Beat: Music

Violin that played as Titanic sank sells for $1.4 million at auction

-, 20.10.2013, 02:55 Time

USPA News - A violin that is believed to have been played by Wallace Hartley as the RMS Titanic sank in the Atlantic Ocean has been sold for 900,000 pounds ($1.45 million) at an auction in England, making it the most valuable Titanic item ever sold. The violin, believed to have been made in Germany in circa 1880, was played by bandmaster Wallace Hartley who has been credited for leading his eight-member band in playing the hymn "Nearer, My God, to Thee" in an attempt to calm passengers boarding lifeboats as the passenger liner sank in the North Atlantic Ocean during its maiden voyage.

All eight men died in the disaster, along with approximately 1,500 others, and Hartley`s remains were recovered more than a week later by the vessel CS Mackay-Bennett. The English bandmaster had placed his precious violin in a leather luggage case before going into the cold waters of the North Atlantic on the morning of April 15, 1912, and reports suggest his body was found with the leather case strapped to him. The violin was given to Hartley as a gift from his fiancée Maria Robinson on the event of their engagement, and she later wrote a diary entry in which she wrote about the musical instrument having been saved from the water and returned to her. A silver plate on the violin is engraved: "For WALLACE on the occasion of our ENGAGEMENT from MARIA." Some have expressed doubts about the authenticity of the object since it was discovered in 2006, leading to an extensive scientific and historical investigation after which experts declared it to be genuine. Among the methods used was a CT scan of the interior of the instrument, and trace analysis showed it to be compatible with material that had been recovered from other Titanic victims. "In my opinion, the findings in relation to the corrosion associated with the metal fixtures of the travel case in which the violin was recovered, and also to the portfolio, would be considered compatible with immersion in seawater," said Michael Jones, who led the scientific analysis. "The silver fish plate present on the violin visually appears to be an original fixture. The four screw fixtures appear very heavily corroded." The violin was sold on Saturday to an unidentified British buyer for 900,000 pounds ($1.45 million) at an auction by Henry Aldridge and Son in England. The auction house had initially estimated that the musical instrument would sell for between 200,000 pounds ($323,000) and 300,000 pounds ($484,000).

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1503/violin-that-played-as-titanic-sank-sells-for-14-million-at-auction.html

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