



Hartlepool
Borough Council

OFFICER DECISION RECORD

Department: Housing, Growth and Communities

Division:

Date of Decision / Issue of Licence: 19/11/2025

Officer Making Decision: MS G PTAK

Subject / Description & Reason for Decision: Decision to accept the donation of a Schiedmayer baby grand piano from the Tertis Foundation.
(for publication)

These are the reasons for the decision - viewable by the public:
Lionel Tertis was a globally renowned viola player and composer in the early twentieth century and was born in Hartlepool in 1876. Musically, he remains a figure of international acclaim. The Council has developed a strong relationship with the Tertis & Aronowitz International Music Competition, in recognition of the town being his birthplace.
The piano was originally Lionel Tertis' piano and has been owned most recently by the Tertis Foundation, which was set up in his memory.
The Tertis Foundation trustees have recently decided to look for a suitable "home" for the piano and approached the Council directly.
The piano will be donated to the Council, fully and professionally restored, with an accompanying 5 year guarantee. It will be transported to Hartlepool free of charge, with the request that it continues to be "cherished and used".
The Council is honoured to accept the donation and will incorporate its use into the development of a creative, musical legacy in the town, in his name.

Type of Decision: Non Key

Nature of Delegation Being Exercised: Accepted as a legitimate officer delegation.

Alternative Options Considered & Rejected: The decision involved consultation with Cllr Pam Hargreaves as Leader of the Council and Cllr Matt Dodds, in his role as Vice Chair of Housing, Growth and Communities.

Any Declared Register of Interest: No

Other Considerations:

Financial Considerations: Consideration of the ongoing, longer-term revenue costs for the repair, maintenance and tuning costs of the piano

Risk Implications: Inclusion of the piano, covered by the Council's insurance policy/ies

OFFICER WITH THE DELEGATION

NAME: MS G PTAK

POSITION: Director of Housing, Growth & Communities

IN CONSULTATION WITH...

NAME: Pam Hargreaves

POSITION: Councillor

NAME: Matthew Dodds

POSITION: Councillor

ACQUISITION PROPOSAL

Creative Hartlepool

Object: Baby Grand Piano: SCHIEDMAYER & SOEHNE : Serial No: 28439 made c1909 in Germany.

See attached document of images.

Title/object:	Schiedmayer & Soehne Baby Grand Piano
<i>Entry Form No:</i>	
<i>Name:</i>	Baby Grand Piano
<i>Date of work:</i>	1909
<i>Description:</i>	Baby grand piano, with two pedals; full cast iron frame; Casework is Rosewood French polished.
<i>Material/process:</i>	See above
<i>Size:</i>	5' 9"
<i>Country Produced in:</i>	Germany
<i>Region/City/Locality Produced in:</i>	
<i>Notes on item:</i>	<p>The item was fully rebuilt in 2004 by A Hanna and Sons Piano's (94 Kingston Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 1LA).</p> <p>It has also been recently serviced although details of any repair work are yet to be confirmed. Suggestions are that the piano's hammers are being replaced having been eaten by moths!</p> <p>The piano will be supplied with a 5 year guarantee.</p>

Provenance (ownership history):

The piano has been owned most recently by the Tertis Foundation, set up in memory of composer and viola player, Lionel Tertis.

The piano has previously been owned by Lionel Tertis.

The trustees have recently decided to close the Foundation and are looking for a suitable home for the piano. As Tertis was born in Hartlepool in 1876 and the Council has developed a relationship with the Tertis & Aronowitz international Competitions, it has been offered to the Council, with the request that its is "cherished and used".

All repair and transportation costs will be covered by the Foundation.

Assessment of object's significance for collection (including opportunities for display):

In headline terms, Tertis is globally acclaimed as the most important person ever to be associated with viola – both as a violist and as a composer.

Tertis was born in [West Hartlepool](#), the son of Polish-Jewish immigrants.^[1] Tertis's first instrument was the piano, and at thirteen he left home to earn a living as a pianist. In 1892 he had saved enough money to enter [Trinity College of Music](#) in London, where he had violin lessons under B.M. Carrodus, whilst continuing to learn the piano under R. W. Lewis for three intermittent terms. In 1895, after six months at Leipzig Conservatorium, Tertis entered the [Royal Academy of Music](#) (RAM) in London and studied the violin under [Hans Wessely](#).^[2] In 1897, whilst at the RAM, he was encouraged by the principal, [Alexander Mackenzie](#), to take up the viola instead.^[3] Under the additional influence of [Oskar Nedbal](#), he did so and rapidly became one of the best-known violists of his time, touring Europe and the US as a soloist.

As Professor of Viola at the RAM (from 1900), he encouraged his colleagues and students to compose for the instrument, thereby greatly expanding its repertoire.^[4] In 1906, Tertis was temporarily in the famous [Bohemian Quartet](#) to replace the violist/composer Oskar Nedbal and later he took the viola position in the [Walenn Quartet](#).

Composers such as [Arnold Bax](#), [Frank Bridge](#), [Gustav Holst](#), [Benjamin Dale](#), [York Bowen](#), [Ralph Vaughan Williams](#), [Arthur Bliss](#), [Arnold Trowell](#) and [William Walton](#) wrote pieces for him. The Walton piece was his [Viola Concerto](#); however, Tertis did not give the world premiere as he found it difficult to comprehend at the time; that honour went to [Paul Hindemith](#). His pupil [Bernard Shore](#) took on the second performance at the [Proms](#) in August 1930.^[5] Tertis first performed the work a month later at the International Society for Contemporary Music festival in Liège. Over the next three years he gave five more performances of the concerto.^[6]

He owned a 1717 [Montagnana](#) from 1920 to 1937^[7] which he found during one of his concert tours to Paris in 1920, and took a chance in acquiring. According to his memoirs, it was "shown to me in an unplayable condition, without bridge, strings or fingerboard.... No case was available – it was such a large instrument 17 1/8 inches – so my wife came to the rescue by wrapping it in her waterproof coat, and that is how it was taken across the English Channel." Tertis preferred a large viola to get an especially rich tone from his instrument. Knowing that some would find a 17-1/8-inch instrument too large he created his own Tertis model, which provides many of the tonal advantages of the larger instrument in a manageable 16-3/4-inch size. Tertis sold the 1717 Montagnana to his pupil Bernard Shore in 1937, who in turn passed it on to his pupil [Roger Chase](#).

Along with [William Murdoch](#) (piano), [Albert Sammons](#), and [Lauri Kennedy](#), Tertis formed the *Chamber Music Players*.^[8] He also encouraged and coached [Sidney Griller](#) as he worked to found the [Griller Quartet](#) in 1928, and influenced the Griller's enthusiasm for the [first Viennese School](#).^[9]

In 1937, while at the height of his powers, he announced his retirement from the concert platform to concentrate on teaching. He appeared as soloist only one more time, at a special concert in 1949 to an invited audience at the RAM to help raise money for his fund to encourage the composition of music for the viola.^[10]

He was appointed a [Commander of the Order of the British Empire](#) (CBE) in the 1950 New Year's Honours.^[10]

Tertis composed several original works and also [arranged](#) many pieces not originally for the viola, such as [Edward Elgar's Cello Concerto](#). He was the author of a number of publications about string playing, the viola in particular, and his own life. They include *Cinderella No More* and *My Viola and I*.

Lionel Tertis died on 22 February 1975 in [Wimbledon, London](#). He was 98 years old.

Relevance to Acquisitions policy / plan:

The Council and Tertis & Aronowitz international Competitions are developing an approach, supported by Arts Council England, to build upon Tertis' memory and to build a legacy in his name. The ability to own such an important instrument with a direct link to Tertis is culturally and historically significant for the town and represents an incredible opportunity.

Additional comments:

Condition information: <i>(including potential hazards)</i>		
Excellent condition. Has been fully rebuilt and more recently fully restored by professional piano company. The piano also comes with a 5yrs guarantee.		
Implications of purchase: <i>(Major treatment, external conservator, display problems, storage problems, limited life, copyright restrictions):</i>		
No immediate conservation needed due to recent work completed. The piano will need to be maintained and tuned on a regular basis. Advice will be taken regarding the conditions that it needs to be stored in. The piano has a value (as provided by A Hanna and Sons) of c£35k. This excludes any associated added value as being Lionel Tertis's piano.		
Collection Management requirements		Costs
Associated Acquisition costs:		
<i>Agents fees:</i>	N/a	
<i>Travel/accommodation:</i>	N/a	
<i>Crating/packing:</i>	N/a	
<i>Freight:</i>	N/a	
<i>Insurance:</i>	N/a	
<i>Customs:</i>	N/a	
<i>Record photography:</i>	See attached	
<i>Other costs:</i>		
Storage:		
<i>Intended location:</i>	Either Hartlepool Town Hall Theatre main auditorium or Hartlepool Art Gallery.	
<i>Is space available:</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>Preservation and storage costs:</i>		
<i>Other costs</i>		
		Total cost:

Acquisition approval				
Purchase	Bequest	YES - Donation	Commissioned collection	for Field collection
Acquired from: <i>The Tertis Foundation</i> (Charity Number 1099084)				
Name: The Tertis Foundation				
Address: c/o Harbottle & Lewis LLP 7 Savoy Court LONDON WC2R 0EX				
Total cost of acquisition:				
Purchase price (<i>including buyer's premium; excluding GST</i>):			£0	
All associated costs (<i>from p.2</i>):			£0	
Valuation:				
Valuation: c. £35,000				
Valuer: A Hanna and Sons				
<i>Appraisal source: (Purchase price/Market valuation/if other, state):</i>				
Piano restorer and retailer. The value excludes any sum due to the association with Lionel Tertis, which is only considered to increase its value further.				
Acquisition proposal:				
Proposed by:		<i>Ian Gardiner</i>	Date:	8/10/2025

Schiedmayer & Soehne Baby Grand Piano







