



Records



Digital



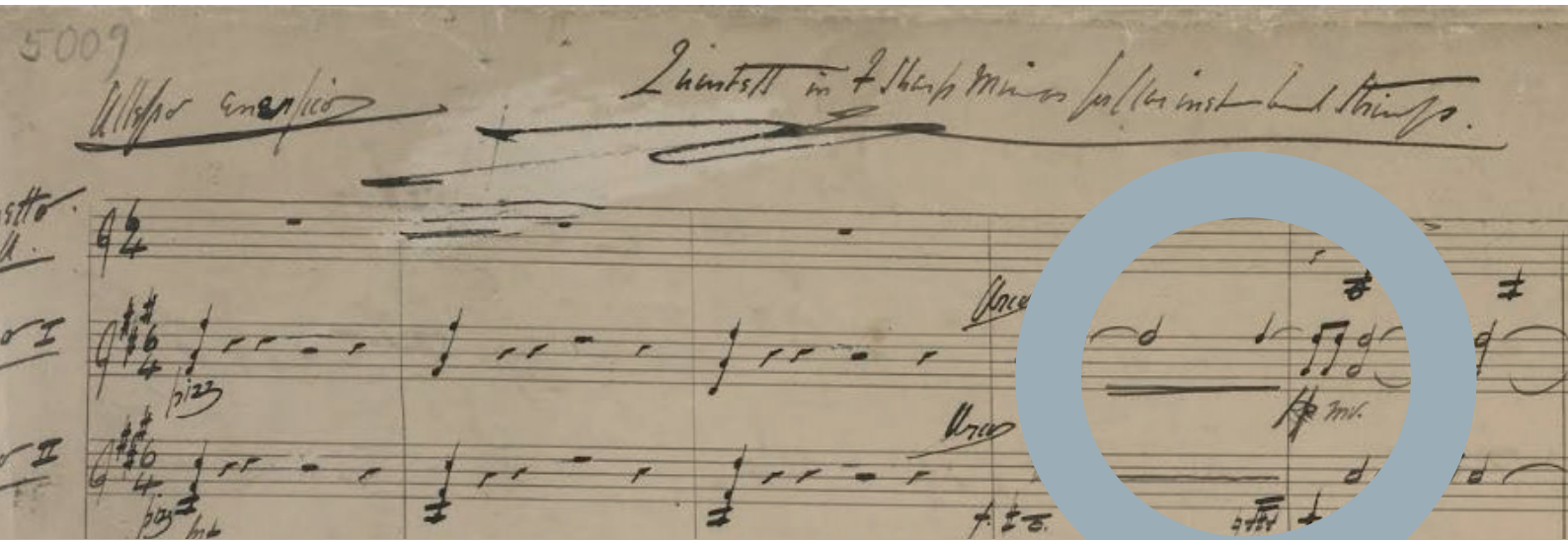
Datashred



Relocation



Technology



**Business Sector:** Heritage  
**Organisation:** The Royal College of Music Museum  
**Location:** London

## 01: Our Client

The Royal College of Music is one of the world's great conservatoires. It was founded in 1882 by Edward VII and has trained some of the most important figures on the British and international music scenes.

The Royal College of Music Museum preserves and displays an internationally renowned collection of more than 25,000 items including musical instruments, portraits, sculptures, photographs and engravings related to music.

Many date from the 16th century to the present and demonstrate the transformation of instrument models and sounds over time.



## 02: The Project:

### Case Study

To pack thousands of pieces of antique musical instruments, paintings and other artefacts and move them to our storage warehouse while the Museum site undergoes renovations.

Museum relocations and storage are part of our specialist field of removals, so when we were contacted, by the RCM, we couldn't wait to get started. During this project we employed specialist methods for packing antique items and safely relocated them to our dedicated heritage storage facility where they will remain under controlled conditions for three years.

Antique musical instruments are functional works of art and their care, conservation and storage requires very specific techniques to ensure that they'll be preserved for the future and enjoyed for several more centuries. Due to the fact that they are most often made of wood, bone, metal, leather and other organic materials, they are very sensitive to ambient temperature and humidity and cannot be exposed to any materials that can cause warping or disintegration.

The RCM collection is comprised of centuries' old, handmade instruments including the earliest dated guitar (Belchior Dias, Lisbon, 1581), the earliest known stringed keyboard instrument called a Clavicytherium (c. 1480), a harpsichord by Alessandro Trasuntino (1531) and a remarkable collection of English viols ranging from c. 1590 to 1694.

### 03: Our Solution

Our team of experienced and expert packers worked in close collaboration with the conservators at the RCM and came up with the perfect packing approach for each of these unique items. Before this hugely important and complex relocation could begin, every item was given a unique barcode and recorded onto a master inventory so it could be tracked at every step of the process.

One by one, the items were measured and wrapped in acid-free tissue paper or unbleached cotton and sealed with acid-free tape before being placed in custom built, museum grade cases. The cases were lined with plastazote foam which is used by the conservation industry, among other specialist fields, due to its inert nature and absence of chemical agents which can affect surrounding items. The foam was custom shaped and carved to house or fit around the instruments so that there would be no movement once they were inside their cases. The boxes were sealed with copper rivets designed for conservation grade boxes due to their chemical composition and fitted with tamper proof, shock-watch indicators designed to flash red if the item is handled roughly or experiences abrupt movement. This is a great indicator of our expert level of handling which guarantees the least amount of agitation to the instruments while in our care.

Once packed, all items were taken to our climate controlled heritage warehouse in Upper Heyford where they were ingested into to their home for the next few years. The instruments are being kept in conditions which mimic those of the museum with a constant temperature of 13-20°C and relative humidity levels between 47%-58% at all times.

Both metrics are constantly monitored and noted to ensure that the items are kept under the most optimal storage conditions until they can be returned to their new home.



### 04: The Outcome:

The RCM relocation was completed within deadline, on budget and keeping to the targets set by the museum with all the items safely packed, moved and stored, allowing the staff to proceed with the site changes as planned.



“We enjoyed working with the team from Harrow Green, who were very flexible and accommodating when it came to our requests and the needs of the collection, and have an ongoing relationship with them transporting our collection to and from storage.” Susana Caldeira, Conservator, Royal College of Music Museum.