

University acquires Scarfe-La Trobe theatre collection

A major collection of almost 2,000 rare Spanish plays, one of the most important available outside Spain, has been acquired by the University of Glasgow and is now housed in the Library's Special Collections Department.

The Scarfe-La Trobe Collection was owned by Mr Bruno Scarfe who has close family connections with both the city and the University of Glasgow, where for many years his father was a senior lecturer in the Department of French. Mr Scarfe had received offers from Spain and the USA to purchase the collection but the University was his preferred permanent location.

For over a year Ann Mackenzie, Ivy McClelland Research Professor of Spanish and David Weston, Keeper of Special Collections, sought and eventually found ways and means of bringing this major collection of Spanish plays to Glasgow.

An application made to the National Fund for Acquisitions resulted in the award of a 50% grant (the largest available), while the additional funds needed to assist purchase were provided from within the University: from the Chancellor's Fund, the Friends of Glasgow University Library and the Faculty of Arts Library Discretionary Fund. A final award made from the Principal's Strategic Development Fund, allocated to assist research on the Collection (which matched an amount for the same purpose from a private source), resulted in Mr Scarfe's agreement that the entire collection should pass to the University.

This has been accomplished for a price significantly lower than he would have accepted from any other institution, so favourable, in fact, that numerous duplicates included

in the Collection effectively changed hands by gift. Since the sale was confirmed Mr Scarfe has generously donated additional items to the University, including manuscript fragments of two extremely rare Spanish plays, one of which definitely dates from the 17th century. The acquisition of the collection has had another unexpected consequence: Professor Don W Cruickshank of University College, Dublin, a leading expert on early modern Spanish plays, has expressed his intention to bequeath to the University of Glasgow his own outstanding collection.

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A large proportion of the collection comprises *comedias sueltas*, which means plays that were printed separately for sale in pamphlet form; while a smaller number are *desglosadas*, i.e., plays printed to form part of mainly 17th century volumes, each volume normally containing 12 plays, but which were also made available disbound for sale as single items. Many of the Collection's *suelas* are 18th century editions, but, like the *desglosadas*, are plays composed during the golden



First page of 'El testimonio vengado' by Lope de Vega Carpio. Valladolid 1604

age of Spanish theatre by Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Calderón, Tirso de Molina, Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, Agustín Moreto and numerous other playwrights. The earliest item in the collection, a *desglosada* which dates from 1604, is the first edition of *El testimonio vengado* by Lope de Vega. The collection also includes important rare texts by 18th and 19th century playwrights, of which one of the most famous is Ramón de la Cruz — a satirical observer, in numerous one-act comic plays known as *sainetes*, of Spanish society.

Mr Scarfe, who is himself a Hispanist of repute, and formerly a lecturer at La Trobe University, has been engaged in research for many years to compile an analytical research catalogue of the entire collection. He will now complete this project at the University of Glasgow in collaboration with Professors

Ann Mackenzie and Don Cruickshank, the results of which will be published both in print and online through the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, a Glasgow-based international research journal.

A small display of selected items from the collection, together with other rare Spanish books, will be on show in the Henry Heaney Room on level 12 of the University Library between 14-16 April 2003. This has been scheduled to coincide with the presence in Glasgow of over 100 delegates attending the annual Conference of the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland, which this year will take place at the University's Kelvin Conference Centre.

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