

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Jean-Léon Gérôme
(Vesoul 1824 – 1904 Paris)

A seated and turbaned musician playing a spike fiddle, seen from behind, a study for The Sword Dance

Pencil on paper
32.3 x 20.3 cm (12 ¾ x 8 in.)

Provenance:

Suzanne and Aimé Morot, the daughter and son-in-law of the artist;
By descent to their son, Aimé-Léon Morot;
By whom sold, Sotheby's, Paris, 27 June 2002, lot 187;
From where acquired by the present owner.

Literature:

L. des Cars, D. de Font-Réaulx and É. Papet (eds.), *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904)*, exh. cat., Los Angeles–Paris–Madrid 2010–2011, no. 152, pp. 266–267 (ill.).

Exhibitions:

The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 15 June–12 September 2010; Musée d'Orsay, Paris, 19 October 2010–23 January 2011; Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, 1 March–22 May 2011.



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Squared for transfer, this seated *rebab* player was used for one of the musicians in The Sword Dance, now known only from a photogravure (fig. 1). Another *Sword Dance* (fig. 2), from 1875, features a similar *rebab* player, although this time viewed from three-quarters.



Fig. 1, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Sword Dance*, photogravure,

A *rebab* is a bowed string instrument that spread widely across North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia via Islamic trade routes from the 8th century onward. The musician in the study plays a spike fiddle variant, which, as the name suggests, features a projecting spike at its base, allowing the instrument to rest on the ground for support. It typically consists of a small, rounded or oval body and a long neck. Though appreciated for its voice-like tone, the *rebab* has a limited range of just over an octave, and over time it was supplanted in many regions by the violin and the *kemenche*.



Fig. 2, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Sword Dance*, 1875, oil on canvas 58 x 80 cm, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University

The drawing is delicately constructed, with fine contour lines used to define the folds of the garment and the angles of the limbs. Gérôme renders the anatomy and pose with economy and clarity, focusing on the play of line and proportion rather than shading or detail. The result is a poised and quietly expressive study of a figure in concentration.