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Greetings and Looking Back at 2006

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Ann Arbor! And I hope that you are reading this double issue of The Stearns Newsletter amidst your various festivities and celebrations during the holiday season of 2006-2007. Looking back at the year that has passed, I can see that 2006 was particularly busy and successful. Indeed, it was so packed with events that production of the newsletter was delayed. To keep you updated, however, I have prepared this double issue, and I hope that you will enjoy the reports, essays, and illustrations.

Among the major developments of 2006, I would like to highlight the following that I and the collection staff take pride in developing. First the Stearns lecture-recital series is blossoming. In fact, in 2006, we had six exciting lectures/lecture-recitals, featuring music and musical instruments from four corners of the world (see Lectures, page 2). Audience response has been wonderful. Since we moved the time and venue of the Stearns lecture-recitals from Sunday afternoon at the Moore Building on North Campus to Saturday afternoon at the Burton Memorial Tower on Central Campus, we have seen larger audiences, many of whom have attended more than one of the lecture-recitals. Second, with the help of Mr. Tim Sullivan, a Ph.D student in music composition and a part-time Stearns assistant, the collection’s database now includes all information about individual instruments that was until now available only on index cards. Third, under the guidance of Ms. Carol Stepanchuk, the collection’s outreach to the public has grown substantively. As our records show, the collection gave guided tours to over 400 adults and children visitors in 2006.

As the director of the collection, I am particularly pleased with this development, because it fulfills one of the fundamental goals of the collection, which is to highlight and share our global and musical legacies through displays of musical instruments. Fourth, with our curator Mr. Christopher Dempsey, the collection is getting more of the care it deserves—many musical instruments have been stabilized and given better storage systems. Fifth, the collection has become more active and extensive in supporting performance and research activities. For example, we have loaned musical instruments to student ensembles of Philippino and Arab music, to individual students researching on brass instruments, and to faculty giving workshops and demonstrations on keyboard and wind instruments. We have also accommodated a selected number of national and international organoloists who visited the collection to study the unique instruments in our holdings. Sixth, to better coordinate with other U-M units and increase our exposure, we are now mounting displays outside the Moore Building and Hill Auditorium (see “The Allure of Collecting,” page 2). Until January 2007, a display of Frederick Stearns and his collecting of musical instruments can be viewed in the lobby of the Hatcher Graduate Library. Sixth, thanks to the hours and hours of work of Mr. Ted Lottman, a professional exhibitor, we have totally remodeled the Vesta Mills Gallery. There, a new and exciting display of fiddles and their cultural histories will open in February 2007. Looking back at this busy and productive 2006, I become very proud of what the collection has achieved. At the same time, I also see how much of that achievement depends on your continued interest and support for the collection.
Virginia Martin Howard Lecturers, 2006

On January 7, Professor Du Yaxiong of Hangzhou Conservatory, China, gave a lecture on traditional Uygur music and musical instruments in Northwestern China. With informative videos and actual samples of musical instruments, Professor Du underscored the hybrid and multi-layered nature of Uygur music in Northwestern China, a land that is now officially called the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Occupying 16% of the land of contemporary China, Northwestern China is where the historical silk-route passed through, and where Asian and non-Asian peoples crisscrossed, exchanging commercial goods and cultural practices in the last two millennia. See the essay by Du Yaxiong that details more of this exciting talk on page 6.

On January 21, Mr. David Orlin, a renowned violin bow specialist of Ann Arbor, presented a lecture entitled “Violin Bows and Bowmaking, 1705-2005: History, Mystery and Hope for the Future.” Revealing little known historical facts, and demonstrating technical details of violin bows that few music lovers familiar with string music would know, Mr. David gave a fascinating survey of the topic. His comments on the dwindling availability of natural hard wood needed for making bows, and the search for its substitute deeply impressed the audience. Demonstrating the interrelationships between cultures, global commerce, and natural environment/resources, violin bows involve much more than what the eyes can see.

The Allure of Collecting:
Frederick Stearns 1831-1907

While the Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments is the best known gift that Frederick Stearns (1831-1907) donated to the University of Michigan, it is by no means the only collection that he gave to the institution. Two exhibits during the academic year 2006-2007 will commemorate the centennial of his passing by showcasing his many gifts to the University with modern day cabinets of curiosity. The first, open during the entire year, is currently on display in the lower level of Hill Auditorium. The second, showing during December and January, is located in the north lobby of the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, the main library on the U-M campus. Both exhibits present some of Stearns’s other gifts to the University and have been made available thanks to various divisions of the Museum of Zoology and the Special Collections Library.

Who was Frederick Stearns?

Born in Lockport, New York on April 8, 1831, Stearns became a wealthy patron of the arts and sciences through the manufacture of pharmaceuticals in Detroit. At age 14, he became an apprentice at a drug store in Buffalo, New York. A few years later, he attended lectures on chemistry and pharmacy at the University of Buffalo, but he never received a degree. On New Year’s Day, 1855, having “little money, fair credit, and high hopes,” he settled in Detroit, and opened a drug store the following April. Soon, Stearns began to manufacture pharmaceuticals in a
A New Harpsichord

On May 4, 2006, Dean Christopher Kendall of the School of Music, Theatre and Dance, U-M, formally accepted, on behalf of the Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments, the donation of a new harpsichord by Dr. and Mrs. Alton Clark. Right after the dean’s acceptance speech, a mini-concert of Handel arias and reconstructed music by Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) followed. The performers were Ms. Terry Meerkov, a noted mezzo-soprano of Ann Arbor; Mr. James Dorsa, a graduate student at U-M; Dr. Li Youping of Wuhan Conservatory of Music, China, and a post-doctoral fellow at U-M; and Professor Joyce Lindroff of Temple University, Philadelphia.

The mini-concert not only celebrated the arrival of the Clark harpsichord, but also announced the opening of the Musiking Late Ming China (1550-1650), an international and interdisciplinary conference held on May 4-7, 2006 at the University of Michigan. Organized by Professor Joseph Lam, the director of the collection, and funded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation and four U-M offices—the Office of the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, the Center for Chinese Studies, the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, and the School of Music, Theatre and Dance, the conference highlighted the musical exchange between China and Europe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as one of its discussion topics. To evoke the musical excitement of such a historical exchange, the mini-concert was scheduled.

History has recorded that Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit who entered Beijing in 1601 and was soon granted an audition with the Ming emperor, presented a Western keyboard instrument and other Western gifts to the Ming court. After this audition, Ricci stayed in Beijing until his death there, befriending many elite Ming scholar-officials, learning Chinese language and culture from them, and introducing to them Christianity and European culture and science. Probably with his missionary and cultural work in mind, Ricci composed a set...
Harpsichord, continued from p. 3

of songs set to Chinese lyrics that he wrote himself. The lyrics of the songs have been preserved but their actual melodies are now a musicological mystery. Nevertheless, based on her extensive investigation of the lyrics and other relevant data, Professor Lindroff has produced a reconstruction, which she performed during the mini-concert as instrumental music accompanying Dr. Li’s chanting of the Chinese lyrics.

Dr. Alton Clark who donated the harpsichord to the collection is also the maker of the instrument, inspired by the 1693 anonymous Italian harpsichord in the Smithsonian. The instrument has two sets of 8 foot strings. It deviates slightly from the original in that it is built in one piece (the so-called false inner/outer construction) rather than as a case within a case. It also has a transposer, which is helpful for modern groups who need a pitch of A440 rather than the traditional A415 used in much early music. A physicist and materials scientist, Dr. Clark retired in 2000 from his position as the Associate Director of the Cornell Nanofabrication Facility, Cornell University. He still retains a position at Cornell University as an Adjunct Professor of Materials Science & Engineering.

Since then, he has produced five harpsichords, four of which he has, respectively, donated or will donate to the Ithaca College, the Oberlin College, the Stearns Collection of U-M, and to the University of Maine. In addition to the joy of producing instruments that are visually beautiful, mechanically intricate, and sonically musical, Dr. Clark and his wife, Donna, take great pleasure in meeting fellow harpsichord collectors and specialists, and sharing their love for the instrument.

Dr. and Mrs. Alton Clark with Mr. and Mrs. David Schultz.

The Clark’s donation of the harpsichord to the Stearns was facilitated by Mr. David Schultz, a devoted friend of the collection and the leader of its managerial committee. Dr. Clark and Mr. Schultz are long time friends and former business colleagues. Only with Mr. Schultz’s help, the collection has acquired a performance instrument that faculty and students of the School of Music, Theatre and Dance can regularly access for their research and performance activities.

Flower Girls

The Stearns Collection would like to thank the following who participated as flower girls during the Musiking Late Ming China performances:

Reception, Friday, May 4, 2006: Stephanie Liu, Lisa Ni, and Stephanie Webb.

Collecting, continued from p. 2

small 12x12 room in the back of his shop with a simple cook stove and one female assistant. With samples of these manufactured goods, Stearns traveled across Michigan and took orders from interested retailers, which were later delivered by Stearns himself.

When the Civil War began, Stearns was appointed purveyor of medical supplies for the entire State of Michigan, and with this responsibility his manufacturing business expanded. By the end of hostilities, Stearns’s cook stove had been replaced with steam power, milling machinery, and extraction apparatus. Despite this prosperity, disaster loomed. On June 11, 1871, his store was severely damaged when a fire broke out in the laboratory on the fourth floor. Six months later, on December 30, another fire, beginning in the basement and reaching the top floors within minutes, completely destroyed the facility while killing four employees and injuring several others. Fortunately, Stearns had installed a fire escape following the first fire, and this addition undoubtedly saved the lives of many. In rebuilding, Stearns decided to separate the manufacturing business from the retail facility, and on September 22, 1877, a telephone was placed in the drugstore that connected the store to the manufacturing plant a half mile away. Installed only eighteen months after Alexander Graham Bell patented his invention, it was the first telephone in Detroit. A sign in the store’s window invited the public to stop in and speak over the new device every hour on the hour.

In 1876, Stearns embarked on a “new idea” in pharmacy: popular non-secret family medicines. Responding to the rampant quackery of the period, Stearns decided to prepare simple medications in popular-sized quantities and provide complete directions for their use as well as a clear statement listing the product’s ingredients. This idea proved extremely successful. Soon, other druggists who lacked manufacturing facilities asked Stearns to create similar products for them while affixing their labels. Eventually, the Food and Drug Administration would require the listing of ingredients on medications, but not for another thirty years.

In 1881, Stearns sold his drugstore to Henry J. Milburn and turned his attention solely toward manufacturing. At the end of that year, a new manufacturing facility was constructed that could accommodate the company’s expansion. In 1882, Frederick Stearns was made president of the newly incorporated company with $200,000 in capital stock, but he would announce his retirement during the annual meeting in February 1887. His son, Frederick Kimball Stearns, was named to succeed him. In retirement, Stearns traveled the world, amassing objects that would form the core of his historical and natural collections. As he would later state, his collections stemmed from a strong desire to supplement his moderate early education. Consequently, many pieces of his collections reflected the customs of everyday life and illustrated the methods of manufacture instead of possessing mere aesthetic beauty. For the next twenty years, he would share this source of education with others as he generously donated these items to public institutions. On January 13, 1907, Stearns died in Savannah, Georgia while preparing to spend the winter in Egypt.

Stearns’s Collections

No one knows exactly when Stearns began his career as a collector, but while visiting Prague in 1881, he noticed a guitar that closely resembled the shape of a lyre. Curious about how the shape of this instrument developed, he purchased this lira-chitarra, now catalog no. 1130, which began his quest to create a collection that charted what he considered the evolutionary path of musical instruments from the most primitive to the most advanced. At the time it was
Uygur Traditional Music and Its Maqam
by Du Yaxiong

In the Chinese census of 2000, there were more than 8 million Uygurs (Uyghur, Uighurs) in China, most of whom live in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. As implied by the word “Uygur” which literally means united or alliance, Uygur traditional music has developed over the centuries and incorporated many elements from different Asian and non-Asian peoples who have passed through the land, exchanging their commercial goods and cultural practices along the historical Silk Road. Nowadays, Uygur traditional music can be classified into three large categories: folk, religious, and classical.

Uygur folk music includes a variety of songs, song-and-dance, instrumental music, and narrative songs. These genres are performed with many musical instruments, which include, for example, the plucked lutes (tambur, rawap, dutar, and qalun), bowed fiddles (satar, ejik and hushtar), winds (flute, balaman, sunaj, and kanaj), and percussions (dap, shildmadap, naghira drum, and sapaj). The most influential Uygur folk instrumental genre is Naghira Drum Music, which actually involves the playing of both wind and percussion instruments, featuring a repertory of twenty sets, each with three to six pieces of music. Uygur religious music includes a variety of songs, dance-songs, and speech-songs (wahiz). Among these, the most important tune is “Bahshi,” which is traditionally performed by a shaman and during the Sufi healing ritual called erke-sama.

Uygur classical music is distinguished by its use of the maqam, an important and widespread form/rePERTory that Uygur people practice as one of the highest forms of their moral, cultural, regional, and musical expressions. Among the five regional Uygur maqams, the Southern Xinjiang Maqam is most respected and most widespread. As a form/rePERTory, it includes twelve sets, which contain a total sum of 170 songs and 70 instrumental pieces. Each of the twelve sets, in turn, includes, a combination of large pieces (chong naghima), narrative songs (dastan), and song-and-
dance (mashrap), each of which can be a long composition with several structural sections. A complete performance of a maqam can take more than twenty hours.

Stylistically speaking, traditional Uygur music is characterized by its scales, modes, meter, rhythm, and melodic lines, features that are inseparable from the Uygur language. When Uygur speak, for example, they always accent the last syllables of their words, a practice that traditional Uygur rhythm reflects—musical phrases of traditional Uygur music often start on a relatively weak beat in the middle of a bar. Among the several dozen fixed-rhythm forms of the music, some are named after literary forms. The melodic lines of traditional Uygur music can be ascending, waveform, or descending. They progress with intervals of seconds, thirds and skips of a fourth or more. Most of these skips either start from or end on the tonic of the scale/mode featured. Skips up are more common than skips down. After a skip, the melody usually changes direction and progress in stepwise motion.
Lectures, continued from p. 2

On March 18, Dr. James Wierzbicki, the executive editor of Music in the United States of America (MUSA) and an assistant professor of the School of Music, Theatre and Dance presented a lecture on the current state of electronic music. Titled “Shocking News? The Current State of Electr(on)ic Music,” Dr. Wierzbicki’s presentation explored the development of electric-powered music from its beginnings in the nineteenth century to the present day. With multimedia illustrations, and with actual examples from the Stearns Collection, Dr. Wierzbicki underscored the point that electronic music -- whether listeners realize it or not -- is the dominant medium through which music is now experienced.

On September 9, Mr. Mahour Parast, a renowned performer of Persian/Iranian music and a professor of industrial engineering at the University of South Dakota, presented a lecture-recital on the tar (a six-stringed lute and the national instrument of Iran/Persia). Trained by his grandfather and father since he was a child, and by Mr. Houshang Zarif, a renowned tar player and instructor, from 1993-1997, Mr. Parast is now an acclaimed performer. In 1989, he was awarded the first rank Tar Player in the Province of Gilan, Iran. Since coming to the US in 2001 to pursue his doctoral studies in Industrial and Management Systems Engineering, Mr. Parast has continued to perform tar music, and has actually become a force in introducing Persian/Iran music to the American audience. In the last several years, he has given more than fifty concerts in American cities and university campuses. In his Stearns lecture-recital, Mr. Parast played a program of traditional pieces and improvisations, demonstrating Persian rhythms, tones, scales, and musical meanings. He also explained the musical features by comparing them to their Western counterparts.

On October 7, Mr. David Rivnus of Portland, Oregon, a specialist in player injuries and ergonomic design in stringed instruments, gave a most interesting presentation on the origin of the violin/viola. As indicated by the intriguing title of his presentation, which reads “With Grudging Thanks to Isabella?: the Story of the Violin’s Birth,” Mr. Rivnus told a fascinating story of migrating Sephardic Jews, the musical and aristocratic culture of Ferrara, Italy, the cultural and personal competitions between Renaissance women and musical patrons, including Isabella I of Spain. With iconographic and other circumstantial evidence, Mr. Rivnus’s presentation showcased the need to further investigate the human and historical factors in the rise of the violin/viola.

On October 28, Professor James Makubuya of Wabash College, Indiana, a leading ethnomusicologist of African music and culture, presented a lecture-recital on the bow-harp (adjungu) of the Aral people of Uganda. With multimedia illustrations, Professor Makubuya introduced the cultural and musical functions of the instrument, demonstrated its performance techniques and rhythmic patterns, and described how adjungu music has become a form of ensemble music among American college students. Professor Makubuya’s lecture concluded with a musical performance and lively question and answer discussion.
**How Do I Get To The Stearns?**

The Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments is located in the Margaret Dow Towsley wing at the south end of the Earl V. Moore Building of the School of Music, Theatre and Dance on Baits Drive in the University of Michigan North Campus area. Enter through the doors nearest to the parking lot. The McIntosh Hall is just across the lobby and to the right of the entrance. The Stearns galleries are down the stairs at the end of the lobby to the right.

**Admission:** Free at all times.

**Exhibit Hours:** Monday through Friday 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**Group Visits and Tours:**
To arrange for group visits or guided tours, please call (734) 936-2891.

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

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**Collecting, continued from p. 6**

Presented to the University in 1899, the instrument collection would number 904 instruments and Stearns would add over 400 more by 1903. Other types of objects also attracted his attention, and his journeys across the globe allowed his collections to illustrate the cultural diversity of the world. In the early 1890s, Stearns traveled to Asia and collected over 10,000 Japanese and Korean artifacts that were soon donated to the Detroit Museum of Art (now the Detroit Institute of Arts). During this trip, Stearns submitted periodic reports to the *Detroit Free Press* describing everyday life in Japan. His interest in natural history was also satisfied during these journeys, for he obtained several thousand samples of Asian marine life—mollusks and fish—and presented them to local institutions. The mollusks were originally donated to the Detroit Museum of Art in 1895, but were transferred to the University of Michigan in 1918 when the museum settled on a mission that did not emphasize natural history. The samples of fish, along with 353 watercolor illustrations of some specimens (See *The Stearns Newsletter* vol. 17 nos. 1-2, pp. 2-3), were given to the University in 1893.

Stearns’s generosity to the Detroit Museum of Art continued throughout the 1890s. In addition to the Asian artifacts, he obtained items from India, Africa, North and South America, the Middle East and Egypt for the museum. In 1896, the museum honored its two major benefactors, Stearns and James E. Scripps (founder of *The Detroit News*), with specially designed medals, and a 1920 article in the *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* identified Stearns as the third most generous patron to the museum by providing over $40,000 in artifacts, behind only Scripps and Edward Chandler Walker, son of the famous distiller Hiram Walker. Yet, Stearns’s legacy at this museum would quickly fade. The change in name to the Detroit Institute of Art in 1918 marked a new direction for the museum, which would henceforth focus primarily on fine art. The ethnographic and natural history collections that Stearns donated were gradually reexamined, and many of these pieces were either sold off or transferred to other institutions. Today, the museum’s holdings that were donated by Stearns are but a fraction of its original number.

The University of Michigan also continued to receive gifts from Stearns that would enhance its educational goals. In 1890, Stearns donated a collection of bird skins for the zoology museum, and in 1899, he supplemented his musical instrument gift by providing several rare books on musical instruments, some dating back to the sixteenth century, as well as a collection of musical scores. Not all of his gifts were material, however, for Stearns also provided funding for fellowships in pharmacy and music, which assisted many students in their studies. In June, 1901, the University conferred upon Stearns an honorary Master of Arts degree. Newspaper reports of the time described this as a well deserved honor, but the *Detroit Free Press* noted: “to those whose privilege it has been to know him well, he has for many years been Frederick Stearns, Master of Arts.”