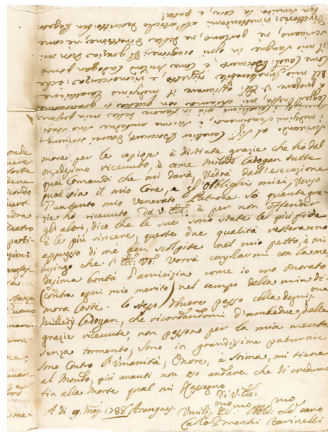


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Sotheby's London To Sell a Rare Autograph Letter by the Most Celebrated of All *Castrati*, Carlo Broschi Farinelli

***** Sale Also Features a Newly Discovered Piano Duet by Gabriel Fauré*****



Music: Wednesday 10th June, 2009

SOTHEBY'S LONDON auction of Music on Wednesday 10th June 2009 will present for the first time at auction an autograph letter by Carlo Broschi Farinelli, one of the most famous Italian contralto and soprano *castrati* singers of the 18th century (pictured above, lot 43, est. £4,000-6,000*). Written by the singer considered to be the greatest of all time, this remarkable and extremely rare letter marks Farinelli's retirement from the operatic stage. The sale, which comprises 136 lots and is expected to raise in excess of £800,000, also features a newly discovered piano duet in F major by Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924), the foremost French composer of his generation (lot 45, est. £15,000-20,000), which is believed to be complete and remains unrecorded and certainly unpublished. The earliest Beethoven manuscript to have appeared at auction for many years is a further highlight in the sale - a remarkable early autograph working manuscript for several unidentified works, containing unknown themes and ideas (lot 16, est. £100,000 -120,000) - in addition to the first collection of keyboard music printed in Britain which includes an apparently new source for 17th-century English keyboard music, with nine previously unknown and unpublished pieces (lot 30, est. £60,000-80,000).

Sotheby's Senior Music Manuscript Specialist Dr Simon Maguire highlights the rarity and significance of Farinelli's autograph letter: *"It is exceptionally rare to find an autograph document by such a celebrated figure in the world of*

opera, and we are thrilled to be offering a letter that not only marks the turning point of Farinelli's career, but is also the first by his hand to appear at auction."

RARE AUTOGRAPH LETTER BY FARINELLI

Farinelli, the subject of the eponymous film that won the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film in 1995 and was also nominated for an Academy Award in the same category, was adored in his lifetime by both the cognoscenti and the public. His talents won him much affection and he was lavished with gifts from admirers, including King Louis XV who gave Farinelli his portrait set in diamonds. After establishing his reputation throughout Europe and proving himself to be so formidable a performer that his rival and friend the castrato Gioacchino Conti ("Gizziello") is said to have fainted from sheer despondency on hearing him sing, Farinelli sang in London during the years 1734-1737 for the Opera of the Nobility, deadly rivals of Handel's opera productions.

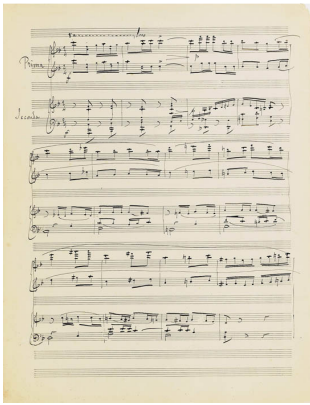
The public's interest in opera was unable to sustain two rival opera companies, and on 15th July 1737 Farinelli left London and went to Madrid in the service of Philip V of Spain where the queen, Elisabetta Farnese, had come to believe that Farinelli's voice might be able to cure the severe depression of her husband (contemporary physicians believed in music therapy). In effect the great foreign star had been lured overseas again by a better paid and more glamorous contract. On 25th August 1737 Farinelli was named chamber musician to the king and *criado familiar* - honorary member of the Royal Family. Nonetheless, he was still under contract in London in the summer of 1737, and the autograph letter to be offered for sale is in response to a letter from Lord Charles Cadogan, a director of the Opera of the Nobility, addressing Farinelli's conduct and the fulfillment of his obligations to the company.

"... I esteem Your Lordship's character; your disinterested conduct with your fellow directors of The Opera of the Nobility assures me of your good intentions towards me... I beg you to do me the honour of never speaking of The Opera of the Nobility, still less of the measures taken against my innocent person, whether justified or unjustified. I, when I look into my soul, always consider myself honest above all things, nor do I find myself in anyway obligated to The Opera of the Nobility; because, even if they paid me handsomely, I for my part always served them faithfully and well, so that both sides have fulfilled their duties to each other. Your Excellency knows better than anyone that I have never been diverted from my honest and correct mode of conduct by offers of money, gold or silver..."

Farinelli never sang again in public and for the remaining nine years of Philip's life gave nightly private concerts to the royal couple.

NEWLY DISCOVERED PIANO DUET BY FAURÉ

The newly discovered piano duet in F major by Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) is an exuberant and strongly rhythmic piece (lot 45, est. £15,000-20,000). Thought to date to around 1870, it is believed to be complete and remains unrecorded and certainly unpublished.

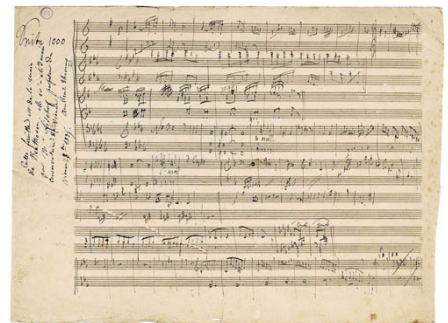


Sotheby's Senior Music Manuscript Specialist Dr Simon Maguire comments: *"It is extremely rare to discover an unrecorded piece of music by such an important composer, and it is particularly thrilling to reveal a duet to the public in such a polished form for the first time since it was composed over a century ago."*

Fauré's musical style influenced many 20th-century composers and his harmonic and melodic language affected how harmony was later taught. The present work is considered to be, on stylistic grounds, an early composition by the composer of the famous "Dolly Suite". It is believed to date from the time of the "Symphonie en fa" Op.20 of 1866-1873. The manuscript is complete, with a repeat of part of the opening section being indicated to close the piece.

REMARKABLY EARLY AUTOGRAPH BEETHOVEN MANUSCRIPT

A further highlight of the sale is the earliest Beethoven manuscript to appear at auction for many years (lot 16, est. £100,000 -120,000). An unknown and unrecorded sketchleaf dating from Beethoven's first year in Vienna, it contains the first unknown sketches for the wind octet Op.103 and much previously unknown music possibly dating from his youth in Bonn. The manuscript contains a large number of unidentified themes and ideas, Beethoven having used the leaf like a commonplace book for his early musical thoughts. His autographs from this early period are extremely rare since many early sketches are lost – it was only in 1798 that Beethoven began to stitch his sketches together in order to preserve them. It is therefore a highly unusual and important new source for scholars.



RECENTLY DISCOVERED MUSIC FROM THE 17TH CENTURY

Also featured in the sale is the first collection of keyboard music printed in Britain, which constitutes the earliest use of engraving for keyboard music outside Italy. This edition, entitled "*Parthenia*, or the Maiden-head of the first Musick that ever was printed for the Virginalls", also includes an apparently unknown source for 17th-century English keyboard music (lot 30, est. £60,000-80,000). The edition contains music by William Byrd, John Bull and Orlando Gibbons, and the new manuscript source contains 15 additional keyboard pieces which are mostly unknown and unpublished. *Parthenia* is of the utmost rarity at auction: about a dozen copies are recorded in libraries from six different issues (1613-1659), the music apparently unaltered throughout. This is the third issue (the first dated issue), of which only one other copy is known to exist.

* Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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