NEWS FROM
THE Stearns
COLLECTION OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Stout to Speak at September
2 + 2 + 2 Lecture

The walls of Professor Louis Stout's studio are adorned with horns - horns on hooks, horns on top of cabinets, and horns in pictures. One picture in particular stands out; a hunting party is gathered for a moment in a clearing in the wood. As the hunters and the dogs listen attentively, a man plays a hunting horn.

"After he finishes playing," Professor Stout says, "they will all await an answer from another horn in another section of their party. These people had about three hundred distinct calls that they used to communicate while on the hunt. It was actually like a language of its own."

The "language of the horn" is certainly spoken fluently by Professor Stout. His enthusiasm is absolutely infectious; as he speaks, he leans forward slightly in his chair, and he tells the story of the history of an instrument, obviously the instrument he loves.

This story will be told for all to hear on Sunday, September 13 at 2:00 P.M. in the McIntosh Vocal Arts Center of the School of Music, as Professor Stout heralds the start of The Stearns 1987-88 2 + 2 + 2 lecture/concert series with his lecture on "The Horn - From the Forest to the Concert Hall."

Assisted by senior horn major Michelle Stebleton, Professor Stout will use about fifty horns from his own award-winning collection and from The Stearns for the lecture, and "I will play every one of them," he states. He will discuss their dates and places of origin as he describes the evolution of the horn from an instrument made of an actual animal horn to the modern horn played in symphony orchestras today. His own personal horn collection is the largest workable collection in the world. It includes steer and ram horns, a shofar given to him by the New York Philharmonic, seashells, hunting horns (one of which dates back to 1650), and a lur, carbon-dated from 3000-5000 B.C. in the Bronze Age. One of the highlights of the lecture is certain to be Stout's demonstration of seven horns made by Raoux, the most famous horn maker in history.

The development of the horn can be divided into five stages, the first being the natural stage, when horns were crafted from animal horns. Later, as human skills with metals improved, the longer, straighter herd trumpetets, alpine horns, and Tibetan horns became popular. The longer horn provided more of an overtone series, and therefore more flexibility and a greater range.

Around 1650, the hunting horn began to be used; as composers heard the sounds of the horns, they started to use them in their works, and by 1710, horns were being played in concert halls in Vienna. Opera in particular found the sound of the horn well-suited to its dramatic tendencies, and many scenes were written with the instruments. However, different horns had to be used to play in different keys, which proved rather unwieldy. The result of these problems was the hand horn era, quite possibly the golden age of the horn.

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Business Meeting to
Kick Off Lecture Series

The Friends of The Stearns Committee will hold its first official business meeting on Sunday, September 13, 1987, at 1:00 P.M. at the University of Michigan School of Music. The meeting will be held in the Recital Hall, immediately next to the McIntosh Vocal Arts Center where The Stearns' 2+2+2 lectures are held (see directions, p.4).

At this important meeting, members in good standing will elect new officers to the board of trustees. They will also hear a presentation on the state of The Stearns by Professor William Malm, director, and Professor James Borders, curator, with emphasis on long-range plans for the future of the collection.

Immediately following the meeting, at 2:00 P.M., the September 2+2+2 lecture will take place. The demonstration and recital will feature Professor Louis Stout, instructor of French horn at the School of Music (see article, page 1). This will be a wonderful opportunity for all members of The Friends to play an active role in the development of the collection and to hear a fascinating lecture by a true expert in his field. Don't miss it!
Instrument Strictly "Hands-Off"
Steans acquisition among first electronic instruments

One of the most fascinating aspects of The Stearns is the ability of visitors to have "hands-on" experience with several of the collection's over two thousand instruments. However, in many instances, such contact with an instrument is impossible or impractical. Rare and fragile pieces, perhaps collected from foreign countries or preserved for centuries and almost always irreplaceable, can only be admired from a safe distance. We must imagine the hands of an African tribesman or an English violin player on their respective instruments, and marvel at the sounds that must have been.

Interestingly enough, one of the newest acquisitions of The Stearns falls into an entirely different category. It is not touched, but the reasons are not extreme age or fragility. Rather, it was new. In fact, the conditions applied, the theremin, one of the first electronic instruments, is unique in that, after the performer turns on the power, it is played without being touched at all.

The theremin was invented in 1920 by Lev Termen, a Russian inventor. Termen, born in 1896, studied physics at Petrograd University, and also played the cello. In 1919, the young inventor set up a research laboratory at the Physico-Technical Institute in Petrograd; there he began to develop an electronic instrument which he named the aetherphon (the name was later changed in honor of the inventor).

In August 1920, Termen gave the first demonstration of his unusual instrument in public. The following year, a presentation for Lenin resulted in a tour of the Soviet Union on which he gave nearly two hundred recitals. In the ensuing years, he toured most of Western Europe, and in 1927, he traveled to the United States, where he introduced the theremin to an enthusiastic audience at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York on January 31.

The theremin operates entirely on electrical circuits, and the performer controls volume and pitch by moving his hands in relation to two electrodes. Pitch is raised by moving the right hand closer to a long vertical rod on top of the instrument; when the hand is moved away, the pitch lowers. Moving the left hand closer to a loop antenna on the side of the instrument lowers the volume, and moving it away causes the volume to increase. The thereminist exercises as much control over tone quality and production as a singer does over the voice: in fact, with practice of the proper techniques, glistening, vibrato and other special effects can be achieved.

Two radio-frequency oscillators are used to produce the unusual sound of the instrument, one at a fixed frequency and the other determined by the distance of the right hand from the antenna. The two frequencies, not within the range of human hearing, are mixed, and the audible pitch that results is amplified over a loudspeaker.

Termen stayed in America for eleven years; while in this country, he continually worked at improving his original instrument, and actually developed several variants upon it, including a four-octave keyboard theremin. His curiosity and imagination were seemingly boundless; other projects (some more successful than others) included a Terpsitone, or "theremin ether wave musical stage", on which a dancer's movements controlled the volume and her arm position the pitch, and another version of the original theremin in which the tremble of the instrument was controlled by the performer's eyes.

In 1938, he returned to the Soviet Union, where he continued to work in the field of musical electronics. He was appointed a professor of acoustics at Moscow University in 1964, and in 1966 he published a book on physics and music.

In the February 1930 issue of Radio Broadcast magazine, an article entitled "A New Musical Instrument for the Home" told of the wonders of the R.C.A. theremin (R.C.A. began manufacturing the theremin in 1929):

"It has no stops, key boards, or any of the other mechanical contrivances with which musicians on other instruments must labor. — The highest tone that can be secured is about 1400 cycles which is about the limit of the average soprano or oboe. The lowest note is some three and one half octaves below. . . This is somewhat greater than the viola."

By the mid-1950's, however, Robert A. Moog was manufacturing a theremin with an expanded five-octave range, and Moog produced five different models between 1954 and the mid-1960's.

The Stearns received its theremin in July 1986 from the estate of Vera Richardson Simpson, who had used it extensively in public performances. The photograph accompanying this article was taken from an advertisement of a performance with the Detroit Civic Orchestra at the 1938 Michigan State Fair, and she also played the theme music for The Green Hornet show.

These varied uses of the theremin were often the exception rather than the rule. Andrey Pashchenko's Symphonic Mystery for theremin and orchestra, first performed in Leningrad in May 1924, is apparently the first orchestral work with a solo electronic instrument.

Clarinist Chosen as October 2 + 2 + 2 Speaker

William McColl, October 2 + 2 + 2 lecturer

William McColl, the Professor of Clarinet at the University of Washington in Seattle, has been selected as the lecturer for the October offering in The Stearns '2 + 2 + 2 series. The lecture, to be held on Sunday, October 11 at 2:00 P.M. in the McIntosh Vocal Arts Center at the School of Music, will focus in part on the early clarinet and its development.

McColl, a founding member of the Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet (in residence at U. Washington), has an active interest in the history of his instrument. In fact, he has designed and built a bassett clarinet upon which he has performed the Mozart clarinet concerto, and he has also performed upon a replica of an 1810 bass clarinet which he built himself.

As a member of the Soni Ventorum Quintet, McColl has made three tours of Latin America and two tours of Europe under the auspices of the United States Department of State; the ensemble also has twenty recordings currently in print. He has studied in the United States with Keith Steln, George Wain, and Herbert Blayman, and in Vienna, Austria, with Leonard Wiach, where he graduated from the State Academy of Music. He has been a member of the Philharmonia Hungarica in Vienna, the Orquesta Filarmonica de las Americas in Mexico City, the Puerto Rico Symphony and the Casals Festival Orchestra under Pablo Casals.
Stout Speaks

graduating from Ithaca College in 1951, I got a job playing in the Kansas City Philharmonic, where we both played for four years.” The couple then moved to Chicago, where he played with the symphony and she with Chicago Lyric Opera for five years before his appointment at Michigan.

On the day of his interview, Professor Stout was awaiting a call from Tom Monaghan, the founder of Domino’s Pizza. Mr. Monaghan had apparently found an old horn, and was interested in taking some lessons. Stout was eager to teach Monaghan, and jokingly wondered what the acoustics of the executive’s leather-floored office at Domino’s Farms would be like. It would be easy to question how productive a beginning lesson in such a situation could be, but no worry.

With a teacher like Louis Stout, it must have been an exciting experience.

Instrument Strictly “Hands-Off”

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instrument. Joseph Schillinger's First Airphonic Suite for theremin and orchestra was performed in Cleveland in 1929, and compositions for the instrument were also written by Varese, Martinu, and Percy Grainger, among others. In 1930, Stokowski actually used a fingerboard theremin, a later development of Terzmen’s resembling a cello, to reinforce the double basses in the Philadelphia Orchestra.

In later years, the theremin was used in many music hall and variety performances, and ensembles such as the Theremin Electrical Symphony were assembled. The theremin was popular in the theme music of many motion pictures and television shows. The sound became familiar enough that, even when a theremin was not used, it was sometimes imitated: at one point in the score for the Broadway musical The Boys From Syracuse, the marking “quasi-theremin” is found. Popular music groups like The Beach Boys used theremins, and in 1965, an instrument similar to Terzmen’s Terpsitone was used in John Cage’s Variations V, in which dancers moving between antennae create differences in musical tone.

The Stearns hopes to have its theremin restored and on display sometime during the coming months, so that everyone can view this instrument with a unique place in our musical history.

Fall 1987 Stearns Collection Staff

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Kim Keen, Teaching Assistant
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Be A Friend to The Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments

Enrich your life — Join the Friends of the Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments.

Enjoy the growth and maintenance of the University’s internationally recognized and respected musical instrument collection.

Enjoy your commitment to the cultural community. With your help, additional instruments may be restored, played, displayed and appreciated by the musical public.

By becoming a Friend, you will receive News from the Stearns, invitations to the new 2+2 lecture series and announcements of upcoming exhibits and performances. Your contribution will help support all activities of the Stearns Collection.

Membership in the Friends of the Stearns Collection is available in the following categories:

- Benefactor $1,000
- Patron $500
- Sustaining $100
- Friends $30

Beyond 200 miles

I (We) want to support the Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments.

I enclose my check for $ ___________ made payable to The University of Michigan Stearns Collection.

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Please circle title(s) and print your name above as you would like it to appear on donor lists.

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Please mail this form with your check to Friends of the Stearns Collection, The University of Michigan School of Music, Moore Building, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109.
How Do I Get to The Stearns?

The Stearns Collection of Musical instruments is located in the new Margaret Dow Towsey wing at the south end of the Earl V. Moore School of Music on Balts Drive in the University of Michigan North campus area. Enter through the doors nearest to the parking lot. The MacIntosh Vocal Arts Center is just across the hall and to the right of the entrance, and The Stearns galleries are down the stairs at the end of the hall to the right.

Admission: Free at all times.

Exhibit Hours: Wednesday-Saturday 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m., Sunday 2:00-8:00 p.m.

Group Visits and Tours: To arrange for group visits or guided tours by members of The Stearns collection staff, please call (313) 763-4389.

Parking: Metered parking is available south of the entrance doors.

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