



Art collector couple Tamás Tálósi (left) and Szandra Katona inspect a Dachau-built instrument dubbed the “violin of hope” in Magyarpolány, Hungary, Tuesday.

NIKOLETT CSANYI / AP

# ‘VIOLIN OF HOPE’

A SECRET NOTE HIDDEN IN DACHAU-BUILT INSTRUMENT TELLS A TALE OF SURVIVAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

By JUSTIN SPIKE  
Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary — During World War II, within the walls of the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau, a Jewish prisoner secretly penned a short note and hid it inside a violin he had crafted under harrowing circumstances — a message to the future that would remain undiscovered for more than 80 years.

“Trial instrument, made under difficult conditions with no tools and materials,” the worn note read. “Dachau. Anno 1941, Franciszek Kempa.”

The origins of the violin, built in 1941 by Franciszek “Franz” Kempa while imprisoned by the Nazis at Dachau in southern Germany, remained unnoticed for decades. It wasn’t until art dealers in Hungary sent the instrument out for repairs — after having stored it for years among a set of purchased furniture — that its history came to light.

Although the instrument’s craftsmanship pointed clearly to a skilled maker, the professional repairing it was puzzled by the poor quality of the wood and the crude tools used to create it, which didn’t match the evident skill involved.

“If you look at its proportions and structure, you can see that it’s a master violin, made by a man who was proficient in his craft,” said Szandra Katona, one of the Hungarian art dealers who discovered the origins

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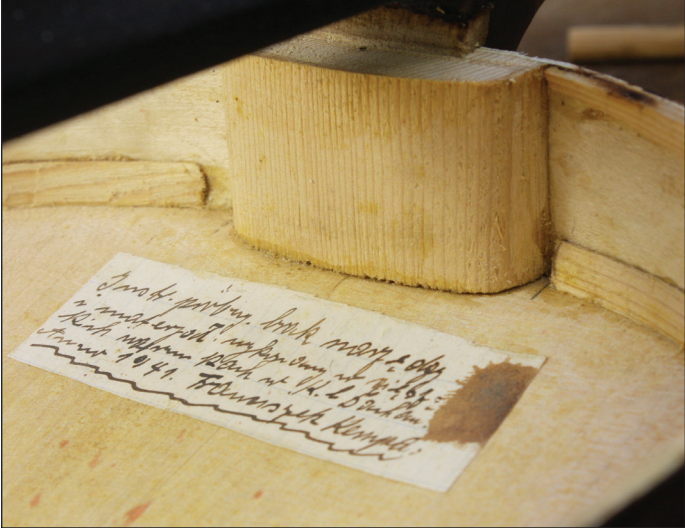
Szandra Katona  
Hungarian art dealer

of the violin. “But the choice of wood was completely incomprehensible.”

Motivated by the contradiction, the professional disassembled the violin, revealing Kempa’s hidden note — an apparent explanation, even an apology, from a master violin maker forced by the brutal limitations of his captivity to build an instrument that fell short of his own standards.

Dachau, located near Munich, was the first concentration camp established by the Nazis in March 1933. It initially housed political prisoners but later became a model for other camps, imprisoning Jews, Roma, clergy, homosexuals, and others targeted by the Nazi regime.

See VIOLIN, 3C



SZANDRA KATONA VIA AP

A handwritten and hidden tag in Silesian dialect (mix of Polish and German) inside a Dachau-built instrument dubbed the “violin of hope” reads: “Trial instrument, made under difficult conditions with no tools and materials, K. L. Dachau. Anno 1941, Franciszek Kempa”, in Magyarpolány, Hungary, in 2020.



NIKOLETT CSANYI / AP

This image obtained from AP video shows a tag with the text “K.L. Dachau” seen through the f-holes of a Dachau-built instrument dubbed the “violin of hope.”

## Dispatch from Camino

We will start walking before sunrise. Pilgrims are lacing up boots in the darkness outside our hostel, on our way to Santiago. Many languages are spoken. No English.

It’s cold in these mountains. And windy. A guy sits beside me. He has a Southern accent, like I do.

“This seat taken?”

His name is Steve, from Chattanooga. We shake hands. He and I are so grateful to have someone to speak English with that we are talking blue streaks.

“Isn’t this amazing?” Steve says. “To be in a place where you don’t know anyone, and yet you feel so close to everybody?”

He’s right. It is strange. To feel deep comradeship with total foreigners. People you might otherwise never interact with.

But you’re speaking now. In fact, you do more than speak. You empathize. You connect.

You complain about the weather. About the five-minute showers. You’re all in this together.

Breakfast is light. Steve has Cornflakes. I have coffee. I’m trying to coax my muscles into another day of abuse.

A Korean man at the table sees my cowboy hat and is intrigued. He asks to try on the hat, communicating solely in hand gestures.

The hat is four sizes too big, and droops on his head like Speedy Gonzalez’s sombrero, but he is thrilled. The man poses for pictures with his friends, holding pretend air-pistols, saying to the camera, “I am Crint East-rood.”

Our walk begins.

The sun is not yet up. Pilgrims are on the desolate highway, trudging onward in the dark of morning. We are in the far flung hills.

There are no houses out here. No barns. No evidence of man. Just farm animals, kept captive without fences. Because where would they go?

It’s foggy, we can’t see anything except our own feet.

Then the sun comes up. Sunrise starts slow, and intensifies. Like the second movement of a symphony. That’s when we realize we are in the sho’ nuff mountains. Not a reasonable facsimile of the Pyrenees. Not a tourist-bred imitation of mountains. We’re in the actual Pyrenees. It looks like we are walking through Shangri-La.

“Wow,” says my wife.

“Yeah,” says I.

— Sean Dietrich is a columnist, and novelist, known for his commentary on life in the American South.

COLUMNIST



SEAN DIETRICH

## NGC 3718 a highly disturbed galaxy in the Ursa Major constellation

NGC 3718 is a highly disturbed spiral galaxy located 52 million light years away in the constellation Ursa Major and it has a diameter of 70,000 light years. The galaxy contains prominent sinuous, twisting dust lanes that cross its center. It was discovered by William Herschel in 1789.

Beyond its warped appearance, NGC 3718 contains a supermassive black hole at its core. Additionally, it exhibits regions of active star formation, particularly in the twisted arms, where clouds of gas and dust collapse to give birth to new stars.

This galaxy’s S shape is due to the gravitational interactions with the smaller galaxy (NGC 3729) that we can see on the top of the pic-

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DR. CARLOS ROTELLAR

millions of years.

This is a perfect example of the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the cosmos.

Nothing in the Universe stands still.

NGC 3718 is moving away from

ture. NGC 3729 is also a spiral galaxy and it is located 150,000 light years away from NGC 3718. Such interactions highlight the profound influence galaxies can have on one another, reshaping their structures over

the Sun a speed of two million miles per hour.

Finally, to the left of NGC 3718 we can see a small group of five galaxies known as Hickson 56, located 400 million light years away from the Earth.

Four galaxies in this group appear disturbed and apparently interacting with each other. That I can get a glimpse of these galaxies 400 million light years away from my driveway is truly amazing.

— Dr. Carlos Rotellar is a Bowling Green nephrologist who has had an interest in astrophotography and has been taking images of the universe from his driveway for several years. Website: Skyastrophotos.com.



CARLOS ROTELLAR

NGC 3718 is located 52 million light years away in the constellation Ursa Major.