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Arnold Dolmetsch, the Rebab, and the Revival of the Rebec

The early music pioneer Arnold Dolmetsch (1858–1940), his wife Mabel (1874–1963), their children, students and friends played a key role in the revival of the rebec. They also had an interest in the rebab. Arnold and his family might have first encountered the rebab through their friend Marie-Thérèse de Lens (1888–1948), who moved to Morocco during World War I. She visited England in 1920 and performed on the rebab at a Dolmetsch family concert. The Dolmetsches visited her in Meknes in 1929. Mabel observed rebab performances there and later wrote about them to Henry George Farmer (1882–1965) and Virginia Randolph Harrison (1901–1991), discussing the rebab's relationship with the rebec. Arnold began to build rebecs in 1928; an audiovisual recording of him playing one survives from that year. He and his family performed on the instrument in the Haslemere Festival. Arnold searched for repertoire that would suit its historical context and timbre; his decisions were sometimes described as anachronistic. In 1934, Arnold constructed tenor rebecs to play arrangements of music by Pérotin (fl. ca 1200). This chapter examines the Dolmetsches' engagement with the rebab and their contribution to the revival of the rebec.

Arnold Dolmetsch (1858–1940) needs little introduction to any scholar studying the history of the early music revival.[1] Born in Le Mans, France, to a Swiss father and French mother, Dolmetsch studied in Brussels and London, then lived and worked in the United States, Britain and France. In late 1917 he settled in Haslemere, a small town in Surrey that became the base for the rest of his career. There he showcased many new discoveries and established the Dolmetsch workshop.[2] In 1925 he founded the Haslemere Festival, an annual event at which he presented performances of new repertoire and resuscitated instruments. Devoted specifically to

I am grateful to Thilo Hirsch and the organisers of the conference "Skin-Covered Bowed String Instruments of the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance and their Non-European Relatives", held at the Bern Academy of the Arts (HKB) on 28–30 April 2023, for an opportunity to present this work. I thank the Dolmetsch family for permission to reproduce archival materials from the Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection (Cambridge University Library); Rodrigo de Zayas and Anne de Zayas for permission to quote from letters in the Zayas Archive, Seville; Jean-François Berar for permission to quote from letters by Marie-Thérèse de Lens; and the Estate of George Percy Grainger for permission to reproduce archival materials held in the Grainger Museum, the University of Melbourne. I am grateful to Cyrille Gerstenhaber and Jean-Christophe Frisch for their help in the interpretation of some early twentieth-century handwriting. I thank Anna Pensaert and the staff of Cambridge University Library, and the President and Fellows of Clare Hall, Cambridge, for their support of this work.

1 For biographical information see DolmetschM 1957; Campbell 1975; Haskell 1988, pp. 26–43; Campbell 2001. Arnold Dolmetsch's account of his family history and his own life can be found in DolmetschA 1930b.

2 The Dolmetsch family, together with their circle of students and friends, also performed concerts in many other locations, in the United Kingdom and abroad. Despite a hiatus in musical-instrument production during the Second World War, the workshop produced countless instruments that were exported around the world. See Stuart 1951.

the interpretation of early music according to emerging and evolving research on historical instruments and performance practices, the Haslemere Festival may have been the first of its kind; it quickly gained international renown and was reported on widely.

Within these contexts and others, Arnold Dolmetsch, his family, and his circle of students, colleagues and friends made prominent contributions to the revival of the making and playing of (now) mainstream instruments such as the clavichord, harpsichord, lute, viola da gamba, and especially the recorder. Their activities have been broadly recognised in studies on the historical performance practice movement. What is perhaps less well known today, however, is Arnold's engagement with instruments such as the clarsach (Celtic harp), the crwth, the vihuela and the rebec (see some of these in Fig. 1).[3] The present chapter focuses on the last of these instruments, which Arnold began to build and play from 1928. The Dolmetsches and their colleagues made rebecs with three and also four strings; they constructed pear-shaped varieties with round backs and, moreover, began to produce trapezoidal-shaped instruments with flat backs, in a variety of sizes.[4] A number of Arnold's rebecs survive; for example, a four-string instrument from 1934 is held in the Horniman Museum (inventory number M44-1983).[5] Members of his family were involved in this project; in particular, his eldest child Cécile Dolmetsch (1904–1997) became noted for performing on the instrument, from its premiere in the late 1920s onwards.[6] A photograph in the Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection (Cambridge University Library), with "Oct. 1933" written in pencil on the reverse, shows Nathalie Dolmetsch (1905–1989) playing the rebec, accompanied by her brother Carl Dolmetsch (1911–1997) on a small keyboard instrument, which bears the date 1932 (Fig. 2).[7]

In what follows I will trace the history of the rebec's revival from the late 1920s until Arnold's death in 1940, with some reference to correspondence by Mabel Dolmetsch née Johnston (1874–1963) after the Second World War. To provide relevant context for this phenomenon, it is also essential to consider the Dolmetsches' awareness of and interest in the rebab,[8] which they saw played in both England and Morocco. Subsequently, I will examine the revival of the rebec and questions about its timbre that emerge from archival sources, as well as discussing contemporaneous publications that demonstrate the critical reception of performances on it. Finally, I will briefly survey the kinds of repertoire played in the rebec's rebirth and explore how different sizes were constructed for the instrumental performance of music by Pérotin (fl. ca 1200). For this work I draw on materials in the Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection, the University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections, the Zayas Archive in Seville, and a variety of published sources from the twentieth century.[9]

3 For the sake of clarity and brevity I frequently refer to members of the Dolmetsch family by their given names, after first introducing them in full.

4 More research needs to be undertaken on the making of the trapezoidal form; it is not dissimilar to the violin designs of Félix Savart (ca 1819).

5 In the early 1960s they were still being produced in the workshop; see Ward 1961, photograph at p. 25.

6 See photographs of Cécile Dolmetsch playing a rebec at Dolmetsch n.d. and Pickow n.d. Cécile also contributed to the making of rebecs. In 1937 a popular periodical published a photograph of her varnishing a rebec. See *Bystander* 1937, p. 19.

7 The latter matches what is described as a "small virginal or octavina (Compass 4 Octaves, 4 ft. Tone)" and is depicted in DolmetschA 1930a, p. 9. The pairing of these two instruments is a historical choice that is plausible in fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century contexts.

8 For the research project at the HKB, Thilo Hirsch decided to use the generic name "rabab" for European club-shaped skin-covered bowed string instruments, based on the transliteration of the Arabic name of the instrument *rabāb.* In Morocco the latter is approximately pronounced "rebab", and this is also the way that the term was written by Marie-Thérèse de Lens, Arnold Dolmetsch, Mabel Dolmetsch, and others in their circle. To match the sources produced by them, I have used the spelling "rebab" in this chapter.

9 For an overview of sources relating to the Dolmetsch Circle, see Irving 2023. The story of the rebec's continued

Fig. 1 Arnold Dolmetsch posing with (clockwise from top) a clarsach, crwth, rebec, tenor rebec, and a small virginal or octavina. Cambridge University Library, Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection, Ms. Add. 10371/C: Photographs and family documentation, Dolmetsch Photographs I–VI, Dolmetsch Photographs II, No. 92 (Photographer of source: Amélie Deblauwe/Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library and the Dolmetsch Family).

Fig. 2 Nathalie Dolmetsch playing rebec, accompanied by her brother Carl Dolmetsch on a small virginal or octavina. Cambridge University Library, Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection, Ms. Add. 10371/C: Photographs and family documentation, Dolmetsch Photographs I–VI, Dolmetsch Photographs II, No. 115 (Photographer of source: Amélie Deblauwe/Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library and the Dolmetsch Family).

First, however, it is useful to reflect on historiography relating to the Dolmetsches' revival of the rebec. In literature by members of the family, or about them, this instrument is mentioned only occasionally, since it was overshadowed by the revival of others (such as the viol, lute and recorder). Surprisingly, Arnold himself does not discuss the instrument in an autobiographi-

Fig. 3 Photograph of rebec and bow in DolmetschA 1930a, p. 15 (Photographer of source: Amélie Deblauwe/Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library and the Dolmetsch Family)

proliferation and performance by Mabel, Cécile, and Carl in the second half of the twentieth century is another topic relevant to this discussion, but it awaits further research.

cal account of his career, dated 18 December 1929, despite his recent commencement of work on it.[10] Nevertheless, one of the plates at the end of the booklet containing this text – which functioned as a sale catalogue, with blank spaces for the insertion by hand of current prices – does include a photograph of a rebec and bow (Fig. 3).[11]

Carl Dolmetsch, the youngest son of Arnold and Mabel, performed on the instrument in his concerts and tours, and mentioned the rebec in at least two publications.[12] In 1945, Carl reflected on the workshop's output:

> Rebecs of various sizes were produced. Their reedy incisive tone explains their ancient popularity for playing dance music. These instruments, *true* ancestors of the violin, have three or four strings, thicker than those of the violin, and like them, tuned in fifths. The soundboard is flat, there is no soundpost, and the tone is more like that of an oboe than a stringed instrument. The small rebec is held up against the shoulder, not under the chin; the bow is held in the same manner as a violin bow. The larger rebecs are held and bowed like viols.[13]

Carl's comments, particularly those about timbre, are echoed in other discussions of the instrument in Dolmetsch historiography. Mabel, in her 1957 book *Personal Recollections of Arnold Dolmetsch,* elaborates further and describes how Arnold began to make the instrument following his long-awaited production of violins, late in his career:

> The violins were followed by their ancestral prototypes, the rebecs, of which the first to be made were spoon-shaped trebles. Their characteristic tone might well be mistaken in the open air for that of the chanter of a bagpipe, so surprising is their carrying power. The tenor and bass rebecs, which followed a year or two later, were made with flat backs, resembling the type in use among Central European folk dancers.[14]

Rebecs are mentioned a few times, usually in passing, in Margaret Campbell's 1975 biography of Dolmetsch.[15] In 1987, Carl wrote more extensively about the rebec in a publication that was based on a conference paper of a few years earlier. Here he differentiates the "earlier Moorish form" from "the European type", in terms of the materials used for their soundboards: parchment and wood respectively. He also comments that "traditionally rebecs normally have three strings, tuned in fifths, but some modern Moorish and Balkan descendants have been reduced to two and even just one string."[16] His allusion to organological descent becomes relevant to what we can discover about Arnold Dolmetsch's approach to the rebec, and particularly his knowledge of a related instrument: the rebab.

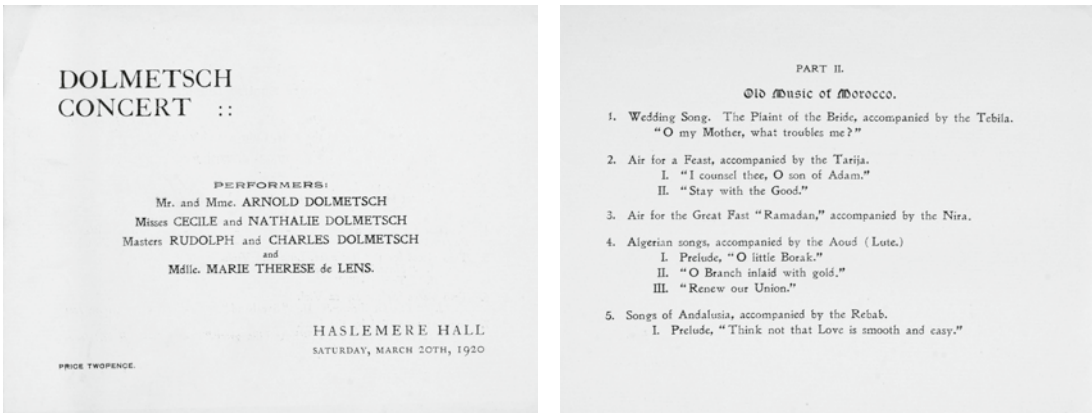
The rebab and its relationship with the rebec

One of the Dolmetsch family's friends and collaborators was Marie-Thérèse de Lens (1888–1948), a French woman whom they had met in the 1910s.[17] During the First World War she moved to Morocco; there she studied local cultural practices and music, and published two

10 See DolmetschA 1930b.
11 See DolmetschA 1930a, p. 15.
12 DolmetschC 1987, p. 5. A recording of Carl playing the rebec, within an ensemble accompanying the song "Je ne prise point tels baisiers", set by Gilles Binchois (ca 1400–1460), is on the LP record Haslemere 1974.
13 DolmetschC 1945, p. 41.
14 DolmetschM 1957, p. 150. On Arnold's making a violin relatively late in his career, see Campbell 1975, p. 224.
15 See ibid., pp. 258f., 262, 274, and 299.
16 DolmetschC 1987, p. 5.
17 Campbell 1975, p. 185; DolmetschM 1957, p. 95.

articles on these themes.[18] In a letter of 13 October 1916 to Arnold, she writes about musical instruments that she saw and heard around her, connecting them to older types from western Europe: "There also exists the 'rebab' which strangely resembles the 'rebec' of old times. Wouldn't they have a common origin[?]"[19] In another letter of June 1919 she notes: "With the assistance of my brother-in-law who directs municipal affairs, I am going to open a school of music with the aim of conserving old traditions, to promote musical taste and to combat the deplorable introduction of the violin."[20] Her aim – although it could be seen in line with certain colonialist attitudes of the time – was clearly to 'defend' Moroccan music from the introduction of instruments from western Europe. In a published article of 1920 (dated 10 June), she comments furthermore that "the resemblance of the instruments is not contested: the rebecs, lutes and tambourines used by our trouvères and troubadours are well the same as the 'rebabs', the 'uds' and the 'tars' that one encounters in the hands of the 'muallimi' [teachers] of Fez or of Marrakech."[21] Later in the article, she asserts: "The *Rebab* is the ancestor of our old Rebec."[22] She goes on to designate the rebab as "the king of instruments" and states that "the Arabs love to decorate it richly"; she provides a detailed description for the reader of a two-string example, notates its tuning, and publishes a photograph of it.[23]

De Lens is an early example in the twentieth century of a scholar-practitioner from western Europe who engaged directly with the rebab, studying and writing about the instrument and its practice *in situ*. She also performed on it outside Morocco. When de Lens visited the Dolmetsches in Haslemere that same year, they presented a three-part concert together in which she offered the middle bracket of music, with the title: "Old Music of Morocco" (Fig. 4). She sang a


DOLMETSCH
CONCERT ::

PERFORMERS:
Mr. and Mme. ARNOLD DOLMETSCH
Misses CECILE and NATHALIE DOLMETSCH
Masters RUDOLPH and CHARLES DOLMETSCH
and
Mdlle. MARIE THERESE de LENS.

HASLEMERE HALL
SATURDAY, MARCH 20TH, 1920

PRICE TWOPENCE.

PART II.

Old Music of Morocco.

1. Wedding Song. The Plaint of the Bride, accompanied by the Tebila.
"O my Mother, what troubles me?"
2. Air for a Feast, accompanied by the Tarija.
I. "I counsel thee, O son of Adam."
II. "Stay with the Good."
3. Air for the Great Fast "Ramadan," accompanied by the Nira.
4. Algerian songs, accompanied by the Aoud (Lute.)
I. Prelude, "O little Borak."
II. "O Branch inlaid with gold."
III. "Renew our Union."
5. Songs of Andalusia, accompanied by the Rebab.
I. Prelude, "Think not that Love is smooth and easy."

Fig. 4 Cover and extract from the programme of "Dolmetsch Concert", Haslemere Hall, 20 March 1920. Cambridge University Library, Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection, MS Add.10371/I: Concert programmes, Programmes 1920–1939 (Photographer of source: Amélie Deblauwe/Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library and the Dolmetsch Family).

18 De Lens 1920; 1924.

19 "Il existe aussi le 'rebab' qui ressemble étrangement au 'rebec' des temps anciens. N'y aurait il pas une origine commune[?]" (De Lens 1916). Thanks to Jean-François Berar for permission to quote from this correspondence.

20 "Je vais avec l'aide de mon beau frère qui dirige les affaires municipales, ouvrir une école de musique afin de conserver les vieilles traditions, propager le goût de la musique et combattre l'introduction deplorable [sic] du violon." (De Lens 1919).

21 "La ressemblance des instruments ne fait […] pas de contestation: les Rebecs, les Luths et les Tambourins employés par nos Trouvères et Troubadours, sont bien les mêmes que les 'Rebabs', les 'Aouds' et les 'Tars' que l'on rencontre dans les mains des 'mouallemine' [sic] de Fès ou de Marrakech" (De Lens 1920, p. 138).

22 "Le *Rebab* est l'ancêtre de notre vieux Rebec." (Ibid., p. 150).

23 "Considéré à juste titre comme le roi des instruments, les arabes aiment à le décorer richement." (Ibid.) For the description and photograph see ibid., pp. 150f.

range of repertoire, accompanying herself on four different instruments; for 'Songs of Andalusia' she played the rebab.[24] This performance – or perhaps another similar event the same year – was reviewed by the poet and critic Ezra Pound (1885–1972), writing under the pseudonym William Atheling, although his text focuses on her singing and does not mention instruments.[25]

In 1929, the Dolmetsch family in turn visited de Lens in Meknès.[26] According to Marco Pallis (1895–1989), a prominent student and financial backer of Dolmetsch, it was thanks to de Lens's hosting their visit that the Dolmetsches had access to musical environments usually out of bounds to outsiders:

> [de Lens] ran a centre for local arts and crafts. She was also interested in music, playing the bass viol as well as a number of Moorish instruments such as the rebab, which is bowed rather like a viol and to which she also sang folk-songs belonging to the region. This lady occupied a lovely old house in the Arab quarter of the town where the Dolmetsch family stayed and from where they went out to visit, in her company, Moorish homes which normally would remain closed to Europeans and non-Muslims.[27]

During these visits the Dolmetsches exchanged performances of music and dance with local musicians.[28] Mabel made illustrations of the encounters; one depicts a gathering of women musicians (Fig. 5), with a rebab hanging on the wall, and another a group of male musicians (Fig. 6), one of whom plays a rebab.[29] In her vivid description of events depicted in the latter, published in 1931, she wrote:

> In their midst sits the leader, a blind man whose face is lit with an inward joy. His skill on the Arab lute, or "'Ud" [sic] and the two-stringed rebec called "Rebab", made him the favourite court musician of a former Sultan. […] [To his far left] sits another of the dark-skinned men […]: he plays the rebab and lends his voice to the choruses.[30]

The visit to Morocco had a profound impact on Mabel, and she later discussed memories of the experience "with delight".[31] Mabel's extant letters to the renowned Arabist and musicologist Henry George Farmer (1882–1965) reveal additional details regarding the intellectual and cultural contexts that underpinned the Dolmetsches' revival of the rebec. She noted the impact of the European violin on local traditions in Morocco, and also commented on confluences between the rebab and the rebec. In a letter of 22 January 1930, Mabel wrote: "The blind man was a musician of a former sultan, & played the lute & rebab, & also an ordinary violin, with three thickish strings tuned very low & with the bow stiffened to form an arc [here she adds a diagram of its shape], although it was actually a European bow."[32] On 20 April, Mabel wrote again to Farmer asking for information about his forthcoming book *Historical Facts for the Arabian Musical Influence* and described an instrument in possession of de Lens: "One […] is a curious instrument which they call locally the 'gougui.' It is in effect a tenor ~~rebab~~ rebec [she crossed out 'rebab' and wrote 'rebec' above], but with a more slender neck than the ordinary

24 Haslemere 1920.
25 Atheling 1920.
26 See DolmetschM 1957, pp. 143–147; Campbell 1975, pp. 234f.
27 Pallis 1974, p. 58.
28 See DolmetschA 1931; DolmetschM 1931a.
29 I reproduce the original drawings in Figs. 5 and 6; these illustrations were published in ibid., plates I and II, between pp. 14 and 15.
30 Ibid., pp. 12f.
31 See Pallis 1974, p. 58.
32 DolmetschM 1930a.

Fig. 5 Mabel Dolmetsch, Group of female musicians in Meknès, Morocco (ca 1929), drawing. Cambridge University Library, Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection, MS Add.10371/C: Photographs and family documentation, Mabel Dolmetsch writings, drawings and designs (Photographer of source: Amélie Deblauwe/Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library and the Dolmetsch Family).

Fig. 6 Mabel Dolmetsch, Group of male musicians in Meknès, Morocco, (ca 1929), drawing. Cambridge University Library, Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection, MS Add.10371/C: Photographs and family documentation, Mabel Dolmetsch writings, drawings and designs (Photographer of source: Amélie Deblauwe/Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library and the Dolmetsch Family).

'rebab', & with a scroll head and <u>four</u> strings."[33] Here she conceptually conflates the rebec and rebab, assuming a common origin.

In a letter of 30 December 1930, Mabel thanked Farmer for sending a book, although she did not state its title. She elaborated on the instrument she had described in the previous letter:

> Your instrument illustrating an Arab lute much resembles an ancient instrument which our friend Mad.[elle] de Lens found in Morocco. It was there called the "gougui" and she understood from her informant that it was played with the bow. The arched bridge would seem to indicate this. It had four strings tuned in fifths and in general form much resembled the pear-shaped "gumbri". It appeared to be a form of tenor rebec, with separate neck (not hollow). The sound board was half wood and half skin.[34]

Mabel's description of the "gougui" is intriguing, and sounds like it was another type of rebab; an instrument of this name does not appear to be mentioned in de Lens's article of 1920. Regarding the book sent to Mabel by Farmer in December 1930, it seems possible that this was a copy of *Historical Facts,* about which she had asked the previous April; this work certainly discusses the relationship of the rebab and rebec, especially in terms of the etymology of its name.[35] However, *Historical Facts* includes no illustrations. This circumstance suggests that it may alternatively have been *A History of Arabian Music to the XIIIth Century* (London: Luzac & Co., 1929), which does; a copy survives in the Dolmetsch collection.[36]

33 DolmetschM 1930b. This letter is also transcribed and discussed in Katz 2015, p. 72. For Farmer's book see Farmer 1930a.

34 She continues: "I am sending you as a new year greeting an enlarged print of a pencil sketch which I made as a memento of our musical parties in Morocco." (DolmetschM 1930c).

35 See Farmer 1930a, pp. 143f.

36 It is catalogued as III C I in Supper 1967, p. 84, and survives in the Cambridge University Library (cataloguing of the books in the Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection is currently in progress). It is also worth noting that in the same year of 1930 Farmer published his article "The Origin of the Arabian Lute and Rebec" (Farmer 1930b). Arnold and Mabel may have been aware of this – given that offprints of other articles by Farmer, some inscribed

In a subsequent letter to Farmer, dated 5 February 1931, Mabel echoed de Lens in discussing the introduction of the violin into traditional practices in Morocco, writing:

> The violin is gaining rapidly in Morocco in place of the rebab, but they treat it very much like a rebab. There are only three strings used: – these are very thick & are tuned down about a third below our pitch. They hold the instrument downwards on the knee & play with a stiffly arched bow. In their ornamentation they use intermediate intervals.[37]

References to the rebab during Arnold's lifetime appear to trail off from this point in the extant archival materials, but in early 1936 Arnold notes in his diary that he bought one at an auction in London.[38] This instrument may be the object hanging on the left wall that is faintly visible in a photograph of the "Jesses" music room published in *The Musical Times* in 1951.[39]

After Arnold's death, Mabel continued correspondence with Virginia Randolph Harrison (1901–1991), a prominent patron of music and the arts, for whose husband (Marius de Zayas, 1880–1961) Arnold had made a vihuela in the late 1930s.[40] In a letter to Harrison (whom she addresses as "Madame de Zayas") on 22 January 1945, Mabel recalled some of the performances she had seen in Morocco, detailing again how the violin could stand in for the rebab:

> In Morrocco [sic] we heard a woman of the kind who perform in public (they are called the Shikhat) singing in the principal public garden of Meknès. She was accompanied by a man with a violin thickly strung & tuned at a low pitch which he played downwards & made to sound much like a rebab. He started with a florid prelude, at the close of which he played a drone upon which the Shikha [sic] took up the theme declaiming it in recitative fashion with much ornamentation, all in the chest voice. In between her stanzas, while she rested, the stringed instrument played ritornelles finally landing on the drone, when her turn came round.

She also mentioned both rebab and rebec:

> In the versified treatises on instruments (1528–1545) by Martin Agricola he speaks of three kinds of geigen, the grosse or Welsche Geigen, the Polische Geigen and the kleine dreiseitigen Handgeiglein (rebecs). The Grossen Geigen are tuned in fourths & a third like we tune the viols & guitars now.

Mabel was probably referring here to an 1896 edition of works by Martin Agricola that was held in the Dolmetsch Library.[41] She goes on to notate the tuning for descant, tenor, and bass rebecs, then continues:

> All this seems like a wide digression; but it seems to separate definitely the Viols as European instruments from the rebecs and Polish fiddles of oriental provenance with their tuning in fifths, their absence of fingerboards & frets, & their more muffled tone in consequence, similar to the technique of the Arab rebab.[42]

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with a dedication to Mabel, are extant in the collection – but evidence of that specific work being in their possession is yet to be located. A listing of offprints of other articles by Farmer sent to the Dolmetsches, some dedicated to Mabel, is in Supper 1967, pp. 83f.

37 DolmetschM 1931b. Also quoted in Katz 2015, p. 73.

38 "P. & S. [Puttick and Simpson, auctioneers] vu les instruments et décidé d'acheter Luth, Rebab et tambour." (DolmetschA *Diary*, 9 January 1936).

39 Two sitars (on the wall) and various tambourines (in the shelving) are also visible. See the photograph in Stuart 1951, p. 299.

40 See DolmetschM 1957, pp. 155f.; Griffiths 2013, p. 131.

41 Agricola 1896. This copy survives in the Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection at Cambridge University Library. It is listed in Supper 1967, p. 22.

42 DolmetschM 1945.

She mentions again the "Gugui" [sic] which she saw in Morocco, stating that it had "a round rebec body[,] a longish neck, curved bridge tuned in fifths with four strings & played with a bow."[43]

It seems that Harrison was interested in buying rebecs, for Mabel writes on 21 September 1946: "We have rebecs but I am not sure if there is a roundbacked one, or only the flat European type. I will see when I get home."[44] On 7 November she followed up, commenting: "We have now been able to find a rebec of the kind you wanted, that is with the round back as you saw it pictured in one of our former catalogues."[45] Her comments suggest that fewer round-backed rebecs were available from the Dolmetsch workshop at this time. Further investigation may reveal more about the post-war scale of production of flat-backed rebecs as distinct from round-backed types, and the role of the de Zayas family and others in promoting the Dolmetsches' continued output of this instrument in its various forms.

Reviving the rebec

Arnold Dolmetsch was not the first to build a rebec based on old models, although it seems that he and his circle may have been the first to perform extensively on it. Harry Haskell, in his history of the early music revival, notes that Léon Pillaut (1833–1903), the curator of musical instruments at the Paris Conservatoire, presented a reconstruction of a rebec for display at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris; however, this was only for visual display and was not played, according to a contemporaneous description by Julien Tiersot (1857–1936).[46] In the 1890s Auguste Tolbecque (1830–1919) also reconstructed the rebec.[47] He described the instrument's sound as "dry and hard", and stated that it was used by "village fiddlers".[48] Dolmetsch was certainly aware of the rebec early in his career, and in an article of 1904 for *The Connoisseur* magazine he wrote: "The three-stringed Rebec, prototype of the latter, dry and sharp, was best for popular tunes and dances."[49] His book of 1915, *The Interpretation of the Music of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries Revealed by Contemporary Evidence,* refers to an English painting (now dated to ca 1596) in the National Portrait Gallery that depicts a broken consort, with one of the players using, according to Arnold, "a violin or rebec".[50]

Arnold had access to a range of literature about the rebec. Many items of his library survive in the Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection at Cambridge University Library, and although the catalogue of this collection was made by Uta Supper in 1967, a significant number of the printed works were clearly used by Arnold during his lifetime, since they contain his name, annotations, or inserts. The catalogue lists the second edition (1911) of the book *Old English Instruments of Music. Their History and Character* by Francis William Galpin (1858–1945). Although the Dolmetsches' copy of it has not yet been located, this publication includes discussion and

43 Ibid.

44 DolmetschM 1946a.

45 DolmetschM 1946b.

46 See Haskell 1988, p. 44; Tiersot 1889, p. 8. The instrument is described by Tiersot as "un rebec à cinq cordes, dont quatre sont accordées à l'unisson de deux en deux, la cinquième isolée tenant probablement lieu de *bourdon*" (ibid.). His wording suggests a rebec with two string choirs and a single string. Thanks to Thilo Hirsch for this observation.

47 See a photograph of a reconstructed rebec in Tolbecque 1898, p. 5.

48 "Le son du rebec est sec et dur; il servait aux ménétriers." Ibid., p. 6.

49 DolmetschA 1904, p. 134.

50 DolmetschA 1915, p. 463. The painting *Sir Henry Unton* can be seen at the National Portrait Gallery (Scarlett n.d.). As the instrument has clearly indented ribs and a separate neck, today it would be described more likely as a violin.

photographs of rebec iconography. Galpin states that the rebec "first appears in Europe under the name *Lyra*, which is still given to it in Greece, by which route it probably entered our continent." He reproduces the iconography of the instrument from three sources: an eleventh-century illustration held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; a photograph of a twelfth-century Norman carving from Canterbury Cathedral; and a late twelfth-century psalter in the University of Glasgow Library. In commenting on the rebec's form – "pear-shaped in outline with a short neck and a sound-box which is convex or rounded at the back" – Galpin also includes photographs of a contemporaneous Greek rebec (or lyra) and an eighteenth-century Italian rebec, writing that "the specimen from modern Greece closely resembles the mediæval instrument, and the Italian Rebec represents the later form."[51]

In 1928, the musicologist Gerald Ravenscourt Hayes (1889–1955) began publishing a projected five-volume work, *Musical Instruments and Their Music, 1500–1750,* although only the first two volumes were issued.[52] In the first, Hayes noted that Dolmetsch "examined and revised all my manuscript before publication".[53] The second volume, entitled *The Viols, and Other Bowed Instruments* and published in 1930, devotes a section to "The Strepitant Rebec".[54] If Hayes's comment about Dolmetsch revising the manuscript of the first volume holds true for the subsequent one – certainly, Dolmetsch contributed the introduction to the second volume, and page proofs of almost the whole book (with pencil annotations that are probably by Arnold) survive in the Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection – then Hayes's text could be considered to correspond to Arnold's contemporaneous perspectives on the rebec, or at least to intersect with them.[55] Although he does not mention Dolmetsch by name, Hayes refers to him implicitly when mentioning the making of "facsimiles" of the instrument. He writes:

> In an early form, the instrument was used till recent years in Greece and the adjacent islands, and examples of this, compared with eighteenth-century Italian rebecs and pictorial records, have enabled facsimiles of the sixteenth-century rebec to be made, with a tone that cannot be far from the original. This tone is surprising and resembles neither viol nor violin, but has a snarling brilliance more akin to the chanter of a bagpipes; this powerful and penetrating voice is a fit fellow to its unbiblical companions, the serpent and the shawm, in music for dances, for example, which must stand out in clear-cut distinctness above other sounds.[56]

It is striking to note Hayes's mention of both Greek and Italian models, which echoes Galpin's comments, and provides further weight to the possibility that Dolmetsch may have drawn from pictorial examples in Galpin's book. The discussion of timbre here suggests a sense of excitement and discovery – "the tone is surprising" – and the instinctive relegation of the instrument by its revivers to music for dancing.

The rebec was first listed in the programme of the Haslemere Festival in 1928, which that year took place from 20 August to 1 September.[57] The front matter of the programme includes

51 Galpin 1911, p. 80, and – respectively – plate XXI (facing p. 110) and plate XX (facing p. 102). Although it is not clear when that book was acquired, it is likely that Arnold Dolmetsch was familiar with it.

52 On the meeting of Dolmetsch and Hayes see Campbell 1975, p. 220.

53 Hayes 1928, p. vii.

54 Hayes 1930, pp. 155–159; see also pp. 175–178 on "the ancestors" of the violin.

55 The bound page proofs for the second volume are in the Cambridge University Library, Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection, and are given the shelfmark III C 10, 1.2 in Supper 1967, p. 109.

56 Hayes 1930, pp. 158f.

57 In 1940, in an obituary of Arnold Dolmetsch, William McNaught mistakenly dated the rebec's revival to 1931: "As it [the rebec] had no recorded place in high-class music Dolmetsch had to provide it with duties; its début was made in three pieces by Anthony Holborne 'for viols, violins, or other musicall [sic] wind instruments,'

the rebec in a list headed "Instruments to be employed will include".[58] Advertising began several months earlier, and a number of stories appeared in the press to publicise the event. On 11 June 1928, the *Newcastle Daily Journal* reported:

> Among new features is the rebec which will be employed in certain dances. It has only recently been revived by Mr Dolmetsch, the needful research upon it having been done this year. Its tone is most striking and it sems [sic] a very practical instrument for dancing to, a Correspondent writes.[59]

On 1 July 1928, a short notice in *The Musical Times* announced the programme of the Haslemere Festival and stated: "The Rebec will be used in some of the dances, Mr. Dolmetsch having devoted special study to the instrument during the past year."[60] As the festival approached, further details were announced, further emphasising the connection of the rebec with dancing. *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post* stated on 18 August: "The rebec is to be revived by Mr. Dolmetsch when the festival opens on Monday. Its tone is said to be most striking, and admirable to dance."[61] The *Daily Herald* also reported on 21 August: "An instrument new to the Haslemere festival is the rebec, to be used in the dances on Saturday for the first time in modern years. It was made in Mr. Dolmetsch's workshop."[62] A newspaper local to Haslemere, *The Surrey Advertiser and County Times,* added on 25 August, under the sub-heading "New Works & A New Instrument":

> A number of works are receiving their first performance in modern times, and another feature in this year's festival is the use for the first time for many years of the rebec – thought to have been an ancient Moorish instrument – to accompany some of the dances.[63]

Audiovisual footage of Dolmetsch's reconstructed rebec survives from the time of this festival, in the Fox Movietone News Collection at the University of South Carolina (Moving Image Research Collections).[64] It contains nine minutes of "outtakes" for a news story, filmed on 31 August 1928, of instrumental music and dancing, by performers in historical costumes. Its content seems to correspond to the final concert of the festival, "Dances and Festive Music", which was scheduled for the following day.[65] The clips begin with a performance by an instrumental ensemble of three recorders, serpent, cello (rather than viol), drum, and octavina, led by Arnold Dolmetsch on the rebec. The group then plays (twice) a piece announced by Arnold as "a Scotch brawl", before the same music accompanies (twice) a group of dancers. Finally, Arnold plays the rebec as a solo melody instrument, accompanied by the octavina, in what seems to be an arrangement of William Byrd's "La Volta" (as reported on the programme; the music matches No. 155 in the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*), to direct and accompany the dance of that name. The video (06:32–07:46) shows a good rhythmic coordination between rebec and dancers in its performance, especially in the latter's leaps. Most remarkable, though, is Arnold's

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which were played at the 1931 festival on recorder, lute, cithren [sic], rebec and two viols." (McNaught 1940, p. 154). This quote is also discussed in Scholes 1947, Vol. 2, p. 777.

58 Haslemere 1928.

59 *NDJ* 1928, p. 8.

60 *MT* 1928, p. 658.

61 *NWBP* 1928, p. 11.

62 *DH* 1928, p. 2.

63 *SACT* 1928, p. 9.

64 FMNC 1928.

65 Haslemere 1928, "Twelfth Concert". It is possible to match some of the repertoire seen and heard here to the festival programme, although not all works have yet been identified.

subsequent rendition of the same piece on the rebec, this time without dancers but accompanied by keyboard and what sounds like a cello plucking the bassline (08:28–09:09). In this clip, the pear-shaped form of the rebec, its short bow with a thick stick, and Arnold's graceful technique are clearly visible. The quality of the recorded sound in this short clip – perhaps because of the close-up positioning of the camera and microphone – gives a reasonable impression of the aural impact that this newly-built instrument may have had on listeners.

Beyond notices in the press about the festival, there are also details in archival and published sources about the rebec revival. The first mention of the rebec in Arnold's own words – in his diaries – dates from 1930, when on 19 January he notes receiving an order for one.[66] On 6 December that year he writes: "started the plan of a rebec"; on 16 December he notes "finished the plan of the rebec with the exception of the rose"; and on 17 December: "designed the rose of the rebecs".[67] On 18 December he records that he ordered gouges to use for the rebecs.[68] On 29 December he noted: "Have had to design a bridge for the rebec. Tried this rebec, which doesn't work"; and on 31 December he wrote: "fixed the bracing and the belly of the rebecs. They need to be redone. The braces have been glued onto humid wood and have bent inwards."[69] Arnold also made notes in his diary about the timbre of the rebec. On 2 January 1931, he wrote: "A new rebec with a thinner soundboard and very reduced braces is strung up. [The] sound [is] very beautiful, vibrant and free. But Leslie [Ward, husband of Cécile and maker in the workshop] having put the fingerboard too high, one cannot judge the strength of the sound."[70] At the celebration on 26 February 1931 for his birthday (which was two days earlier), Arnold wrote: "I gave to Cécile as a gift a beautiful rebec with its case and its bow. She is happy."[71] A few months later, on 19 June, he noted a rebec with strings that were too thin did not sound properly, and changed them.[72]

On a later occasion Arnold commented on rebec bows, regarding their production of sound. In playing the music of Marin Marais (1656–1728) with Mabel, he noted on 19 April 1936 that "her old bow prevented the beauty of the sound and the delicacy of expression that she was obtaining with the rebec bow."[73] Dolmetsch's student Robert Donington (1907–1990) mentioned the recent production of rebecs in a 1932 booklet entitled *The Work and Ideas of Arnold Dolmetsch* (published by the Dolmetsch Foundation), giving further details on the characteristics of their bows: "A number of fine rebecs have recently been finished, together with their bows, which are of the hard type, short, tight, and almost without flexibility."[74] (The types of rebec bows being produced in the Dolmetsch workshops can be seen clearly in Figs. 2 and 3.) It seems that by 1932, the early prototypes of the rebec had evolved into a standard form for reproduction, for Donington continues:

66 DolmetschA *Diary*, 19 January 1930.

67 "Commencé le plan d'un Rebec" (ibid., 6 December 1930); "Fini le plan du Rebec à l'exception de la Rose" (ibid., 16 December 1930); "Dessiné […] la Rose des Rebecs" (ibid., 17 December 1930).

68 "Ecrit à Buck commandant gouges pour creuser les Rebecs" (ibid., 18 December 1930).

69 "[J']Ai dû dessiner un chevalet pour le Rebec. Essayé ce Rebec, qui ne va pas" (ibid., 29 December 1930); "Réglé le barrage et la Table des Rebecs. Ils sont à refaire. Les barres ont été collées sur du bois humide, et ont creusé." (Ibid., 31 December 1930).

70 "Un nouveau Rebec avec Table amincie et Barres très réduites est monté en Cordes. Son très beau, vibrant et libre. Mais Leslie ayant mis la touche beaucoup trop haute, on ne peut pas juger de la force du son." (Ibid., 2 January 1931).

71 "Je fais cadeau à Cécile d'un beau rebec avec sa boîte et son archet. Elle est contente." (Ibid., 26 February 1931).

72 "Mis en état les Rebecs qui ne sonnaient pas, à cause de cordes trop fines." (Ibid., 19 June 1931).

73 "Recouru que son ancien archet empêche la beauté du son et la délicatesse de l'expression qu'elle obtenait avec l'archet de Rebec." (Ibid., 19 April 1936).

74 Donington 1932, p. 15.

> Now that the difficulties of the preliminary research work have been overcome, and the form of the instrument satisfactorily established, the rebecs are not difficult or costly to make: the treble rebecs are considerably smaller in the body than violins; and their extreme portability and their strong, incisive tone might well recommend them to teachers and leaders of folk-dancing.[75]

Donington thus considered the instrument to be established for use in popular practice. In other sources from around this time there also emerged further reflection on the type of music it could be used to play, a point to which we now turn.

Repertoire for the rebec

In 1976, Ronald Pearsall stated: "There was no record of the rebec playing art music, so when he had made one Dolmetsch had to scrabble around for suitable material."[76] In the programme of the 1928 Haslemere Festival, where the instrument was premiered, it is not clear in which pieces the rebec was actually played; however, clues come from reviews of the following year's event. Edmund van der Straeten (1855–1934), writing in *The Strad,* reports that Cécile

> sang a pretty Provençal sixteenth[-]century song, and repeated the previously heard fifteenth[-]century French song, "C'est a ce Jolly Moys de May" with added ritornelles for a rebec which she played herself holding it against the chest as was the custom of the ancient minstrels. It has a thin and nasal tone, and is only of historical interest.[77]

By the description "only of historical interest", van der Straeten appears to dismiss the potential for the revived rebec to play a part in newly living practices. The same author reviewed the 1929 festival for *The Musical Times,* and stated that the song was a repeat of a performance from the previous year's event.[78] Cross-referencing the programme for the 1928 Haslemere Festival, we can see this work listed in the eighth concert (28 August), although it is described as "Song with Lute and Viol". Perhaps the fact that the rebec was played by the singer herself precluded its description among the instruments used by accompanying musicians.

In a review of the 1931 Festival, van der Straeten noted the use of the rebec in five-part broken consorts of 1597 by Antony Holborne (ca 1545–1602), describing the instrument's timbre in negative terms:

> [Three pieces were played] for the somewhat unorthodox combination of "recorder, lute, cithren, rebec, and two viols" and which, in spite of the acid tones of the extraneous rebec, sounded quite nice. Of course there is no literature of the rebec, which was never used in high-class music, but having once been reconstructed it is natural that one should wish to make use of it.[79]

Despite these comments about the historical incongruency of the rebec within the ensemble (and its jarring timbre), the author presumes that its recent revival and current availability is the justification for its inclusion. It seems, then, that novelty overrode other concerns about historical accuracy, although the latter issue returned in observations about other performances in the same festival.

75 Ibid.
76 Pearsall 1976, p. 158.
77 Van der Straeten 1929a, p. 318.
78 Van der Straeten 1929b, p. 933.
79 Van der Straeten 1931, p. 845.

In particular, criticisms arose regarding the incorporation of the rebec into larger ensembles. As van der Straeten commented:

> Interesting features in this year's Festival with regard to the instruments used were the reconstruction of the Band of the famous twenty-four 'violons du Roy' of the French Bourbon Kings […]. The inclusion in their number of two rebecs, however, is historically unjustifiable, and so is the use of that instrument for accompanying a Trouvère's song (tenth concert).[80]

The very last comment appears to refer to the use of the rebec along with two viols to accompany the song "Je ne prise point tels Baysiers" (text by Charles d'Orléans, ca 1450), unless there was another unprogrammed work in the tenth concert.[81] More recent understandings of the rebec suggest, however, that this use does not seem to be "historically unjustifiable", since the rebec was a popular tool of professional minstrels.[82]

Yet the main point of contention for van der Straeten was the inclusion of rebecs in an orchestra modelled after that of late seventeenth-century Versailles. In *The Work and Ideas of Arnold Dolmetsch* (1932), Donington explained the rationale behind this ensemble's formation in the following way:

> With the addition of two rebecs and an extra violone on the occasion of a concert of French music, the Dolmetsch orchestra was able to form a replica of the "twenty-four violins" of Louis XIV's court. It is probably the rebecs that are the nearest relatives of the violins: at any rate, they were unfretted, tuned in fifths, and except in the bass sizes, played violin-wise; and the two seem to have reacted on each other's development. They had not yet separated again even as late as Mersenne. In expressiveness the flexibility and nobility the violin is by far the superior: but in a certain kind of brilliance and incisiveness the rebec surpasses the violin.[83]

The text of this publication includes marginal notes for the reader's ease of reference, and next to this comment about the instruments is written: "The Rebecs: the closest cousins of the violins". One wonders whether members of the Dolmetsch Circle were regarding them as related to the kinds of pochettes used by dancing-masters at the time of Louis XIV.

In any case, the distinctive timbre of the rebec was clearly becoming a notable characteristic – it had already been described by van der Straeten as "thin and nasal" and "acid", as quoted above – and in the following passage Donington elaborated on its sonic characteristics:

> Its tone is of a reedy nature, at once pleasing and penetrating, so that in the orchestra a proportion of one rebec to perhaps three or four violins is all that would be needed to produce an extreme sharpness and heightened tone-colour. A scoring possible where colour, brilliance and power rather than tenderness and nobility are aimed at, is to write for the oboes in unison with the violins; the combination of the rebecs with the violins might give a rather similar but more pronounced effect, while preserving the string characteristics unmixed, and leaving the oboes free for another part.[84]

80 Ibid.

81 A setting of this text, attributed to Gilles Binchois, was recorded in 1973 with Carl Dolmetsch playing the rebec, and released on the LP Haslemere 1974 (side 1, track 5). The sleeve notes to the recording state that "the song was transcribed by Arnold Dolmetsch in 1931"; thus it seems likely that this same setting was performed at the 1931 festival.

82 See Remnant 2001, p. 901.

83 Donington 1932, p. 15.

84 Ibid.

Beside the last passage appears the following marginal note: "Their possibilities in the modern orchestra." From these words one might infer that the Dolmetsch Circle saw the newly revived rebec not as an instrument that was mutually exclusive from the violin, but rather as a tool that could be deployed pragmatically in explorations of orchestral repertoire from the late seventeenth century. Donington's comment that oboes could be "left free for another part" also suggests an openness to experimentation with instrumentation. Regarding the phrase "a scoring possible", one might even speculate that he was hinting that new compositions could be written for it.

Playing Pérotin on rebecs

This issue of timbre was possibly what inspired the construction by Dolmetsch of different sizes of rebecs for the performance of twelfth-century repertoire: in this case the music of Pérotin (fl. ca 1200). In the late twentieth century, the tendency to use different sizes of rebecs together with voices in the performance of late medieval music was critiqued in detail by scholars including Christopher Page, with reference to performances from around the 1960s onwards, such as those by David Munrow (1942–1976) and his group the Early Music Consort of London.[85] However, the origins of this contentious practice in the early music revival can be dated back to the activities of the Dolmetsch Circle. Unless evidence to the contrary emerges, it appears that Arnold Dolmetsch may have been the first luthier of the early music revival to construct families of the rebec in different sizes. Arnold was also among the early interpreters of medieval music in the first few decades of the twentieth century who applied instruments to vocal repertoire. As Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has pointed out, the combination of instruments and voices in medieval music was a hypothesis that had been promoted by Hugo Riemann (1849–1919), and later extended by Pierre Aubry (1874–1910).[86] The latter wrote in 1908 about tenors in thirteenth-century motets as follows: "We can very well imagine that this role would have been entrusted to a string instrument, vielle or rebec: the bow has a keenness and a precision that the singer cannot attain."[87] Evidence of the presence of that particular volume by Aubry in the Dolmetsch Library has not yet emerged, but the family's collection contained other works by that author, and thus one wonders whether Arnold was aware of Aubry's views on this topic.[88] Whatever the case, Dolmetsch certainly contributed to the early twentieth-century controversy over the use of instruments in medieval repertoire.[89]

In an article published in 1934 in *The Consort,* Arnold articulated his position in this debate:

85 He writes: "The bass rebec, for example, a Renaissance instrument, has been a major workhorse in countless modern performances of Machaut and Dufay where, with its large size, round bridge and covered strings, it is ideal for the textless tenors and contratenors lying below the vocal part in pitch. However, many (perhaps most) medieval bowed instruments appear to have been quite small in size; they often had flat bridges and did not use covered strings. It remains uncertain in the present state of our knowledge whether such instruments could ever have been used in the way the bass rebec has been." (Page 1992, p. 28).

86 Leech-Wilkinson 2002, pp. 23 and 35f.

87 "Nous concevons à merveille que ce rôle ait été confié à un instrument à cordes, vièle ou gigue: l'archet a un mordant et une précision à laquelle le chanteur ne peut atteindre." (Aubry 1908, p. 148). Translation from Leech-Wilkinson 2002, p. 36.

88 Supper 1967, p. 27.

89 For a critical overview of this hypothesis see Leech-Wilkinson 2002, pp. 13–87.

> [An] obstacle to the realization of mediæval part music is the idea that it was intended for voices only. A mass of literary and pictorial evidence proves that, on the contrary, instruments took a more important share in its performance than voices. Some is purely instrumental; none is purely vocal, since the vocal music was always backed by instruments.
>
> The revival of mediæval music must be based upon a judicious combination of the proper contemporary musical instruments with voices specially trained for the purpose.[90]

He goes on to critique an article of August 1933 by Jacques Handschin (1886–1955), who wrote about the polyphonic works of Pérotin for two to four parts that are contained in the manuscript Wolfenbüttel 677.[91] Arnold's complex views on the history of vertical harmony, his negative perceptions of some musicological methods, and the content of Handschin's study are broader topics that go beyond the scope of the present discussion, but his engagement with this article appears to have been a catalyst for his application of rebecs to the performance of Pérotin. Commenting that Handschin "does not touch the great four-part pieces", Dolmetsch asserts that "[t]hey are true *fantasies*, comparable to the English fantasies for viols which I have revived. [...] Although much of the music is obviously unsingable, he [Handschin] maintains that it is intended for voices."[92]

After obtaining a facsimile of the Wolfenbüttel manuscript, prompted by its mention in Handschin's article, Dolmetsch began to transcribe some of these four-part works.[93] On playing them through with a viol consort, however, he found that they did not live up to "great expectation" and attributed this lack of success to questions of timbre.[94] On 29 December 1933, Dolmetsch wrote to the Australian-American composer Percy Grainger (1882–1961), reporting on this issue and describing some progress that had been made:

> This music proved extremely difficult to decipher and put together. But, I have done it. It is also quite as difficult to play – more so than any viol consort. We are mastering it. It fascinates us – It sounds like some very profound work of Debussy! ... We play it on Four Tenor Violins. Viols have not the necessary bite. I want 4 Tenor Rebecs. I am going to make them. I sh[d] like to try 4 saxophones…… Clever, refined ones.[95]

He enclosed extracts of his arrangements (Fig. 7). It is unknown whether Dolmetsch attempted to have this music played on saxophones, but his mention of them here seems to emphasise his focus on issues of timbre or articulation, given his mention of the lack of "bite" in the sound of viols.

Less than a month later, Dolmetsch started work on constructing his ideal instruments for these works. On 26 January 1934 he noted: "[I] started and almost finished the plan for the large rebecs to play Perotin."[96] The following day he noted that he had finished his plans and that the making of the instruments had begun.[97] On stringing up the first tenor rebec on 6 February he noted "Complete success."[98] The next day he wrote: "[I] perfected the rebec in changing the

90 DolmetschA 1934, p. 2.
91 Handschin 1933.
92 DolmetschA 1934, p. 5.
93 Ibid., p. 5. For the facsimile see Baxter 1931.
94 DolmetschA 1934, pp. 5f.
95 DolmetschA 1933.
96 "Commencé et presque fini le plan des grands Rebecs pour jouer Perotin." (DolmetschA *Diary*, 26 January 1934).
97 "Fini le plan des Rebecs. On les commence." (Ibid., 27 January 1934).
98 "Mis des cordes sur le 1[er] Tenor Rebec. Succès complet." (Ibid., 6 February 1934).

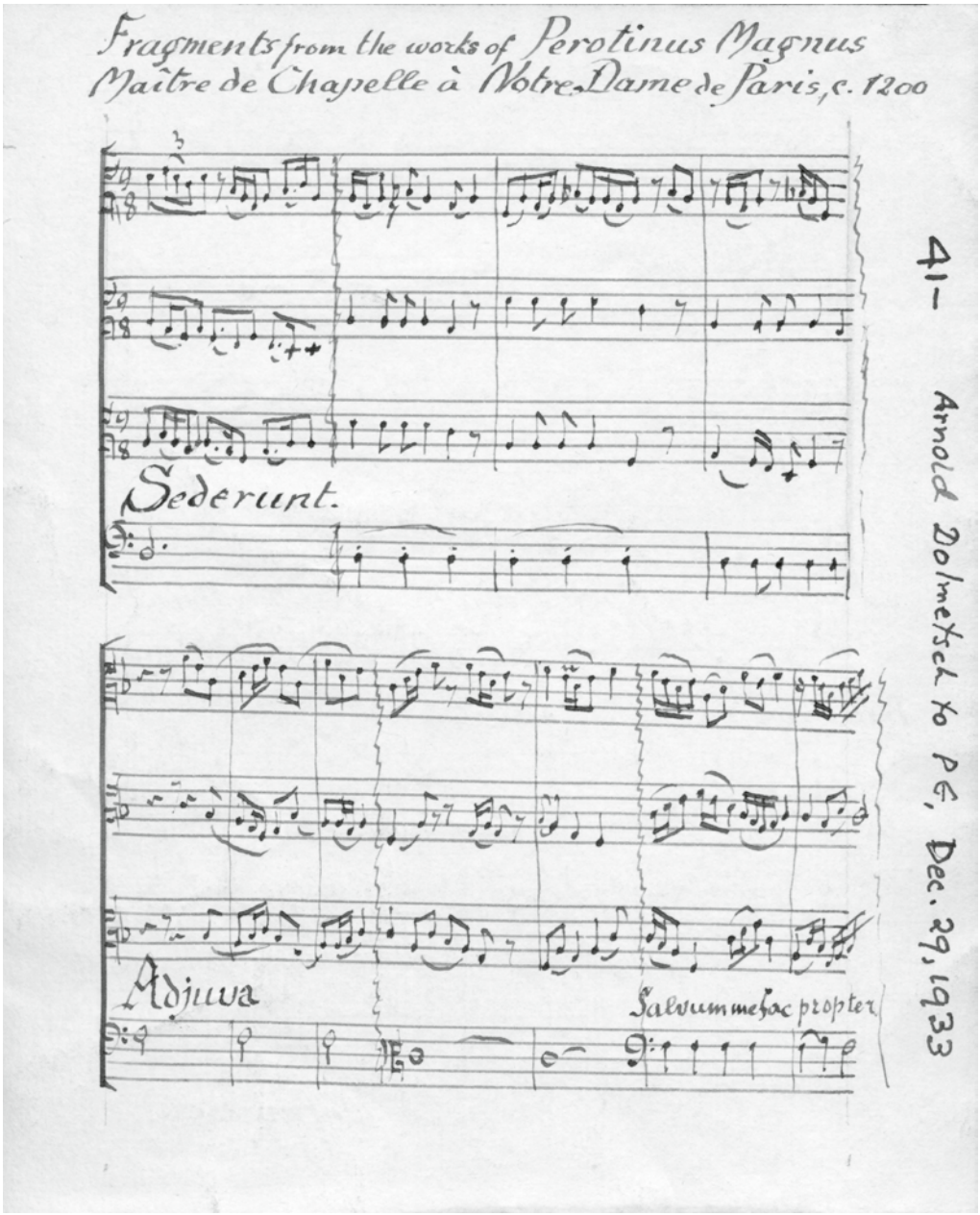

Fig. 7 Arnold Dolmetsch, arrangement of Pérotin's *Sederunt* (excerpt), sent to Percy Grainger in a letter of 29 December 1933 (DolmetschA 1933, reproduced by permission of the Estate of George Percy Grainger and the Dolmetsch family).

position of the bridge. The sound now emerges very easily and is of an extraordinary beauty."[99] In his article of 1934, Arnold wrote:

> The viols we had used at first seemed unsatisfactory; a more robust, pungent tone was needed. I decided that tenor and bass rebecs would be the proper instruments, but whilst these were being made, we used tenor violins, which were useful meanwhile for our studies.[100]

99 "Perfectionné le Rebec en changeant la place du chevalet. Le son maintenant sort très facilement et est d'une beauté extraordinaire." (Ibid., 7 February 1934).

100 DolmetschA 1934, p. 6.

It seems that the unique timbre afforded by his speculative reconstruction of rebecs and experimentation with different sizes contributed to the popularisation of the instrument (and the music of Pérotin), but also somewhat negative reactions by critics. Reviewing the performance on tenor rebecs, Arthur Henry Fox Strangways (1859–1948) – a longtime friend of Dolmetsch and a specialist on Indian music – wrote in *The Observer* on 22 July 1934:

> Dolmetsch, introducing him [Pérotin] (like a wise mother recommending hasty pudding with a little jam to her family), said that we had never heard, and never would hear, anything so complex in our lives. When it came, it was those highly complex harmonics of D minor and F major triads, with a little sweetening in the way of meandering parts. It was on four tenor rebecs, and the sound of them explained why the French like Erard pianofortes.[101]

Fox Strangways's last acerbic comment betrays a certain prejudice – albeit jocular – against the sound of the instruments, suggesting that they inversely demonstrated a French preference for the timbre of piano. A review by Gerald Hayes, published two months later, stated of the same performance: "The music, played on four tenor rebecs, sounded as though its highest pleasure would be given to one actually playing in it."[102] Both reviewers implied a lack of perceived beauty in the sound for contemporary listeners. Nevertheless, Hayes allowed for the enjoyment of the practitioners.

These performances were clearly memorable. Music critic William McNaught (1883–1953), in his 1940 obituary of Dolmetsch, noted: "In 1936 the fantasies by Perotin, which Dolmetsch alone had succeeded in construing, were tried out on four rebecs of different sizes."[103] This reminiscence may refer to a performance of Pérotin's *Viderunt omnes.* The programme for the 1936 Haslemere Festival actually states that they were performed on four tenor rebecs, without men-

Fig. 8 Arnold Dolmetsch and Robert Donington playing rebecs in ca 1936. Cambridge University Library, Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection, Ms. Add. 10371/C: Photographs and family documentation, Dolmetsch Photographs I–VI, Dolmetsch Photographs IV, no. 35 (Photographer of source: Amélie Deblauwe/Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library and the Dolmetsch Family).

101 Fox Strangways 1934, p. 12.
102 Hayes 1934, p. 158.
103 McNaught 1940, p. 154. Also discussed in Scholes 1947, Vol. 2, p. 777.

tioning bass or treble.[104] However, a photograph from around 1936 shows Donington and Arnold playing four-stringed treble rebecs, in trapezoidal form (Fig. 8).[105] In the final years of Arnold Dolmetsch's life, he continued to use the rebec and to programme it for the festival. On 22 June 1936 he notes that he "played the rebec for the dances" (referring to a regular domestic event), and a week later he records the same activity.[106] The programme for the last Haslemere Festival during Arnold's lifetime, that of 1939, includes a performance of Pérotin's *Adjuva,* described as "A Fantasy on the Plain Chant, played on Four Rebecs", with the performers on one treble, two tenor, and one bass rebec listed as members of the Dolmetsch family.[107]

Conclusion

As the evidence presented in this chapter shows, Arnold Dolmetsch was led by a number of circumstances and intercultural inspirations to experiment in the reconstruction of the rebec and the revival of its performance. He, Mabel, and their family were attracted by the history of the rebec as an 'ancestor' of the violin, and inspired by Marie-Thérèse de Lens to consider the relationship between it and the rebab; de Lens brought the latter to Haslemere in 1920 and they saw it in Morocco in 1929. As regards the rebec's timbre and physical form, Arnold Dolmetsch was clearly fascinated and sought to explore the new, but also old, sound-worlds that emerged from the instrument. The correspondence of Mabel and the performances of Cécile and Carl suggest that the Dolmetsch family's interest and practice of the rebec continued consistently for several decades.[108] In 1956, for example, a programme with the title "Music for Rebecs" was broadcast by The Cécile Dolmetsch Rebec Ensemble on BBC Radio, featuring music by Pérotin (*Haec dies, Mors,* and *Adjuva*), an unnamed motet by John Dunstable (ca 1390–1453) and an anonymous branle.[109] The history of the rebec's ongoing dissemination and popularity after the Second World War invites further investigation. Nevertheless, it is clear that Arnold Dolmetsch, from 1928 until his death, played a central and prominent role in reviving the instrument, in terms of both luthiery and performance practice.

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104 Haslemere 1936, p. 10. It was preceded by the thirteenth-century troubadour song *Bele Doette as Fenestre se siet* (Fair Doette at her window sits), for which the rebec and harp are listed as accompaniment; see ibid., pp. 9f.

105 Reproduced in Donington 1983, p. 42. Although Donington dates it to 1936, Campbell dates it a year earlier; see Campbell 1975, p. viii and photographs between pp. 208f.

106 "Joué le Rebec pour les Danses" (DolmetschA *Diary*, 22 June 1936); "Danses. Je Joue le Rebec" (ibid., 29 June 1936).

107 Haslemere 1939, p. 8. The players were respectively Mabel Dolmetsch, Nathalie Dolmetsch, Carl Dolmetsch, and Marie [Mary] Dolmetsch (1915–1996).

108 Amongst the items of the Jeanne-Marie Dolmetsch Collection, it is interesting to note that the spine of the 1982 volume of the *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America,* which contains a seminal article by Margaret Anne Downie (1982) on the rebec, is annotated: "American | ON REBECS & VIOLS | Journal".

109 The programme was scheduled for 10.40 pm on Sunday, 9 December 1956, and performed by Cécile Dolmetsch, Nathalie Dolmetsch, Layton Ring, and Michael Walton. It is described as a "BBC Recording" (*RT* 1956, p. 13).

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