STEARNS ON STAGE

The quality and diversity of the Stearns collection holds many delights and surprises. Among other things, it even contains a complete drum and percussion set from the pit band of the Vaudeville era.

To feature this "trap set" the collection will present "Vaudeville Revisited" on Sunday March 12th. This special presentation — a members only event — will be a revival of what the trap set used to play for — dancing, music, magic and juggling — entertainment straight off the Vaudeville stage.

Included in the show will be three generations of a Michigan family who danced on the Vaudeville stage, and in interview with The Stearns during the first half of the show, will be Tom Donahue, a member of that very family.

— THE DONAHUE FAMILY —
A MICHIGAN LINK WITH THEATER HISTORY
"Entertainment deluxe - 9 of the cleverest kids on stage", So proclaimed the Ann Arbor Daily News on April 8, 1934 in its description of a unique and popular vaudeville act well known to depression bound audiences throughout the midwest for its infectious cheerfulness.

WHO WERE THE DONAHUE KIDS?
Ranging in years from 1½ through 17, Emmett, Jack, Dennis, Tommy, Dick, Betty, Kathryn, Nancy, and Barbara Donahue put on "clean, wholesome and entertaining acts".

The brains behind the act was mother. Born in 1892 of Irish stock, Ella Campbell was a talented musician who graduated from the Detroit Conservatory of Music as an accomplished concert pianist. Despite her family's expectations of a concert career, Ella married Emmet Donahue, a Michigan farmboy and bricklayer, and allowed her musical career to change direction somewhat.

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RECENT ACQUISITIONS

In addition to the Stearns Collection Galleries, the School of Music boasts several other displays. Presently the third floor exhibits feature the more recent instruments acquired by the collection. Outside the Music Library the instruments exemplify the world scope of the collection. Generous donors have added a Malaysian sapeh, and Indonesia angklung, and a New Guinean slit gong. Inside the library a 19th century American flute and a Portuguese mandolin are presented. Be sure to include these exciting exhibits when you visit the Stearns, and don’t miss seeing the first Moog synthesizer ever made on display in the second floor lobby. Experience and learn about our modern musical history!

STOP PRESS . . . STOP PRESS . . . STOP PRESS . . . STOP PRESS

STEARNS COLLECTION RECEIVES NATIONAL ATTENTION!

The Stearns Collection’s acquisition of the first commercially produced Moog Synthesizer was featured in the February 5th edition of the New York Times. Come see for yourself what the nation is talking about!

WANNA TOUR? WANNA WORKSHOP? — HERE’S HOW!

The Stearns Galleries (see back page for location and hours) are open to the public at all times without charge. Many visitors have benefitted from taking the extra step of arranging to have a Stearns tour guide with them to answer any questions on the exhibits.

Stearns tours are tailored to suit your group, be they young school children or adult special interest groups.

Various workshops are also available. It is possible, for example, for you to experience playing Gamelan ensemble music on the Stearns authentic ensemble. All it requires is the ability to sit on the floor and the willingness to learn.

Guided tours are available at a cost of $1 per person (50¢ per child). A workshop costs $40 plus $1 per peson (50¢ per child).

To make reservations for either of these opportunities, call 763-4589 or write to The Stearns, University of Music, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2085.

2 + 2 + 2 = 2 p.m. on the 2nd Sunday of the first 2 months of each semester.
Stearns on Stage
Continued from page 1

From the very first child, Ella began to nurture a troop of entertainers that grew with each succeeding child. As director, choreographer, costume designer, seamstress and musical accompanist, she combined the different talents and abilities of her children. No-one was excluded and all were important. Emmett, the eldest, had a beautiful soprano voice while Betty, Dick and Tom were fine dancers. They were featured in a soft shoe routine to “Tea for Two”. Jack, #2 child, couldn’t keep a tune very well but he was a gutsy performer whose style was perfectly suited to what the family called “the crazy songs”. Jack could not dance very well, but mother put him in the middle and directed the other children to shuffle around him! All nine children did perform the Waltz Clog, but the Buck and Wing and the Soft Shoe, being more specialized, were reserved for the better dancers. Denny, child #3 and a more flamboyant character, was great as the announcer. Being such a large act, the Donahue family was generally the finale of 4 or 5 acts.

In great demand throughout the midwest, the family travelled in a 7 passenger Studebaker car. A rug covered board was placed over the two opera seats and that made adequate seating for 4 children.

WHAT DID FATHER DO?
Father “couldn’t carry a tune in a basket!” but each number had its own wardrobe and dad was responsible for keeping all the trappings in order. Sometimes that meant having a parasol ready, or a straw hat and a cane, or maybe a false beard. Sometimes it meant lining up 18 shoes! He never missed a performance and always smiled and applauded encouragement from the side of the stage with as much enthusiasm as if he was seeing the act for the first time. Once, in 1948, he was included in the stage act when the family performed “That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine”. Although well rehearsed, when it came time to move, dad’s feet were glued to the floor! The children couldn’t understand what had happened. They never knew what stage fright was!

THE END OF AN ERA
Vaudeville faded out of theatres when the talkies arrived around 1933. The early talkies’ primitive sound equipment was large and cumbersome. It took up the entire stage area and left no room behind the screen for vaudeville acts. Only the exceptionally large United Artist or Fox theatres could still accommodate vaudeville, and indeed did so right up until the 60’s.

WHAT NOW?
Today there are no vaudeville theatres. For the Donahues, family gatherings such as wakes and weddings provide the stage and their own vaudeville tradition continues.

Why not join Friends of the Stearns and travel back in time with us on Sunday March 12th at 2 p.m. in the School of Music Recital Hall, when the Stearns presents — — — “Vaudeville Revisited”?

Become A Friend of The Stearns

With your help, additional instruments may be restored, played, displayed and appreciated by the musical public. Friends receive The Stearns Newsletter, invitations to the 2 + 2 + 2 lecture series and announcements of upcoming exhibits and performances. Your contributions 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 Sustaining $100 Student/Senior Citizen/Patriot $ 500 Friends $ 30 Beyond 200 miles $15

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.
Mr., Mrs., Dr., Miss, Ms.

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

Spouse’s name if not given above
Phone number

Street
City
State
Zip Code

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 Baits 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: Thurs., Fri. 10-5
Sat., Sun. 1-8

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.

Stearns Instruments
In Live Performance

MARCH 11th 8 p.m. McIntosh Theatre
Thomas Key 10 key B♭ Clarinet played by Kelly Burke

APRIL 2nd 8 p.m. Rackham Auditorium
A Concert of Japanese Music, featuring a professional shamisen player from Japan

APRIL 14th 8 p.m. Rackham Auditorium
Javanese Gamelan Ensemble in Concert

Stearns Staff
Spring, 1989

William P. Malm, Director
James M. Borders, Curator
Paula Survilla, Research Assistant
Hsiu Hui Tsai-Balaz, Research Assistant
Arlene Leitch, Editor, The Stearns Newsletter

Special Event for Members Only
VAUDEVILLE REVISITED

Sunday March 12, 1989
School of Music Recital Hall

for further information call 763-4389

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