique and the Smithsonian Institution, has provided new insights into the collection. These primary sources complement archives of all sorts documenting the art and instrument markets before and during World War II and cultural heritage trafficking, including spoliations. While interpretation of these sources is sometimes difficult, the wealth of information they contain is very encouraging and will stimulate further study of the Caressa and Français archive, as well as similar and related record collections.

## Notes

Acknowledgments: The authors wish to thank the archival and curatorial staff of the Smithsonian Institution, Archives Center, National Museum of American History. Special thanks to the France Berkeley Fund, which funded this research.

1. See Jean Mattéoli, *Mission d'étude sur la spoliation des Juifs de France: Rapport général* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2000); Annette Wieviorka and Floriane Azoulay, *Le pillage des appartements et son indemnisation* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2000); Willem de Vries, *Sonderstab Musik, Music Confiscations by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg under the Nazi Occupation of Western Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996).
2. De Vries, *Sonderstab Musik*, 119.
3. For example, the music library and musical instrument collection of the noted keyboard player Wanda Landowska. See Landowska file, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères (MEAE), RA 389-P24, Exportation—Douane 1941-1945; Sonderstab Musik Inventory for Landowska, Bundesarchiv, Berlin (BA), NS 15/190. The Stradivari cello owned by soloist Gregor Piatigorsky was also among the musical instruments confiscated, Mme. Piatigorsky file, MEAE, CRA 32 - 45.771.
4. For example, Records of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, 1941-1945, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 242, Microfilm Publication T-454, Rolls 6–7.
5. Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, Sonderstab Musik, BA, NS 30/63-67.
6. "Le Répertoire des Biens Spoliés" Site Rose-Valland, Musées Nationaux Récupération, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/mnr/MnR-rbs.htm>. These records reflect claims for

- looted instruments of the violin family allegedly made by Amati, Gagliano, Grancino, Guarneri, Landolfi, Lupot, Maggini, Ruggieri, Stradivari, Tecchler, Vuillaume, and many others, the authenticity of which has not been confirmed.
7. For example, Records of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, 1941-1945, NARA, RG 242, T-454, Rolls 6 and 7.
  8. See, for example, Doris Kachel, "Raub & Handel: Der französische Kunstmarkt unter deutscher Besatzung (1940-1944) Bonn, 30 November-1 December 2017," Conference report, Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, accessed May 30, 2018, [https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/01\\_Stiftung/DE/Veranstaltungsnachlese/2017/Tagungsbericht.pdf](https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/01_Stiftung/DE/Veranstaltungsnachlese/2017/Tagungsbericht.pdf); Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland GmbH, Kunstmuseum Bern, eds., *Gurlitt: Status Report* (Munich: Hirmer 2017). Notable publications and studies regarding Nazi-era confiscated artwork are too voluminous to mention, but see "Bibliography and Suggested Reading," Claims Conference/WJRO, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://art.claimscon.org/home-new/resources/resources-bibliography>.
  9. RAMA documents and studies the different actors in the art world in France under the German Occupation; see "Répertoire des acteurs du marché de l'art en France sous l'Occupation (RAMA)," L'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.inha.fr/fr/recherche/le-departement-des-etudes-et-de-la-recherche/domaines-de-recherche/histoire-des-collections-histoire-des-institutions-artistiques-et-culturelles-economie-de-l-art/repertoire-des-acteurs-du-marche-de-l-art-en-france-sous-l-occupation-rama.html>.
  10. David Zivie, *Biens culturels spoliés pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale: Une ambition pour rechercher, retrouver, restituer et expliquer*, Report, February 2018, France: Ministère de la Culture, accessed September 21, 2018, <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/184000530/index.shtml>.
  11. See Benjamin Fellmann, "Garde meuble aux biens juifs saisis: Die Lagerung der geraubten Klaviere im Musée National d'Art Moderne," Conference proceedings: *Looted Art and the Art Trade, Raub & Handel*, Bonn, November 2017, <https://www.artmarketstudies.org/conf-looted-art-and-the-art-trade-raub-handel-bonn-1117/>; Jan Machala, "The Confiscation of Jewish-Owned Musical Instruments: The Example of the Jews of Prostějov (1942)," Conference proceedings: *Plundered, but by Whom? Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and Occupied Europe in the Light of the Nazi-Art Looting*, Prague, October 2015, <http://www.cdmp.cz/wp-content/uploads/Sbornik2015.pdf>, 24-34; Carla Shapreau, "Musical Cultural Property: The Nazi Era and Post-War Provenance Challenges," in *Looted Art Working Group, European Union Conference on Holocaust Era Assets 2009*, accessed November 16, 2018, <https://www.lootedart.com/NN9Q2D763901>. See also Conny Sibylla Restle, "The Acquisition of the Wildhagen, Bitter, and Paur Collections by Alfred Berner for the Berlin Musikinstrumenten-Museum between 1957 and 1962: Questions of Provenance"; Monika Löscher, "Provenance Research in the Collection of Historic Musical Instruments in Vienna—Background, Configuration, and Practice"; Linda Escherich, "Provenance Research beyond Looted Art and Restitution—the 'RückPortal'"; and Markus Zepf, "Musikinstrumente für die Wissenschaft: Die Musikinstrumenten-Sammlung an der Universität Freiburg zwischen 1920 und 1944," all in symposium proceedings, *Private Passion—Public Challenge: Musikinstrumente sammeln in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Dominik von Roth and Linda Escherich, German National Museum, Nürnberg, May 2017, Heidelberg. <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.402> (accessed 7.14.2019).
  12. See, for example, de Vries, *Sonderstab Musik*. See also, Carla Shapreau, "Bells in the Cultural Soundscape: Nazi-Era Plunder, Repatriation, and Campanology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Repatriation*, ed. Frank Gunderson, Robert C. Lancefield, and Bret Woods (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Graham Bowley and Carla Shapreau, "German Panel Rules That a Rare Violin Was Looted by Nazis," *New York Times*, December 9, 2016; Carla Shapreau, "The Vienna Archives: Musical Expropriations during the Nazi Era and 21st Century Ramifications," *Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation Report* (2014); Carla Shapreau and Florence Gétreau, "The Loss of French Musical Property during World War II, Post-War Repatriations, Restitutions, and 21st Century Ramifications," *France Berkeley Fund Report* (2013); Carla Shapreau, "A Nazi Violin Still Keeps Its Secrets," *New York Times*, September 23, 2012; Carla Shapreau, "The Stolen Instruments of the Third Reich," *The Strad* 120, no. 1436 (December 2009): 32-37; Matéoli, *Rapport général*, 93-95; 146-48; Annette Wieviorka and Floriane Azoulay, *Mission d'étude sur la spoliation des Juifs de France: Le pillage des appartements et leur indemnisation* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2000), 23-25; 36-39.

13. "Das Instrumentenmuseum der Kölner Musikwissenschaft im Netzwerk der NS-Zeit," University of Köln, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://musikwissenschaft.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/31911.html>; "Musikinstrumente sammeln - das Beispiel Rück," Germanisches Nationalmuseum, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.gnm.de/forschung/forschungsprojekte/musikinstrumente-sammeln-das-beispiel-rueck/>.
14. Decisions of the Kommission für Provenienzforschung, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://www.provenienzforschung.gv.at/en/empfehlungen-des-beirats/beschluesse/beschluesse-2008-2013/>.
15. "Recommendation of the Advisory Commission in the matter of the Heirs of Felix Hildesheimer v. Franz Hofmann und Sophie Hagemann-Stiftung," Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, accessed May 30, 2018, [https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/06\\_Kommission/EN/Empfehlungen/16-12-07-Recommendation-Advisory-Commission-Hildesheimer-Hagemann-Foundation.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/06_Kommission/EN/Empfehlungen/16-12-07-Recommendation-Advisory-Commission-Hildesheimer-Hagemann-Foundation.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6).
16. The term "violin," unless otherwise specified, includes the whole family of bowed stringed instruments of the classical string quartet: violins, violas, and cellos.
17. For example, varying methods of construction, such as graduations in thicknesses of the top and back plates of the instrument, varying purfling materials and techniques used by different makers, the dimensions of the bass-bar, and the design of the f-hole, to name a few. W. Henry Hill, Arthur F. Hill, F.S.A., and Alfred E. Hill, *Antonio Stradivari, His Life and Work (1644–1737)* (Norfolk, UK: Fakenham Press Ltd., 1980, original edition London 1902), 181–99.
18. Sébastien-André Sibire, *La chélonomie ou le parfait luthier* (Paris, 1806); François-Joseph Fétis, *Antoine Stradivari luthier célèbre connu sous le nom de Stradivarius précédé de recherches historiques et critiques sur l'origine et les transformations des instruments à archet et suivi d'analyses théoriques sur l'archet et sur François Tourte* (Paris: Vuillaume, 1856); Jules Gallay, *Les luthiers italiens aux 17e et 18e siècles suivi de notes sur les maîtres des diverses écoles* (Paris: Académie des Bibliophiles, 1869).
19. The term *luthier* originally meant lute maker. "[I]t has become a general term for a maker of violins or other string instruments. Though French, the word has gained currency in English and German. Similarly, the derivative *lutherie* (lute making) has acquired the meaning of instrument making in general." *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.17221>.
20. Hélène Bigot, "Les pianos orphelins," radio broadcast, France Musique, April 21, 2018, <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/une-histoire-particuliere-un-recit-documentaire-en-deux-parties/les-pianos-orphelins-12-le-piano-du-juif-inconnu>.
21. Ernest N. Doring, *How Many Strads? Our Heritage from the Master*, enlarged edition, Robert Bein and Geoffrey Fushi (Chicago: Bein & Fushi, Inc., 1999), 235–37.
22. Gaël Français, "The Français House of Violin Making: A Retrospective," *Journal of the Violin Society of America* 19, no. 3, (2005), 3–22. Following current recommendations of the French Ministry of Culture, in order to better analyze and interpret the data, the authors have included in the time frame of study the years 1930 through 1945.
23. Sylvette Milliot, *Nicolas Lupot, ses contemporains et ses successeurs: Lupot d'Orléans, Pique, Thibout, Gand, Bernardel: Tome 1* (Messigny-et-Vantoux: JMB Impressions, 2015).
24. Bequest of Jacques Français to the Smithsonian Institution Archives Center, 2004; Beatrice Français (widow of Jacques Français), in a telephone interview with author, February 4, 2017; Curator Emeritus Gary Sturm, Smithsonian Institution, in a telephone interview with author, July 9, 2015. Mr. Sturm worked with Jacques Français to ensure that his specialized library and his historical Française workshop records were preserved in the Smithsonian Institution Archives Center.
25. Français, "The Français House of Violin Making," 11.
26. Archives du Musée de la Musique, Fonds Gand, Bernardel, Caressa et Français, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://archivesmusee.citedelamusique.fr/gand/archives.html>.
27. Jacques Français Rare Violins, Inc. Photographic Archive and Business Records, 1566–1998," Smithsonian Institution, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://sova.si.edu/record/NMAH.AC.0872>.
28. Jacques Français Rare Violins, Inc. Photographic Archive and Business Records, 1566–1998.
29. Jacques Français Rare Violins, Inc. Photographic Archive and Business Records, 1566–1998.

30. The predecessors of Caressa & Français also kept similar ledgers, named *Signalement*. See Jean-Philippe Echarde and Pierrick Gaudry, "A Harmonious Encoding of Instrument Values by a Nineteenth-Century Parisian Violin Dealer," *Cryptologia* 41 (2017): 1-11.
31. For example, Kenneth Mouré and Fabrice Grenard, "Traitors, 'Trafiquants,' and the Confiscation of 'Illicit Profits' in France, 1944-1950," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (December 2008): 969-90, 972-73.
32. Correspondence to Emil Herrmann, December 5, 1940, Box 95, Folder 4, Français Archive, Smithsonian.
33. Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, Sonderstab Musik, BA, NS 30/65.
34. Records of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, 1941-1945, NARA, RG 242, T454, Roll 6.
35. Ledger E.931.8.29, Inventory nos. 746, 758, and 356bis. "Dienststelle L. 20-651" appears to be "Dienststelle L. 20-651," meaning department or section, with the number representing a location, based on similar use of "Dienststelle L." from this period.
36. Ledger E.931.8.29, Inventory nos. 721 and 728.
37. Sales Book 1941-42, Box 56, Folder 1, Français Archive, Smithsonian; the prices for these instruments are listed in code as "otTTTT and otTTT." There was a traditional use of code by this workshop; see Écharde and Gaudry, "A Harmonious Encoding," 1-11.
38. Ledger E.931.8.29, Inventory nos. 776, 768, and 828.
39. See "Soldatenheim, Rouen," Bundesarchiv, Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1978-036-04, Frankreich, Soldatenheim, accessed May 30, 2018, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv\\_Bild\\_146-1978-036-04,\\_Frankreich,\\_Soldatenheim.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_146-1978-036-04,_Frankreich,_Soldatenheim.jpg).
40. Sales Book 1941-42, Box 56, Folder 1, Français Archive, Smithsonian.
41. For ledger E.981.8.29, this study excludes purchases and sales of violas (106 ledger entries) and bows (439 ledger entries).
42. It should be noted that similar data is also missing in the same ledger for several instruments purchased in the 1920s.
43. Undated violin and cello entries include: Ledger E.981.8.29 (1930-1944): 188 instruments; Sales Books 1937-1938, 1941-1945: 220 instruments.
44. For example, a further investigation, beyond the scope of this study, could include genealogical and historical research to identify customers in the records who may have been persecuted during the Nazi era and whether or not their sales to or purchases from Albert Caressa and/or Émile Français were made at, above, or below market values.
45. Christine Laloue and Jean-Philippe Echarde, "Luthiers dans la Première Guerre Mondiale," in *Mon violon m'a sauvé la vie: Destins de musiciens dans la Grande Guerre* (Paris: LienArt, 2015), 116-19.
46. *L'esposizione di liuteria antica a Cremona nel 1937*, ed. Gianpaolo Gregori (Cremona: Turrin, 1987).
47. Archives du Musée de la musique, Fonds Gand, Bernardel, Caressa et Français, *Varia*.
48. Correspondence by the Abteilung Musik der Leiter, November 27, 1943, BA, R55/243.
49. Shapreau and Gétreau, "The Loss of French Musical Property during World War II," 77n8, quoting Hamma & Co. 1944 invoices. Records of the Reparations and Restitutions Branch of the US Allied Commission for Austria ("USACA"), NARA, RG 260, M1926.
50. Dr. Wirz letter to Hamma & Co., July 8, 1944, St. Florian Archive.
51. Claim File of Vve Dérivaux née Dolmaire Marie, St. Dié (Vosges), MEAE, RV 647.
52. *Répertoire des biens spoliés en France durant la guerre 1939-1945*, Commandement en Chef Français en Allemagne, Groupe Français du Conseil de Contrôle, Division des Réparations et Restitutions, Bureau Central des Restitutions. 1948, vol. 4, suppl. 1, ch. 8, 109-11.
53. Another Dérivaux entry appears in a "receipt" dated May 21, 1938, which lists prices requested by Français from Marie Dérivaux's husband, René Louis Dérivaux, for several rare bows and two instruments by Dall'Aglio and Rocca. Français Archive, Smithsonian, Series 4, Box 55, Folder 7, "Receipts, 1937-1938."
54. Jean Gribenski, "L'antisémitisme au conservatoire: Du recensement des élèves juifs à leur exclusion (1940-1942)," *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* 198 (2013), 363-81, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-revue-d-histoire-de-la-shoah-2013-1-page-363.htm>; Karine Le Bail, *La musique au pas: Être musicien sous l'Occupation* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016), 140.

55. See Serge Blanc and Jules Boucherit in a 1942 video clip, "Serge Blanc," accessed May 30, 2018, <http://www.sergeblanc.com/>.
56. Boucherit was awarded Righteous among the Nations honor by Yad Vashem for the rescue of Jews in France during the German Occupation: "The Righteous among the Nations, Yad Vashem," accessed May 30, 2018, <http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4014075>.
57. E.981.8.29, Inventory no. 477.
58. The Français Sales Books contains entries for Boucherit for two violins in August 1941, four more in February 1943, and two in January 1944.
59. E981.8.30, *Débites—Exportation*, accounting ledger, Archives, Musée de la musique.