The Virginia Martin Howard Lecture Series - Winter 1994

HARMONICAS AND PIANO ROLLS

Jerry Murad - Harmonica Master -
Sunday, January 9, 1994 - 2:00 p.m. - School of Music
Recital Hall - Admission Free

Jerry Murad, a self-taught master of the harmonica, founded the Harmonicats and has authored teaching manuals for the instrument. He is largely credited for bringing the harmonica its current popularity and instrumental recognition. He has pioneered new techniques in performance and improvisations, and has even invented new models and sounds. Mr. Murad's performing group, the Harmonicats, has played on Pops series with such notable orchestras as the Detroit Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony, and the Grand Rapids Symphony. The Stearns is pleased to present Mr. Murad as a Virginia Howard Lecturer on Sunday, January 9, at 2 p.m., where he will talk about and demonstrate the harmonica. His presentation is sure to be fun and fascinating for anyone interested in this truly unique instrument!

Artis Wodehouse - George Gershwin scholar -
Sunday, February 6, 1994 - 2:00 p.m. - School of Music
(Note Date Change) - Recital Hall - Admission Free

George Gershwin - the name is synonymous with American piano music. Have you ever wondered how Gershwin himself played his piano pieces? Have you ever considered the workings of player pianos and the restoration of piano rolls? On Sunday, February 6, at 2 p.m., the Stearns' Virginia Howard Lecturer, Artis Wodehouse, will answer these questions and more. Ms. Wodehouse's research interests have recently focused on Gershwin's piano roll recordings. Blending new technology with historical documents, Ms. Wodehouse brings these fascinating rolls to life on the Yamaha Disklavier, allowing unprecedented detail of Gershwin's interpretations. Nonesuch Records is producing sixty-five of the Gershwin piano roll performances generated by Ms. Wodehouse. The first CD in the series, Gershwin Plays Gershwin: The Piano Rolls, was released in November of 1993. A nationally-known Gershwin scholar, Ms. Wodehouse has transcribed all of Gershwin's 1926 and 1928 Solo Piano Disc Improvisations. Her notations of Gershwin's late piano rolls are soon to be published by Warner Brothers.
MUSEUM DISPLAY CASE DEDICATION CEREMONY

A dedication ceremony for the Virginia Patton Moss Display Case, donated by Cruse and Virginia Patton Moss, took place on Sunday, October 24, 1993. School of Music Dean Paul Boylan led the ceremony by thanking the Moseses for their generous contribution. After the ceremony, guests proceeded to the Organ Recital Hall where University Organist, Marilyn Mason, performed favorite works by Bach and Beethoven. Stearns Board members Constance Osler and Sally Rogers organized the event in honor of the day’s honoree and their fellow Board member, Virginia Patton Moss. Donors have responded to the efforts of friends like Virginia Patton Moss, contributing significantly to the Stearns Endowment Fund. Through the generosity of such donors, the Stearns collection, one of the more unique instrument collections in the country, remains for all to enjoy.

Visitors are encouraged to view the Virginia Patton Moss case, located in the Palmer Christian lobby of the Stearns Collection. It currently houses rare sacred flutes from New Guinea (highlighted in the Spring 1992 Newsletter, Vol. 6, #3). Visitors can actually hear the sounds of these flutes thanks to Cruse and Virginia Patton Moss.

New Exhibits in the Stearns Galleries

The Stearns Collection continually changes and updates its exhibits with the help of its research assistants. In addition to other displays, two new exhibits have been set up in conjunction with our Winter-term Virginia Howard Lectures (see p. 1).

In honor of our January presentation, Michael Naylor has designed an exhibit of Exotic Harmonicas and Accordions from our own collection. It includes a harmonica with a bell attached to it and a French accordion built in the shape of a cello.

Automated Instruments, designed by Nanette De Jong in conjunction with Artis Wodehouse’s talk on Gershwin piano rolls, highlights familiar as well as unusual automatic instruments, most dating from the late 19th century. Included in the exhibit are a cylinder music box from Switzerland, a hand-cranked barrel organ, and a mechanical zither. Also displayed are piano rolls, including a folding cardboard music book dating from the 1880s.

Paul Wiebe has installed the Changing Winds of Europe in a case next to the exhibit on the work of Adolf Sax. The new display traces the changes in woodwinds of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The colorful new exhibit in the Palmer Christian lobby (lower level gallery) is entitled Nagauta: The Heart of Kabuki Music. That is the title of Prof. William Malm's 1959 Ph.D. thesis at UCLA. It is appropriate since Prof. Malm taught Michigan students to perform such music in Burton Tower for 32 years (1961-1993; see Stearns Newsletter Vol. 7, no. 3). Nagauta ("long song") is a major genre of lyrical music heard in the kabuki theater and in Japanese classical dance recitals; instruments and vocal notation from this tradition are on display. You can see the shamisen, a three-stringed plucked lute which is nagauta’s basic melodic instrument, plus drums and flutes that add to the music's color. All are set against the background of an orange and gold kimono given the University of Michigan Japanese Music Study Group by Semba Kokun, a Japanese musician who taught in the program. Thanks to the skillful arrangement of the exhibit designer, Michael Naylor, visitors to The Stearns can enjoy the visual pleasures of this special music.
The Stearns Storage System

William P. Malm

Museum exhibits are like a skeleton. They show many basic features of a topic but not all the fine musculature and skin tones of the full body of knowledge. At the moment some 250 instruments from the Stearns can be viewed or studied in the School of Music or in performance ensembles such as the gamelan. The other 2,000 are in storage. Rows of shelves and sheets of acid-free plastic help store and protect most of The Stearns. The warehouse room has no windows so sunlight is not a concern, and a special humidifier is built into the heating system. The room entrance has an alarm that sounds at the University Security Office if unauthorized opening occurs. It is the dream of most museums. Here is a description on how it operates for The Stearns:

When the Stearns Building was transferred to the School of Engineering in 1982, the Stearns collection was challenged with the task of turning a mass of boxes and cases into a usable storage system. Two factors were used in organizing the collection. First, instruments were placed in areas based on the five basic classes of instruments under the so-called Sach-Hornbostel system: idiophone, membranophone, chordophone, aerophone, and electrophone. Each area was then subdivided into geographic areas using the letter code of the Murdock Human Relations Area File. These are E=Europe, cont. on p. 4

The European reed instruments are set on shelves in acid-free boxes made specifically for their size.

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 Virginia Martin Howard Lectures and announcements of upcoming exhibits and performances. Your tax deductible contribution will help support all activities of The Stearns Collection.

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

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

- Student / Senior Citizen / Beyond 200 miles $15

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

I (We) enclose a/my/our 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/Partner's name if not given above

Phone number

Street  City  State  Zip Code
How Do I Get To The Stearns?
The Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments is in the Margaret Dow Towles wing at the South end of the School of Music's Earl V. Moore Building. It is located on Baits Drive at the North Campus of the University of Michigan. Enter through the doors off the lower level parking circle. Once inside, the McIntosh Vocal Arts Center is just across from these doors. The galleries of The Stearns Collection are located below and can be reached by taking the elevator or the stairs.

ADMISSION: Open to the public without charge.

GALLERY HOURS: Wed.-Sat. from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m.

GROUP VISITS AND TOURS:
To arrange for a group visit and/or guided tour by a member of The Stearns Collection staff, please call (313) 763-4389. The suggested donation for a group visit and/or guided tour is $1 per person.

PARKING: Metered parking is available in the parking lot.

The Stearns Storage System
(cont. from p. 3)

A=Asia, M=Middle East, F=Africa, O=Oceania, S=South America, and N=North America. Cases and shelves at the warehouse were then numbered in the order in which they occurred. Thus, the first row began with case E-1 and the European stringed instruments ended in case E-15. The third row begins A-1 for Asian strings and so on along the first sets of rows each; M-1, F-1, O-1, etc. The next wind instrument set of shelves uses the geographic letters in the same order with numbers based on the highest number of the last set. With this system one can go to a type of instrument area, for example, drums (membranophones) and find all examples from a given culture, like Oceania, in the same place. It's not a perfect system but it works.

New instruments are marked with India ink. Each accessory, like a plectrum, bridge, or mouthpiece, is marked so that "floating" items can be placed in their proper harbor. So far the moves to and from exhibits have lost few parts.

The data on all instruments is in a computer program so that one can locate exhibit or research needs without direct warehouse searches. Still there is a special thrill to walk among the music treasures of the world that sit quietly in their places, waiting for our use.

The area in the warehouse where new acquisitions are catalogued and photographed.

The Stearns Collection
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