

A violin by Louis Lowendall, 1907

Catalogue Number: RKT-0062

\$4,000

Labeled: “Louis Lowendall, Fecit Berlin. Anno 1907, (signed by maker)”

Also a Repair label: “Restored by Luthier, Gezza Burghardt, April 1998 (signed), Canada”

Repairs: There are repaired cracks in the lower bout of the front, below the treble sound hole, above the saddle and underneath the chinrest. It has apparently been extensively polished and retouched by the repairer, especially at the repairs in the front.

Condition: This instrument is in good condition. There is a long repaired crack below the treble sound hole. According to the repair label this was done by Geza Burghart in 1998. We believe that he also polished and re-touched the varnish at that time.

Comments: The one piece back of this violin is particularly attractive. The varnish is a rich red colour and mostly original except for re-touching in the areas of the repair. This is a particularly bright instrument that should mellow with playing.

LOWENTHAL, LOUIS (LOWENDALL OR LOWENDAHL).

Established as a musical instrument manufacturer in Berlin, 1866. Born 1836, son of a draper in a small provincial town of Northern Prussia. When about seven years of age, displayed considerable talent for music and even at that early age he constructed a violin according to his own ideas namely, from an unplanned wooden board making the neck, pegs, etc., from similar material. The strings he made from strong cotton thread, the bow as best he could, securing a supply of hair from the tails of horses in the street. His father discovering his son's love for the violin bought him a real fiddle, an instrument of reddish tint, sounding very harsh. Commenced his musical studies in earnest in 13th year at Königsberg High School, and in 19th year was an efficient performer on the 'cello. At Leipzig, he became acquainted with the renowned instrument maker Bansch and, later, at Berlin he connected the well-known violin bow maker Heinrich Knopf, under both of whom he took the opportunity of studying violin and bow making. Opened a retail music shop in Berlin in 1855, and from that time the business expanded. Manufactured a large number of the musical instruments he sold and the business grew and prospered. In 1867 he went to the United States and set up in business. His very valuable stock of old violin wood and musical instruments, especially a fine collection of about 60 genuine old violins, soon became known among musical circles and created a sensation as many of the instruments were very costly. One of his friends and customers was George Gemunder the violin maker, who bought some of his most beautiful wood and many valuable instruments. He soon became aware that his German-spelled name was pronounced by his new American friends differently from the original and accustomed sound, so he changed it to the English version, Lowendall. After six years he returned to Europe and devoted himself to collecting on a large scale, old Italian violins which he sold very profitably in America which he visited at regular intervals. In 1873 he lived in Dresden for a short spell and in the following year visited England for the first time, and stayed for about six weeks doing very good business. For the next five years he went annually to America and in 1878 made the acquaintance of 'Ole Bull in St. Louis who permitted him to take a copy of his famous grand concert violin which he was playing there at the time. The copy of this instrument became known as "Lowendall's 'Ole Bull". He thereafter divided his time between America and

England, having enormous success in both countries. Awarded a silver medal at the London Inventions Exhibition and a similar one at Bologna, Italy, for a fine display of his excellent violins. In 1889 he bought a spacious four-storey building at 121 Reichenbergerstrasse, Berlin, and employed many skilled workmen.

L. Lowendahl
1880
Dresden

—(branded on wood where label usually lies)

- From: “Universal Dictionary of Violin and Bow Makers” by William Henley

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Description: This instrument has a one-piece back of slab cut maple, showing irregular medium flame running horizontally across the back. The button on the back is stamped with the Lowendall brand which is an “L” within a wreath. It is also stamped “Berlin” below the button. The sides are of similar wood. The neck is of plainer material. The front is of two pieces of spruce showing medium grain becoming slightly finer at the centre. The fittings are of ebony. The varnish is of a dark reddish brown colour over a yellow ground in good condition and showing minor wear from playing and re-touching in the repaired areas. There are repaired cracks below the treble sound hole, above the saddle and underneath the chinrest.

Back measurements:

Length: 360 mm. Upper bout: 165 mm. Middle bout: 112 mm. Lower bout: 203mm.

October 13th, 2009