Finchcocks keyboards enhance Horniman's

A beautifully-preserved square piano by Adam Beyer, London, 1777 Image courtesy of Dreweatts & Bloomsbury Auctions

The Horniman Museum and Gardens in south London has acquired three historic keyboard instruments from the celebrated Finchcocks Musical Museum, thanks to support from National Lottery players.

A four-year project will conserve and document the instruments, install them in the Horniman's Music Gallery and integrate them into an expanded events programme.

The instruments were acquired at auction following Finchcocks' recent closure. They are:

- A very rare surviving example of an Italian virginals by Onofrio Guarracino of Naples, 1668
- A beautifully-preserved square piano by Adam Beyer, London, 1777
- A handsome late 18th-century English chamber organ, c.1790, possibly by Robert Gray

These rare and historically significant keyboards are an important addition to the Horniman's internationally renowned musical instrument collection and will go on permanent public display in its Music Gallery from mid-2019. They will also provide valuable research opportunities and, as working examples of their type, will offer an exciting opportunity for the Horniman to expand its live performance programme.

These events will build on the Horniman's successful Hear It Live! programme, which currently features monthly performances on its 1772 Kirckman Harpsichord. They will also serve as an ongoing recognition and celebration of the Finchcocks legacy of preserving historic instruments and promoting their responsible use for enjoyment and education.

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Mimi Waitzman, Deputy Keeper of Musical Instruments at the Horniman says: "These important acquisitions will enable the Horniman to preserve and perpetuate in some measure the unique Finchcocks spirit and experience. Through these keyboard instruments, used in a regulated and sustainable way, our live music offer will be enormously expanded, and the range and diversity of scholars, musicians and audiences with whom we can connect will be significantly widened. We are extremely grateful to the HLF for their support, not only for the acquisitions themselves, but also for enabling the conservation and research that will culminate in bringing new sounds and new stories to our Music Gallery for the benefit and enjoyment of all."

Stuart Hobley, Head of HLF London, said: "These beautiful and historic instruments will be a wonderful addition to the Horniman's already world-famous collection of musical instruments. This project offers a great opportunity to preserve and celebrate the unique spirit of Finchcocks Musical Museum, and we are delighted to be able to support it".

Further information

The Horniman's current monthly Hear It Live! recitals are performed in the Music Gallery on the last Tuesday of each month. Please see further details at on the Horniman website. Entry to Hear It Live! and to the Music Gallery is free.