



NEWSLETTER

of

The American Musical Instrument Society

VOLUME 47, No. 3

Winter 2018

THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT COLLECTION OF WALTER ERDMANN

BY GREGG MINER

For AMIS members who read my Summer 2018 “Collector’s Corner” article and/or my Listserv email in which I shared my news and queries about the obscure February 2018 Mehli’s Auction in Germany, I am pleased and honored to follow up with this fascinating, but ultimately sad, story.

I found out about the auction of hundreds of exceedingly rare and unusual musical instruments by dumb luck – a single image posted in the Cittern Group on Facebook. After bidding on several items and winning three, I polled AMIS members at the 2018 meeting and found only one who had even been aware of the auction. Meanwhile, the Mehli’s web site and personnel had not shared any information on the provenance of the instruments, which I found irresponsible at best and a tragedy at worst. I thus went back and painstakingly downloaded their photographs of all the better or more unusual plucked string instruments (there were hundreds more I did not archive). Once done, and in light of the seemingly total lack of awareness of such an unusual and fairly large collection being auctioned off “under our very noses,” I realized that others might similarly find research, archival or entertainment value in some of these lots (i.e. the images and the scant information, even with its errors).

To that end, I cleaned up my folder of captured images, and went back to better collate listings of those items in my areas of interest.

I next shared the above with the AMIS Listserv, asking for any information on the collection. Happily, a couple people responded, and we learned that the collection



Image from the Walter Erdmann House Museum, pre-auction.

had belonged to one Walter J. Erdmann of Goslar, Germany. Mr. Erdmann seemed to be otherwise completely off the radar – just one of the hundreds and perhaps thousands of private collectors (like myself) who scatter the globe – many intentionally private, others hiding in plain sight. Eventually a colleague managed to contact Erdmann’s widow who was happy (eager, I might add) to talk to me as much as I was anxious to query

(Continued on page 4)

IN THIS ISSUE

Walter Erdmann Collection	1
Violin Making in Tehran	3
Collector’s Corner	8
Exhibition: Trumpets, Weird and Wonderful	9
JAMIS Research Grant	10
Tribute to Roland Hoover	11
Gibbon Scholars	12
Book Reviews	16

NEWSLETTER of the
American Musical Instrument Society

ISSN 2374-362X

Sarah Deters, Editor
Emily Peppers, Assistant Editor
Albert Rice, Reviews Editor

The Newsletter is published three times per year for members of the American Musical Instrument Society (AMIS). News items, photographs, and short articles or announcements are invited, as well as any other information of interest to AMIS members.

Contributions to the Newsletter and correspondence concerning its content should be sent to:

amisnewsletter@gmail.com

Address changes, dues payments, requests for back issues of AMIS publications, and requests for information on membership should be sent to:

American Musical Instrument Society
6704 SE 20th Avenue
Portland, OR 97202
Phone: (971) 930-7524
j2kopp@aol.com

AMIS BOARD OF GOVERNORS

President: Jayson Dobney

Vice President: Janet Page

Secretary: Michael Suing

Treasurer: Joanne Kopp

Allison Alcorn

Christopher Dempsey

Cynthia Hoover

Cleveland Johnson

Edmond Johnson

James Kopp

Jayne Kurland

Michael Lynn

Gregg Miner

Bradley Strauchen-Scherer

Carol Lynn Ward-Bamford

Robert Adelson (International)

Jesse Moffatt (International)

Mimi Waitzman (International)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues,

It is an exciting time for AMIS. This past fall we relaunched the AMIS website with an updated design. More importantly, the website offers many new features, including a "members only" section (where the AMIS Membership Directory is housed), an online membership form, and new content from a weekly published blog. The website also continues to house other useful information including our archive of Newsletters and other online publications and links.

This year also saw the establishment of new working groups dedicated to ethnomusicology and to banjo/mandolin/guitar research. These working groups are an opportunity for AMIS, a generalist organization for all things related to musical instrument research, to engage with other scholarly communities. This effort will hopefully lead to greater knowledge for AMIS members about cutting-edge research in these fields, and also make the generalist work of AMIS more available to new scholars. If these working groups are successful, they could offer a model for organizing other interest groups within AMIS.

Finally, the AMIS Board of Governors recently decided to begin a Strategic Planning process. In the coming months, we will be reaching out to all of the members in the society to obtain ideas about how we are currently functioning and to set goals for the next few years. The Board is interested in making our society as relevant and useful as possible to all of our members. Stay tuned for more information about all of these initiatives in the coming months.

In the meantime, I wish you all the best for 2019.

 Jayson Dobney
President, AMIS

New from the Editors' Desk

At the turn of the new year, it is a pleasure to bring to our readers interesting articles, updates, and announcements from the AMIS community. In this newsletter, we bring to you two interesting articles including information on the collection of Walter Erdmann, as well as an introduction to a violin making school and community in Tehran. The research interests of six of our recent Gribbon Scholars are presented, and the Collector's Corner features how a change of occupation led the author to the instrument of his dreams. An additional highlight is the announcement of the new exhibition on the trumpet at the Morris Museum in collaboration with the National Music Museum, which is a "must see" for anyone in the area.

As always, we welcome short submissions (maximum 500 words) as well as short articles. Email all submissions and suggestions to:

amisnewsletter@gmail.com.

 Sarah and Emily

Violin Making in Tehran

An introduction to the Reza Ziaei Workshop Community

Amis Khamse & Neda Asadinejad

Editors' note In October 2018 members of the Reza Ziaei Workshop Community, a violin making workshop located in Tehran, Iran, contacted AMIS. The members are interested in engaging with the AMIS community, but due to the current political climate, are unable to do so because of travel bans and embargoes. As a first step in communication, we asked the group to send a short overview of their workshop and some images to introduce themselves.



The RZW Community (Reza Ziaei Workshop), established in 2002-2003 under the guidance of Master Luthier Reza Ziaei, is located in Tehran, a cultural and historic center and the birthplace of some of the ancient Iranian Plateau civilizations. Maestro Reza Ziaei learned violinmaking from teachers in the local region and was approved by professional makers in Cremona who have evaluated and observed his work.

The Community focuses on cultural activities related to the creation of violin family instruments and the development of talent. An important question in our community is “what are the main characteristics of the methods that should be taken to ensure that individuals in our educational system achieve not only a positive economic outlook but also to understand the historical perspective of the art of creating a violin?” Answering questions like this has led us to change our emphasis from our products to education and the production of thought, as we aim to expose the capabilities of individuals to themselves. Our belief in a dynamic educational system embraces the development of the intellectual abilities and technical skills of the students. The students, in accordance with their practical activities, take lessons in music, design, science, aesthetics, wood processing, and photography. During their studies they are reviewed by themselves and by Maestro Ziaei. Currently the workshop has 20 active students, who come from all over Iran. The students study part-time in four-, six-, or seven-year courses.

Now, according to the view of our members, the Community is set to reorganize itself as Reza Ziaei & Sons and to introduce itself as a family of talented people who are heartedly committed to the advancement of scientific and cultural prospects in the field of violin making. A family is not necessarily born of kinship, but more than anything is formed due to the proximity of thoughts and having common goals. As Reza Ziaei & Sons, we would like to introduce ourselves, our activities, and share our ideas to our colleagues around the world.



her. Before long, she was able to put me in touch with the builder of Mr. Erdmann's "reproductions" – Heyno Herbst, who would build instruments from photographs supplied by Erdmann, specimens particularly rare and unusual and otherwise impossible to acquire. Mr. Herbst thus answered my specific questions about the "bass lute" I purchased from the auction (you can [read about it and see my video here, http://harp guitars.net/blog/2018/12/a-lute-out-of-a-nightmare/](http://harp guitars.net/blog/2018/12/a-lute-out-of-a-nightmare/)). Ms. Erdmann also kindly answered my request for images and articles and sent a dozen magazine and newspaper articles and a CD containing original photos of the 600+ instruments displayed throughout their museum home. I can imagine many of us would be perfectly comfortable in such a place!

And so, I herewith present these previously unpublished photos of the Erdmann Collection in situ. Sabine Erdmann further provided the information below. I hope my translation does justice to the story and memory of our fascinating fellow collector.



The Musical Instrument Collection of Walter Erdmann as told by Sabine Erdmann, translated by Gregg Miner

My husband Walter Erdmann was born on December 13th, 1930. He had the gift of making people laugh, and grew up in the circus as a musical clown and knife thrower. When a child, his father bought him an accordion and told him to perform a song the next morning – which he did! All his life, he has only ever played by ear, never by written music. To survive the difficulties during the war years, performances were given in backyards.

Since he appeared as an artist for a long time in what was then the Soviet-occupied zone at the beginning of the 1950s, he was refused a residence permit for

Berlin. Instead, he was forcibly relocated to Baden-Württemberg. There, now married, his first child, a daughter, was born in the caravan; his son was born a year later. During this time, Walter worked as a chauffeur for Americans and Englishmen, where he learned to speak English.

One could not support a family as an artist at the time, so back in Berlin he undertook various activities, such as scissor grinder. He once appeared on the TV quiz show "Heiteres Beruferate" (What is my Profession?), so he was indeed famous in his profession. He knew how to get along. He had a knack for animals and so opened a dog shop, selling puppies he had previously acquired from breeders.

Then came the time of the upswing and the purging of unwanted material goods. The money was literally on the street, you just needed to pick it up. People were now buying new possessions, so the old was thrown away: furniture, household goods...and musical instruments.

Thus, a new era began for the purchase and sale of antiques and musical instruments. My husband had a large shop in Berlin-Charlottenburg, where the pop stars would come and go because his shop was so unusual. Gypsies would meet there because they could play music spontaneously; often, up to a half dozen men met and played music there. It was with this business that my husband's great passion for collecting began, because every beautiful instrument he was offered he took home. These were thus the beginnings of a large collection.

In 1972 after a holiday, he passed through Goslar where he saw the millennial town on the Harz and, having become weary of the big city, fell in love with the small alleyways and old half-timbered buildings. Against the wishes of his family, he decided to move to Goslar to open a museum there. He sold his house in Berlin in order to buy the house on the High Road in Goslar in 1975, which was intended for demolition. It was soon renovated and the museum set up.

I only know all this from stories about my husband, because I only got to know and love him in 1986. His wife had left him and went back to Berlin with his youngest daughter. She was unable to share his passion for collecting, but instead always scolded and questioned how much he still wanted to collect. I, on the other hand, was thrilled with what he was doing. I have always supported him and had a huge pleasure in the museum myself. The world came to us and it was natural for me that the house was open every day. Every day there were new conversations with visitors and again and again new acquisitions that

(Continued on next page)

could be exhibited. Our son Tony, who was born in 1990, grew up in the museum, so to speak, as that's where our living room was. The collection would double in my day.

Unfortunately my husband got very sick in 1996 and I had to work everything out on my own, and times had changed. After his death in 2010, I had to make up my mind. I would have loved to have continued his life's work had it not been for the heirs, the children and father-in-law from my first marriage, who moved me to give the museum to his heirs, despite the promise that I gave my husband that everything would carry on. They wanted to receive everything in cash, and I couldn't muster that without going into debt beyond measure. And one of my father's life lessons was: Child, never go into debt!

So I had to watch everything my husband built up destroyed. I went back to work in my profession as a dental assistant and now have a new little additional job at the lottery reception center. Our son is studying aerospace engineering in Berlin. He's not musical, unfortunately. But during his lifetime my husband had also given musical instruments to our son, which I sold during his lifetime to the Musical Instruments Museum (MIM) in Phoenix, Arizona.

In 2011 I went with Tony to visit the museum and was so moved because some exhibits were written: Ex Collection Walter J. Erdmann. So, something has remained, albeit on another continent. Anyway, I can say that I spent the most beautiful 25 years of my life in this house and museum – it was a wonderful time.



Two of Walter Erdmann's many instruments on display at the MIM in Phoenix

Now to your specific questions:

When did he start collecting? What instruments did he play?

My husband had always happily played music. He played accordion, piano and other keyboards. Every day he played for me for at least an hour. He was a jazz musician, and outside of the house, like in a bar with a piano, he just sat down and played. Every holiday the accordion accompanied us; the applause was his reward.

He had always been interested in musical instruments, but the true collecting probably only began with the establishment of the business in Berlin, where the musicians and pop stars met to take pictures for magazines.

Were the instruments displayed (in the home or elsewhere)?

So many instruments had then been acquired that they barely found space in his house. Then he came up with the idea of opening a museum. He then bought this house in Goslar to exhibit his instruments there.

Did he ever publish a book or catalog on the collection? If not, do you have any photos of it you would like to share?

Unfortunately, we never had a catalogue. By the time I left the house, I had taken the photos from the museum that I have sent you. Walter was unique and I am still very sad that I was unable to prevent the collection from being dispersed.

Warm greetings from Goslar
Sabine Erdmann



**Note from author* For those seriously interested, I have full resolution images of 135 photographs taken by Sabine of the instruments at home, along with PDFs of the articles and her spreadsheet of the 600+ original instruments. I also have the 80 photos I archived from the Mehli's auction.*





Collector's Corner

New acquisitions, interesting facts, and the stories behind private collections

How I Changed Careers and Found the Violin of my Dreams

Kevin Cardiff

Music has enriched my life in so many ways. I was a performer in several orchestras for eighteen years, and after that, I pursued a career as a violinmaker. I began studying the craft of lutherie while I was still a musician in the Baltimore Symphony. I had the great good fortune in 1986 to meet Michael Weller, former chief repairman at William Moennig & Son, Philadelphia. Weller is a Mittenwald-trained Master Violinmaker, and restored my main violin at the time, an instrument attributed to Giovanni Pistucci. He agreed to teach me and after about three years, I had made my first set of four violins, from all different handmade patterns. I also learned about restoration work like varnish retouching and neck grafting.

To give myself time to decide whether to make violinmaking my full time job, I applied for and was granted a year's leave of absence from the Baltimore Symphony in 1990. My stand partner in the orchestra was my esteemed colleague and dear friend (also another violinmaker), Wayne Taylor. We were talking one day and he told me there was a violin for sale on "the avenue" (as the locals refer to 36th St. in the Hampden section of Baltimore). Wayne said it caught his eye because it looked quite old and had four original Hill boxwood pegs, but two with ebony pins and two with ivory. I told him I would check it out. I went to the store and sure enough, there were two violins in the front window, one brand spanking new Suzuki violin, and the old violin Wayne had described. I went into the store and inquired about the prices. For the Suzuki, \$300, and for the old fiddle, \$90. I immediately went to an ATM, withdrew cash and bought the old violin.

The instrument bears the label of Giuseppe Guaragnini. After a painstakingly careful year-long restoration, I sent it to Dario D'Attili and he certified the violin as an Andrea Postacchini circa 1830. It is the favorite violin I have ever played, and ironically, I got it after I stopped performing. Tonally it has a lightning quick response, with a beautiful soprano timbre overall and a satisfyingly rich lower register. When I finally come to the point of selling this wonderful instrument, it is my fervent wish that the next custodian will treat it with the same loving care that I have given it for the last 25 years. ♪



Trumpets, Weird and Wonderful: Treasures from the National Music Museum opens at the Morris Museum

The Morris Museum in partnership with the National Music Museum (Vermillion, South Dakota) presents the exhibit *Trumpets, Weird and Wonderful: Treasures from the National Music Museum* – 44 fascinating instruments from five continents, on view at the Morris Museum from October 7, 2018, to March 17, 2019.

Dating from the late 17th to the late 20th centuries, the instruments are on loan from the National Music Museum's Joe R. and Joella F. Utley Collection of Brass Instruments, and most of them have never been on public exhibit.

Trumpets, Weird, and Wonderful celebrates the rich audible and visual variety of musical instruments in which sound is generated by buzzing the lips, sometimes called brasswinds. Broadly defined, trumpets come in many different forms and sizes and can be made of many different materials: animal horn, bone, conch, wood, and metals.

Horns and trumpets have been in use as signaling instruments since prehistoric times. They play a role in ceremony and religion in many cultures. For centuries they have had a leading function in the military and the hunt. They are not only musical instruments but also objects of artistic expression, often with hidden meaning.

"This is an exhibit for us all," says Cleveland Johnson, Executive Director of the Morris Museum.

"If a bugle playing 'taps' has you tearing up at a veteran's funeral, you'll discover amazing new dimensions to that simple, dignified instrument. If the call of the shofar holds religious meaning for you, you'll discover how brasswind instruments contribute to ritual ceremonies around the world. If you've ever marched in a band or heard a great jazz trumpeter, you'll discover the engineering history that led to our modern trumpet.

Maybe you just love Ricola cough drops and have never seen an 'alphorn' close up."

Video stations throughout the galleries allow the instruments to be experienced in performance, many in their original context and country of use. A special kid's station traces the history of trumpet playing back to early human civilization. Many of the instruments are beautifully ornate. The exhibit allows the visitor to discover almost-hidden symbols, ranging from expressions of power to religious belief.

Guest curator Dr. Sabine Klaus, Curator of Brass at the National Music Museum states, "The question that guided me in preparing this exhibition was how do form and decoration inform us about an instrument's function and use, and ultimately its sound?"

Five highly-decorative trumpets by Andy Taylor in Norwich, England, which were commissioned by the collector Joe R. Utley and especially created for the Utley Collection, celebrate the trumpet as art.



Andy Taylor, Uncle Sam, B-flat Trumpet, 1996. Photograph: Mark Olencki (© National Music Museum).

(Continued on next page)

The exhibition is shown in two galleries at the Morris Museum and organized in nine themes:

- Found in Nature: Horns and Trumpets made of Organic Materials
- The Meaning of Décor: The Trumpet in Ceremony and Ritual
- Fit for a King or a Queen: Trumpets and Horns for the European Elite
- Strange Curves and Clever Keys for More Notes
- Liberations: Break-through Technology
- Where does the Echo Come From?
- Trumpets Big and Small
- The Trumpet in Jazz
- Cool Looks and Crazy Shapes: The Trumpet as Art

Exhibition Opening

The exhibition *Trumpets, Weird, and Wonderful: Treasures from the National Music Museum* opens to the public on Sunday, October 7 from 12:00PM – 5:00PM and will be on view through Sunday, March 17, 2019.

Admission is free for Museum members and \$10 for Non-Members.



Serpent, William Lander (Mere, Wiltshire, England, c.1820-25). Photograph: Mark Olencki (© National Music Museum).

JAMIS Research Grant Goes to Alcorn

In 2011, the American Musical Instrument Society created an annual grant to help defray the costs of preparing an article appropriate for publication in the *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*. The editorial board, along with James B. Kopp, editor, is pleased to announce that the 2018 annual Publication Grant has been awarded to Allison A. Alcorn for research into Carleen Maley Hutchins (1911–2009), an American luthier and physicist who created a “new violin family” — a consort of eight instruments that spanned the range of the modern piano keyboard.



Alcorn is a professor of musicology at Illinois State University. She earned a PhD and MM in musicology at the University of North Texas and a BM in music at Wheaton College. She also took courses in museum studies at the universities of North Texas and South Dakota. She has performed as a violinist in the Illinois State University Orchestra and String Quartet, and wrote her master's thesis on “Study of Style and Influence in Early Schools of Violin Making, circa 1540 to 1800.” She taught earlier at Trinity International University and Dordt College, and was a research associate at the national Music Museum. She is a former editor of *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*.

The deadline for the 2019 Publication Grant is March 15, 2019. Further details are available at <https://www.amis.org/jamis-publication-grant>; applications should be sent to James B. Kopp, Editor, *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*, j5kopp@aol.com.



A Tribute to Roland Hoover

Long-time AMIS member and supporter, Roland Hoover, died on November 7, 2018, just two months short of his 90th birthday. Born in Buffalo, New York, he attended Yale University (B.S. in Industrial Administration, 1949) and served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. In recent years, he was affected by Parkinson's Disease, and gradually had to give up his printing press and other activities.

Roland was one of the very early members of AMIS (his wife, Cynthia Adams Hoover, was part of the original group that founded the society in 1971). Probably best known to AMIS members as the creator of the beautiful letterpress certificates that AMIS presented each year to recipients of the society's major awards, he also designed posters, announcements, keepsakes and books for organizations including the Smithsonian Institution, National Gallery of Art, Library of Congress, and Yale University, as well as his parish, St. Columba's Episcopal Church.

Roland's varied career included serving as executive editor and as director of publications for the Brookings Institution, in Washington, D.C., and as the University Printer at Yale University. All the while he ran a sideline letterpress printing activity, in Washington, then in New Haven. After retiring from Yale in 1994 he moved his print shop (including his 1700-pound Vandercook press) to Bethesda, Maryland, where his letterpress was known as Pembroke Press. In 2010 he was presented with a lifetime achievement award in the history and art of letterpress printing by the Chesapeake Chapter of the American Printing History Association.

As written by his daughter Emily for the memorial service program, "Roland's life work centered on the written word and how it was presented. A highly-regarded graphic designer and letterpress printer, he began printing in the late 1950s. His passion for the craft was clear by 1960, when with his characteristic wit, he wrote on a resume, 'I have ineradicably stained my hands with letterpress ink.' . . . He saw himself not only as a designer but also as a craftsman. Letterpress printing is a tactile endeavor, and Roland loved every aspect of it, from hand-setting type letter by letter, to the feel of that type pressing into paper as he operated his Vandercook press with its sturdy metal crank. He spent hours upon hours in his shop, working out designs, selecting paper, running off new proofs, and producing sometimes hundreds of copies of his works."

In later years, I worked with Roland to produce the AMIS award certificates, which he had begun doing in 1996, introducing a more gracious and ceremonious wording for the first lines of the certificates: "The Board of Governors of the American Musical Instrument Society records its pleasure in designating . . ." It was an inspiration to note the care he took with all aspects of the task. In 2014 I was able to visit his press, and interview and photograph him to preserve this unique piece of AMIS history.

In addition to his wife, Roland leaves his daughters, Sarah Adams Hoover and Emily Hoover Dooley, and three grandchildren. His obituary can be read at <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?n=roland-hoover&pid=190711130>.



✍ Carolynn Bryant

GRIBBON SCHOLARS

HANNAH GRANTHAM

My research interests tend to bounce around as I read, listen, and discover traditions that fascinate me. For my undergraduate thesis, I studied notions of authenticity in Appalachian dulcimer making traditions of Watauga County, North Carolina. For my current graduate research, I have studied Iranian musical instruments and analyzed their presence in illustrated manuscripts made during the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1722). In my thesis, I explore the cultural climate of instrumental music at the Safavid royal court, and how fluctuating levels of conservatism and religiosity affected the use of musical instruments in Iran at large. Recently, under the direction of Dr. Dwandalyn Reece, Curator of Music and Performing Arts at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, I have had the privilege of researching and writing about the material culture of African American music for use in exhibition and a forthcoming publication. I'm a generalist and I enjoy studying musical instruments for the human stories they tell – stories of creativity, loss, hope, love, and resilience.

I appreciate the flexibility of organology, which enables me to explore different cultures and communicate a more universal human experience in an interdisciplinary fashion. As an organologist who works in museums, I enjoy redirecting narratives through exhibitions. Most of my work and passion is in exposing visitors to lesser known history and marginalized groups who are often misrepresented in textbooks or in the media. Over the past few months this approach



to organology has meant diving headfirst into African American studies and embracing my own mixed-race heritage in my research. I have immensely enjoyed exploring how to use musical instruments to tell the story of American history using the stories of African Americans and members of the African Diaspora. What I hope to achieve through studying organology is finding ways to aid museum visitors in better understanding the world outside of their immediate surroundings and encouraging them to embrace the multicultural society we live in. As I move further into this field, I look forward to working with musicians, local communities, makers, and families to preserve their history and tell their stories.



SAM KRÜGER

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the benefactors who have contributed to the Gribbon Memorial Fund, and who subsequently made it possible for me to attend this past summer's AMIS

meeting in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The membership which came with the award also gives me the opportunity to share with



the group what I am currently researching; therefore I am thrilled to share with you all the topic of my undergraduate senior honors thesis, which I will be writing and submitting to Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts next semester.

As a violinist with a passion for folk music, I have become intimately familiar with the colloquialism known as "fiddle music." On summer weekends when I participate in farmers markets or Irish heritage festivals, people often ask about the difference between a

violin and a fiddle: as if there is but one difference. It is worth mentioning that the degree I am currently pursuing is a Bachelor's in Musical Arts, which requires me to combine my primary studies in music with a second emphasis. I have selected English as my secondary area, and consequently, while I am interested in discovering acute and vast differences in the instruments themselves according to the cultures through which they came to North America, I am also curious as to how the language associated with "fiddles" has transcended early forms of the bowed lute to encompass the modern violin—most often in specific, informal settings. I question not only how "fiddle" the noun has been used in American culture, but also how "fiddle" the verb is used in contrasting contexts.

Why is it that the word "fiddle," in the minds of arguably most Americans, conjures up the image of a violin that looks more similar to a creation of Italian violin maker Carlo Bergonzi, than a single-stringed instrument fashioned from a plant stalk played by the Apache? Why, colloquially, are cellos less likely to be referred to as fiddles when they are, just as violins, relatives of the early bowed lutes? When and in what context was the term "fiddle" introduced to American culture, and how has it evolved since? These are but a few questions I am eager to answer in my upcoming thesis, and I hope to have the opportunity to share my findings with you all, whether it be in future publications, or upcoming AMIS meetings.



ESTEBAN MARIÑO

I am currently undertaking a research project about the cultural significance of the cittern in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This investigation is being developed under the aegis of the Doctoral Programme of Music and Material Culture at the Royal



College of Music in London. I am deeply interested in interpreting musical instruments in their wider cultural significance, which encompasses aesthetic, spiritual, scientific, technological, religious, economic, psychological, historical and philosophical values. I consider musical instruments to be vessels that contain the essence of society and culture, and organology as the discipline that is committed to preserve, research, interpret and present their cultural meaning for present and future generations. My professional experience includes conservation, restoration, cataloging, documentation, photography, technical drawing, building and academic research on plucked instruments and early keyboards.



JIMENA PALACIOS URIBE

I began my studies as conservator-restorer at the National School of Conservation, Restoration and Museography, in Mexico City, where the seminar-workshop on conservation and restoration of musical instruments is taught. After finishing my studies in this seminar, I joined it as a teacher and I had the opportunity to work with enthusiastic students interested in issues related to documentation, conservation and organology, especially of pipe organs and instruments in a museum context.

Over time, my colleagues and I discovered an immense potential for the conservation of these objects in my country; we managed to integrate the seminar into the work plans of some museums with collections of musical instruments, which allowed us to create partnerships that let us explore how the items could be conserved, as well as to strengthen



(Continued on following page)

our professional experiences.

Also, through the conservation and restoration projects of the seminar, my attendance at the annual conferences of AMIS and other organizations, as well as my temporary stay in other museums, I was able to formulate some of the questions that continue to direct my research today. One of these is related to the social, political, economic and cultural processes that involved the use of musical instruments during the formation of Mexico as a nation-state by the second half of the 19th century. At this time, Mexico was the scene of new musical, dance, and entertainment practices, and the use of instruments that were not manufactured in this country were essential to the formation of groups that would interpret traditional and fashionable music, specifically brass bands and orchestras.

From my work in some Mexican communities, local museums, and private collections, I believe that little is known about these processes due to the multiple causes that originated them - sometimes, particular interests of a social sector, in others, of the State itself - which sought to conform to a national identity through music.

Additionally, I am currently the curator responsible for the collection of musical instruments of the National Center of Research, Documentation and Musical Information "Carlos Chávez" (CENIDIM) of the National Institute of Fine Arts, which consists of more than 500 instruments from more than ten states and several ethnic groups from Mexico and other countries. Currently, we have carried out four temporary exhibitions in which the collection has been the main theme, and that has allowed us to spread awareness of the collection to a wider public. Finally, by end of 2018, CENIDIM will upload the virtual database that contains information on each instrument, and a general catalog of the collection.



ARIANNA RIGAMONTI

It was a great pleasure to have taken part in the 2018 AMIS meeting as a recipient of the William E. Gribbon Memorial Award for Student Travel.



It was my first involvement with AMIS, my first time presenting at a conference, and my first time in the United States as well: it was an experience full of emotions and excitement. After the meeting I understood even more how passionate I am about musical instruments and how much I want to pursue studying this field.

I am currently attending the master's program of musicology at the Department of Musicology and Cultural Heritage in Cremona of the University of Pavia. I have always been passionate about musical instruments, but, thanks to a four-month Erasmus Traineeship I completed about one year ago at St Cecilia's Hall: Concert Room and Music Museum in Edinburgh, my interests have grown in this area. There I undertook a joint research project about the so-called "violins without sides," two of which are held in the University of Edinburgh's musical instrument collection.

My main attraction is to historic bowed stringed instruments. I am a violinist and I have been always interested in the study of historic performance and musical philology, which are tightly connected with the conservation of historic musical instruments and historic playing techniques.

Currently, I am embarking on research for my master's dissertation about "fantastic" musical instruments on stage in theater performances, especially during the 16th century. The term "fantastic" refers to bizarre, unusual, disguised, dressed up, or zoomorphic-shaped musical instruments designed for the stage. There were instruments which were transformed into fantastic ones, thereby losing their functional or acoustical requirements, while, on the other hand, some instruments retained their function but were adapted to the scene by appropriate masking.

(Continued on following page)

Since the subjects of the performances were mostly mythological, sometimes we can see attempts to make reconstructions of ancient Greco-Roman instruments: such reconstructions originated as fantastic musical instruments, which never would have existed if not on the stage.

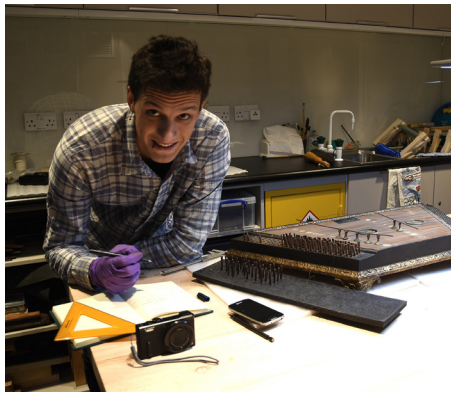
Through my research I will examine the function and the symbolism of the rather fantastic shapes of these musical instruments: were they most likely considered part of the scenography on the stage, a distinguished object for a character, or proper characters themselves?

We can find several sources either in descriptions or chronicles of the Florentine *intermedii* or *sacre rappresentazioni* in the 16th century. I want to enlarge my research to other forms of performances at that time to understand if “fantastic” musical instruments were a widespread practice. Finally, I plan to develop my research past the 16th century and examine musical instruments thought for the stage in later times, with the aim of gathering information on the evolution of these kinds of fantastical objects.



LUCA ROCCA

I am a student in Conservation and Restoration of the University of Pavia. You may remember me from my presentation at the last meeting in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, about the conservation treatment of the salterio MIMEd 1093 by Giovanni Antonio Berera. I attended the AMIS conference



thanks to the Gribbon Award and of course to my mentor Dr. Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet.

As you can suppose, the research about the salterio has not ended, nor my interest in the conservation of the instrument. However, as a student, one comes continuously in contact with new topics, or different subjects that stimulate my interest, so it is very difficult to remain focused on just one issue. Luckily for me, I recently had to choose a subject

for my degree thesis, so for the next few years I will focus on that.

Part of what we study at my university is the conservation of scientific tools—a field that puts together all the instruments used in physics demonstrations and teaching, as well as medical tools, instruments used to measure time, and mechanical devices. Now, to see machines that move by themselves, or sometimes even produce music and sound is something that has captured the fascination of many during the centuries, and still does.

In fact, it is by the mechanical musical devices that I was captured, and slowly followed their history back through time, to the point that suddenly I realized that those instruments precede most of the musical instruments that we know today by many centuries. It is my intention to investigate what was the first purpose of those machines. Were they made for general amazement, and the music was just an accessory, or was there meaning in the music? Could it easily go beyond wonder towards the meaning of a divine epiphany, as the *deus ex machina* intervention was regarded? These are the questions that aroused the thinking of the Hellenistic period, which lingered as we continue to the 9th century Baghdad, and finally to the Italian Renaissance.

As a side note, since many of the original treaties were translated from Greek and Arabic in the city of Urbino in the 16th and 17th centuries, I have also researched the history of that city, and, since I was already there, have wondered about a possible tradition in musical instrument construction in that place. Urbino was one of the most enlightened courts in the Italian Renaissance and references in contemporary iconography to musical instruments are not infrequent. It is not so crazy an assumption that there must have been someone to provide the instruments for the delight of the Duke. Apart from the information we can get from the *studiolo* of Federico da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, the instruments that bore the Urbino sign are four citterns. It is from them that I am trying to identify some possible makers, and if I am lucky, I will be able to share those beautiful histories with the AMIS community.

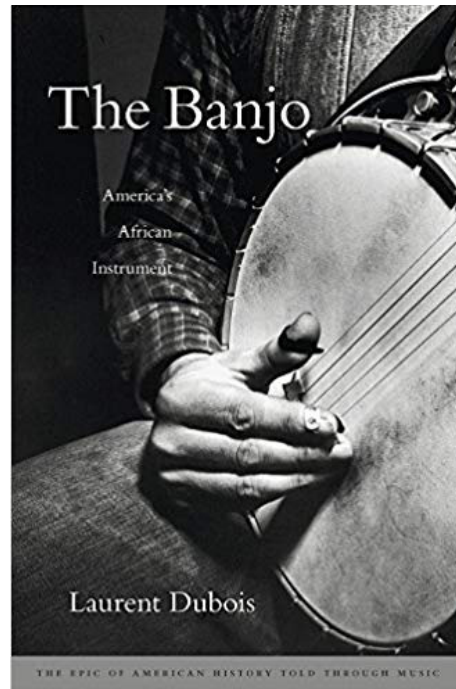


REVIEWS

Laurent Dubois. *The Banjo: America's African Instrument*. Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016. 364 pp.: 20 black-and-white illus. ISBN: 9780674047846 (cloth). \$29.95.

One might imagine the world of banjo players to be about as far as one can get from the ivory towers of academe. Then one remembers that Pete Seeger, among the high-profile figures of American music, was both inextricably linked to the banjo and the intellectual son of a pioneer in American musicology. Laurent Dubois' loving telling of Seeger's journey with the banjo, in the final chapter of his book, shows his hand. Up to that point, *The Banjo* reads like the work of a historian of the "Black Atlantic." And fine historical scholarship it is. Yet the ultimately jubilant tone of this self-described "biography of the banjo" (3) reminds us that Dubois is invested in the instrument; he is an enthusiast who not only documents the routes of skin-covered chordophones, but also derives meaning from the banjo in his personal life. *The Banjo* is the labor of love of a banjo fan, an offering to other banjo fans, and an engaging read for anyone interested in the social history of sound instruments of the Atlantic world.

The last two decades have been exciting for banjo scholars. A paradigm-shift in the 1990s led to a return to envisioning the banjo as African in origin, kindling scholarly interest. After the milestone Black Banjo Gathering at Appalachian State University in 2005, interest grew to a blaze fueled by the passions of performers and academics alike. New media broadened horizons of information access and communication, and enthusiasts found themselves collectively engaged in reex-



amining the banjo's past. Dubois entered the discussion on the ground floor; the benefit of his close associations with performers, builders, scholars, and hobbyists of all sorts can be seen throughout this work. Indeed, while taking nothing away from Dubois' personal achievement of a decade of research and his brilliant selection and use of sources, this work would not have been pos-

sible before the recent critical mass of collective effort. The same practically necessitated Dubois' work. With so much new information shared orally, in on-line discussions, and through social media, a comprehensive work was needed to consolidate it. Dubois is eminently suited to do the job. In reading through the book's encyclopedic accounting of banjo "sightings," it appears to me as though Dubois felt his task to be to include and give shape to all the notable evidence for the banjo's history. The result is a work that is up to date, comprehensive, and sure to satisfy even the most dedicated banjo geek.

By the same token, the rigorous inclusion of banjo sightings and, at times, a surfeit of contextualizing detail about the sources suggest that a convenient reference work is not what readers should look for in *The Banjo*. While never leaving the genre of academic history, its organization leans toward running narrative, reminiscent of the accordion's adventures in Proulx's novel *Accordion Crimes* (Scribner, 1996). As in the latter, Dubois' centering of an instrument-protagonist allows us to know it as something more than a simple object. This is a tale of culture transmission and social survival in the New World; the banjo's perspective offers "a privileged view of American history as a crossroads..." (4). The story is fascinating, and readers are advised not to look for bullet-pointed information, but to sit back for the ride, confident that the tour will make

(Continued on following page)

stops at all of the major sites of American banjo history.

The journey begins within a wide range of northern, western, and central African culture. Chapter 1 surveys this territory's lutes and harps and broader musical practices while being careful not to suggest any one to be the single progenitor of New World banjos. This translates, in Chapter 2, into a characterization of the banjo as the first so-called "African" instrument. Emerging in the 16th through 18th centuries out of a combination of peoples and memories in the Diaspora, it was "capable of offering familiar melodies and rhythms, but without being clearly derived from the traditions of any single African ethnicity" (52). Dubois occasionally appears to digress by discussing other instruments, like the gumba of the Maroons—until one realizes that he is wisely avoiding being reductive; what we don't know about the banjo we might extrapolate through the consideration of other instrumental forms, musical practices, and cultural meanings.

The highlight of the volume, Chapter 3, presents an approach that is not usually seen amongst discussants of the banjo. It argues that the banjo was a living repository for and perpetuator of African signification in the limiting context of slavery. Dubois interprets evidence from iconography and the ornamentation on instruments to reveal how the banjo "tapped into and helped to generate spiritual power" (134). The next chapter, focusing on narratives of the enslaved, con-

tinues the argument that the banjo's music sustained displaced black communities.

Chapters 5 and 6 narrate the acculturation of the banjo to European-American society and aesthetics. "The Banjo Meets Blackface" draws from recent decades' rich scholarship on minstrelsy to paint a picture of the circumstances giving birth to the white banjoists of that genre. "Rings Like Silver, Shines Like Gold" updates the pioneering work of Karen Linn (*That Half-Barbaric Twang*, Univ. of Illinois, 1991), explicating late 19th-century attempts to "disaggregate the banjo and the plantation" (228). The instrument was re-formed, not only in terms of its construction—the result of mass-production driving technological changes—but also with respect to its very status as an "African" instrument. New makers, performance competitions, and the publication of instruction manuals were some of the factors that effected the instrument's embrace outside of African-American communities and the low-brow minstrelsy. One place where it came to be embraced was Appalachia, where the instrument was an authentic expression grown of new roots and re-coded as "white."

"What did it mean, in the wake of this, to be an African-American banjo player?", Dubois asks (247). The remainder of the book tells how the banjo persevered through the 20th century. The transformed banjo led to both successes and failures for black musicians with respect to the emerging Blues,

Jazz, and erstwhile "Hillbilly" genres. While Dubois notes that African-American musicians never totally abandoned the banjo, by World War II it had been phased out of most genres of popular music. In the end, Dubois gives much credit to Pete Seeger—who reconfigured "folk" music as political protest—and Earl Scruggs, the bluegrass banjo-picking innovator, for rescuing the banjo from the edge of the abyss.

Each chapter of *The Banjo* includes a selection of good-quality images that are not gratuitous, but rather illustrate finer points of analysis. For example, a photograph of a lanky Seeger and his long-necked banjo helps us visualize the idea that the player came to embody the instrument. Instead of loading the volume with still photographs of banjo forms, Dubois opts to feature works of visual art that include banjo players, and which tend to offer more information about cultural meaning.

Unavoidably, some of Dubois' choices will receive mixed responses. For example, I find the most exciting parts of the work to be those in which he brings his expertise on the Caribbean (especially Haiti) to bear on this subject. Yet, as with most previous work, the story ultimately revolves around the U.S. So while *The Banjo* goes deeper than its predecessors, it follows more or less the same course. Another example: Dubois now and again evokes a concept of "sonic experience," as of the "hum and buzz of strings vibrating through skin" (90, 88). While attention to

sound and/or timbre suggests an exciting avenue for interpretation, Dubois does not follow through the analysis. Yet another quibble I have is with the absence of a bibliography. The choice to cite references only in notes makes it inconvenient for scholars of the subject to assess the scope of Dubois' sources.

The above-noted limitations aside, Dubois' is a monumental work worthy of its broad title.

✉ **Gibb Schreffler**
Pomona College
Claremont, California

Harald Strebel. *Anton Stadler, Wirken und Lebensumfeld des "Mozart-Klarinetisten": Fakten, Daten und Hypothesen zu seiner Biographie (Anton Stadler, the Working Life of "Mozart's Clarinetist": Biographical Facts, Data, and Hypotheses).* 2 vols. Vienna: Hollitzer, 2016. Vol. 1, 802 pp. vol. 2, 587 pp., 978-3-99012-367-6, \$189.99.

When waiting for a new publication on Anton Stadler, Mozart's favorite clarinet player, what should we expect? Certainly no more than a small pamphlet! Since there have been numerous reports concerning Stadler in biographical works on Mozart and in books that deal with the history of the clarinet, what more could have

been discovered about a person who lived and died more than two hundred years ago, was a prominent musician, but below the rank of great composers of his age, and not even among the innumerable "small masters" who were contemporaries of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven?

This unsuspecting reviewer was simply floored when the parcel arrived! Harald Strebel's magnum opus is as weighty as it is substantial and comes in a cardboard box containing two volumes, each of them having encyclopedic dimensions! The first is an 802-page book and comprises the biography. It can be read, even if one is not interested in music, as a well-told story, which gives numerous details of the lives of both Stadler brothers and also a lively picture of their social environment and historic significance. Because footnote references are included on every page, the reader can immediately obtain additional information or stick to the narrative.

The second volume contains 587 pages of historical documents which form the basis of Strebel's biography, and his chapters on Mozart's music, including the clarinets, basset clarinets, basset horns, clarinets d'amour, Viennese clarinet players, and woodwind instrument makers of Stadler's era. The last chapter in volume two provides a lot of thrilling new information and is of special interest for organologists and instrument collectors. These include letters and documents on the work of Mathias Rockobauer, Jakob Bauer, Fried-

rich Lempp, Martin Lempp, Franz Scholl, Stephan Koch, Caspar Tauber, Johann Friedrich Hammig, Carl Friedrich Hammig (Hammig Junior?), and Carl Hammig. The documents will be most valuable for scholars investigating these makers. However, it is important that Strebel identifies each of his sources, since there has been much erroneous information on Stadler, his supposedly foul character, and misleading statements even by scrupulous writers, which Strebel does not hesitate to point out and clearly criticize.

One can hardly imagine how much time Strebel devoted to research in archives, including travelling to several locations, working to reach his goal of bringing more light to Stadler's life, whose outstanding skills and musicianship inspired the composition of some of the most beautiful clarinet music. Harald Strebel's achievements in other articles and an interview (www.smpv.ch) testify to his extensive historical and musical knowledge of the Mozart era.

For any future author who deals with Mozart and Stadler there is simply no way to ignore Strebel's superb publication. It is warmly recommended to all clarinet players, music lovers, and individuals interested in history. Being a scholarly publication the price of the two volumes is high but worthwhile. English speaking readers should only be

(Continued on following page)

encouraged and not deterred by the German language.

✎ **Thomas Reil**
Clarinet collector,
historian, and restorer
Uhingen, Germany

Victoria Vorreiter. *Hmong Songs of Memory: Traditional Secular and Sacred Hmong Music: essays, images, and film.* Chiangmai, Thailand: Resonance Press, 2016. 267 pp., about 350 color photos, color map, glossaries, references. ISBN (paperback) 978-0-99-81239-0-5, (DVD film, 75 min.) 978-0-99811239-1-2, \$65.00 plus \$20.00 shipping from Thailand (www.Tribal-MusicAsia.com).

Hmong Songs of Memory: Traditional Secular and Sacred Hmong Music offers readers a unique window into the daily life and spiritual activities of Hmong communities living in the upland areas of mainland Southeast Asia. Vorreiter's insights come from more than a decade of field research with "hilltribe" communities from this region (primarily Laos and Thailand), including the Hmong, but also Karen, Mien, Lahu, Akha, and Lisu ethnic groups. Her previous publication, *Songs of Memory* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Resonance Press, 2009), presented a survey of music and cultural activities associated with these populations, whereas this work examines the musical instruments, repertory, and contexts for performance associated

only with the Hmong, giving greater depth of attention to ethnographic description, instrument construction and performance techniques, and text analysis of song.

First impressions of this work focus on the stunning photography that highlights the colorful and intricate textile designs of Hmong clothing, as well as a museum quality presentation of instruments and other artifacts found in Hmong culture. An "Instrument Archives" at the end of the book offers photographs and descriptions of

fourteen upland instruments, which are complemented by "Tonal Preludes" of performances on melodic instruments on the accompanying DVD. Vorreiter's publisher supported a full-color presentation that would have been greatly diminished with a traditional black and white monograph. Her natural eye for creating memorable images is evident throughout the book, as well as the accompanying DVD offering a complementary view of the music and ritual with dynamic visual imagery, unencumbered by intrusive dialogue. To this end, the video is subtitled throughout in either English or Hmoob Dawb (a Romanized script of the White Hmong language). This pres-

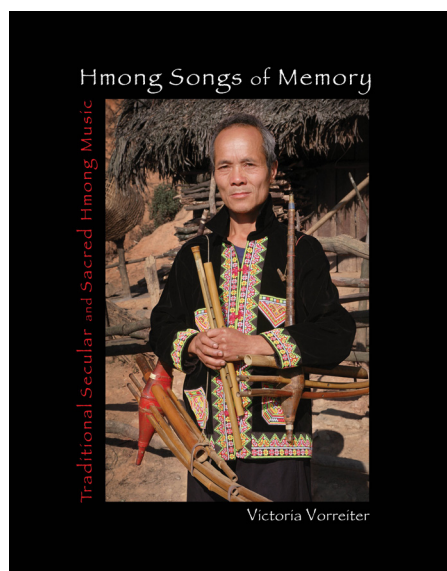
ents the reader with an opportunity to prelude the music and ritual discussed in the text, as an initial enticement for learning more about the examined activities. Specialists and non-specialists alike will appreciate her presentation in such an accessible and conscientious manner. Vorreiter avoids the pitfall of trying to explain the focus events and their meaning through narration that oversimplifies the more robust review found in the accompanying literature. As such, reading the text is a necessity to gain a

more complete understanding of the imagery presented in both the book and film.

After a brief introduction to Hmong history and cultural customs, the secular and sacred music of the Hmong groups is addressed in two parts. Ac-

knowledging that variations in music and dance performance exist among Hmong communities, her discussion gives the reader a thorough understanding of how instruments are made, performed, and valued in Hmong culture. Each example from the film has a parallel discussion in the text that is enhanced by supporting photographs, many taken from the same performances featured in the video.

While the review of secular traditions acquaint the reader with a breadth of musical activ-



ities found among the Hmong, a majority of the presentation in both media focuses on the healing ceremony of a young boy (Cas Koos) who had fallen ill as a baby. The film presents the ritual as a largely uninterrupted documentation of the event; the book expands on the ceremonial activity to introduce related aspects of Hmong cosmology and sacred ritual as conveyed by community members and local interpreters familiar with the Hmong language and customs. Vorreiter steers clear of speculation on the meaning of music and ritual, opting instead to present a discussion with an objective and descriptive tone common to ethnographic study.

This decision to avoid an ego-centric perspective of Hmong musical culture may invite criticism from post-modernist scholars who consider inherent researcher bias a necessary topic for consideration in contemporary academic literature. In conversations with the author, however, Vorreiter regards such indulgences as distracting and somewhat disrespectful to the people who trust her to share their worldview and life experiences with a global audience. While outsiders may view a preservationist attitude as antiquated, the Hmong recognize the encroachment of modern society on their way of living; welcoming and encouraging Vorreiter's interest and enthusiasm in documenting and disseminating knowledge of their history and cultural expressions.

Notably absent is music transcription and analysis within the text itself. While the accompa-

nying DVD certainly offers a sonic experience that notational representations of sound could never provide, a thorough attention to lyrical content would be enhanced with a transcription suggesting the rhythmic and melodic elements of performance. As this work is easily the most extensive documentation of Hmong musical practices and is unlikely to be replicated by researchers for many years to come, the addition of a musical transcription will benefit future scholars who may not have access or the means of hearing the video recordings. While some transcription of music is found in other resources, such as the writings of Amy Catlin, Vorreiter's musical background and training in oral tradition provide insights into musical production that may prove invaluable to future generations of not only scholars, but Hmong descendants as well.

In conclusion, this work is a formidable contribution to the understanding of Hmong musical culture and the experiences of their daily lives and worldview. The author's passion and preparation for presenting this work is considerable and rare. *Hmong Songs of Memory* implicitly reminds us that extended ethnographic fieldwork should be appreciated and valued among all scholars of cultural studies. As such, this book should be on the shelves of libraries at any institution that offers programs of scholarship in any area of cultural study, particularly if ethnomusicology is part of the curriculum. Hopefully, Vorreiter plans to offer

parallel resources focused on specific ethnic groups based on her extensive research with other minority upland populations in Southeast Asia.

✎ **Andrew Shahriari**
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio

Save the Date!

AMIS Annual Meeting May 15–18, 2019



Carolina Music Museum Greenville, South Carolina

Join us for the 2019 AMIS meeting at the Carolina Music Museum, Greenville, SC, May 15–18, 2019. This new museum had its grand opening in late March 2018, with an inaugural exhibit “Facing South: Keyboard Instruments in the Early Colonies.” Founded by Greenville arts advocates Steve Bichel, Beth Lee, and Tom Strange, it features a collection of more than 40 English, European, and American pianos and harpsichords dating from 1570 to 1845, collected by Tom Strange and now housed at the museum.

During the meeting, attendees will also have the opportunity to visit the Joe R. & Joella F. Utley Collection of Brass Instruments in nearby Spartanburg, with curator Sabine Klaus.