



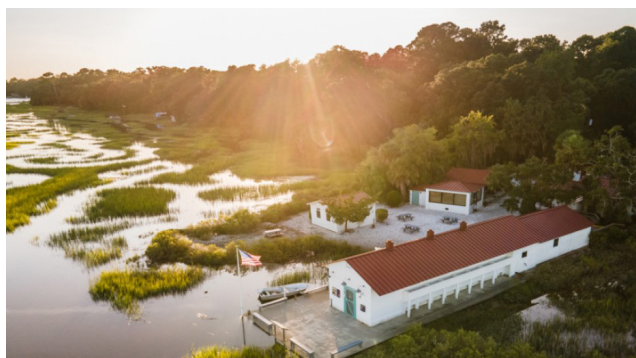
# NEWSLETTER

*of the American Musical Instrument Society*

VOLUME 54, NO. 1

WINTER 2025

## AMIS to meet in Savannah, June 4–7



Rich in history, music, art, and literature, Savannah, Georgia, is on both of Condé Nast’s short lists for the Best Small Cities and Friendliest Cities. It is a truly beautiful and interesting city to visit, or live in. The walkable historic district was laid out in 1732 by General James Oglethorpe, starting on the waterfront of the Savannah River. It provides a varied yet harmonious framework of shady verdant squares, fountains, beautiful homes, and historic churches. Museums and important historic buildings include the Jepson and Telfair art museums, the Juliet Gordon Low House (Low founded the first Girl Scout troop in America, in 1912), the Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters, the Green-Meldrim House where General Sherman made his headquarters upon taking Savannah after his infamous March to the Sea, the Ships of the Sea Museum, the Massey School, the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum, and the Savannah

African Art Museum. Those willing to venture out a little way can visit the civil war Fort Pulaski; Pinpoint, still the home and working oyster factory and museum of descendants of the original Gullah Geechee; and of course the beautiful beaches of artsy Tybee Island.

Savannah is also noted for amazing food of all kinds, and for its entertainment possibilities. There are interesting coffee shops, as well as night spots and clubs, from Husk, to Alligator Soul, to Jazz’d Tapas, to the famous Club One, and far too many others to name here. The Plant Riverside District, which includes the “That Great Gretsches Sound!” museum, is a lively area of galleries, restaurants, performing spaces, and activities along the banks of the Savannah River (*Anne Acker & JKP*).

*Registration & accommodation information on p. 20*

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## NEWSLETTER of the

American Musical Instrument Society

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**Janet K. Page, Editor**

**Núria Bonet, Assistant Editor**

**Lisa Beebe, 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.

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## *News from the Editor's Desk*

Dear colleagues,

This first issue of the AMIS Newsletter for 2025 reports on two new acquisitions, a piano by James Pirsson at the Sigal Museum and a clarinet at the National Music Museum. Both instruments have very interesting histories, linking them into networks of instrument makers and distributors in the nineteenth century. The issue introduces four more of the twelve 2024 Gribbon scholars, presents news of members, organizations and museums, and announces the eagerly awaited database of Wind-Instrument Makers, a new installment of MIRCAt edited by Al Rice. There is also a draft guide to studying organology, which I have put together with help from many contributors; it will be moved to the AMIS website after input from anyone who wants to contribute. Please do! The issue also includes information on the upcoming conference. I look forward to seeing you there.

I thank Anne Acker, Susan Thompson, Carolyn Bryant-Sarles, Jim Kopp, Dexter Edge, and Rob Apple for their help, as well as everyone who contributed news and information. I couldn't have done it without you!



 Janet K. Page  
Editor

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## *President's Message*



During the past year, AMIS took one more decisive step into the digital age. All forty-nine back issues of our Journal are now available online to members. The pdf images are hosted at <https://amis.mircat.org/>. A click of this link takes you to the home page of the JAMIS archive. Included is a full-text search function, which will lead you to specific words within hundreds of peer-reviewed articles and reviews.

If you don't choose to bookmark (or Favorite) this link, you can always find it at <https://www.amis.org/journal> (bottom of the web page, under Journal Archive). Also online is a fifty-three year archive of our Newsletter at <https://www.amis.org/newsletter>.

Coming soon in 2025 is an online Members Area within [amis.org](https://www.amis.org), where you can choose to create a personal profile, including research interests, to be accessed by other members only. The Members Area is now in a testing phase; we'll notify you about how to participate once it's fully operational.

AMIS continues to support the Musical Instrument Research Catalog ([mircat.org](https://mircat.org)), an imposing electronic resource that currently contains five sizable databases of historical musical instruments (for keyboards, wind instruments, and conservation). If you haven't already done so, please visit the site. The MIRCAt site is open to the public and is under the technical care of longtime AMIS member John Watson.

If you have other ideas for enhancing or refining the AMIS digital footprint, feel free to contact me.

 James Kopp  
President

# Sigal Music Museum Acquires a Square Piano by James Pirsson, ca. 1853

**Tom Strange, Curator & Artistic Director, Sigal Music Museum**

From time to time, it becomes necessary for any major museum to assess its collections, and occasionally deaccession items that do not fit well with its mission. After such an assessment within the musical instrument collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1995, several objects were deaccessioned. Among these was a James Pirsson square piano, acquired as a gift of Betty Schwartz and Stanley Weinstein in 1981. For several reasons, however, the Met never actually parted with the piano, and it has remained in storage, marked as deaccessioned, until recently.

Sigal Music Museum was contacted by Jason Dobney in December 2022 regarding the possibility of Sigal acquiring the piano. As piano making in America was sharply reduced by the Panic of 1839 and the depression that followed, examples of pianos made in America in the ten years or so after this period are infrequently encountered. Additionally, due to the connection of James Pirsson with the immigrant Steinweg family (Henry Steinweg Jr. is said to have made keyboards for Pirsson before the family began to manufacture instruments under its own name), such a piano was immediately interesting. Sigal has significant holdings of early Steinway pianos, including square piano #705 of 1856 and grand piano #2162 of 1859, so the accessions committee agreed to take the piano. This transaction was completed in mid-December 2024, with the piano now in the custody of Sigal Music Museum.

The piano had seen a refinish and limited work sometime before 1981, but retains original strings and hammers. It features a full cast-iron frame, and this has resulted in reassessing the age of the piano from its original estimated date of 1840 to a point nearer the mid-1850s. An exhibit telling the story of the early Steinway family at the museum is contemplated within the next four years.

The arrival of the Pirsson square piano provided a good opportunity to tease out the threads of the story of the Pirsson family in early nineteenth-century New York City, as there is some confusion in the outlines given by Daniel Spillane in *History of the American Pianoforte: Its Technical Development, and the Trade* (D. Spillane, 1890) and Nancy Groce in *Musical Instrument Makers of New York; A Directory of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Urban Craftsmen* (Pendragon, 1991), as well as in *Early Pianos Online* ([www.mircat.org](http://www.mircat.org)), which relies heavily on these two sources.

Working with Ancestry.com, Genealogy.com, and Newspapers.com, along with the New York City Directory Online, it became possible to find original sources to piece the family history together. The patriarch was William Pirsson (1763–1828), who was born in London, England, and came to America in 1798, first appearing in the NYC Directory for 1799 as a teacher on 417 Pearl. He was in fact a music engraver, and supplied much of the material printed in New York City during the first decade of the nineteenth century (Richard J. Wolfe, *Early American Music Engrav-*



Square Piano by James Pirsson, Sigal Music Museum. Photo: Tom Strange



Square Piano by James Pirsson, top view. Photo: Tom Strange

*ing and Printing* [University of Illinois Press, 1980]). His son William (1791–ca. 1840) was listed in NYC Directories as a painter and later as an engraver; a second son, Joseph Poole (1792–1847), as a lawyer and later as a civil engineer; a third, A(lexander) T(homas) (1801–1862), initially as a piano maker and then as a teacher and performer; and a fourth, James (April 5, 1806–June 5, 1873), as a piano tuner and later, piano maker.

A. T. Pirsson began work in New York City as a pianoforte maker (likely a journeyman for another firm) and would later claim a six-year apprenticeship to that trade. He then moved to Hartford, CT, in 1823, where he was a music teacher and seller, remaining there for two years before returning to New York City as a teacher. In 1836 he moved to Newark, NJ, where he lived until the final year of his life, when he moved to Patterson, NJ.

According to Charles H. Kaufman (*Musical-Instrument Makers in New Jersey, 1796–1860, JAMIS 2* [1976]: 15), A. T. Pirsson had attempted and failed to establish a pianoforte-making business in Newark. Notices that appear frequently during the time in question make it clear that his primary business was teaching and selling music and pianos. He sold pianos by Mundy & Pethick in 1839, but was selling

pianos made by his brother James from 1842 onward, through an arrangement initiated in April of that year. Notices indicate that this arrangement continued while James was in business as a piano maker.

James Pirsson is listed in the NYC directories alternately as a piano maker or tuner from 1829 to 1839, after which he is listed as a manufacturer until 1856. He achieved some fame as a maker, with gold medals at the American Institute Fairs of 1839 and 1847, and an exhibition of an “American Double Grand Piano Forte” in 1850 at the Apollo Rooms in New York City. In late 1854 or early 1855 his fortunes were reversed; he was declared an insolvent and sought bankruptcy protection in April 1855.

In early May 1855, James Pirsson assumed the role of President of Tontine Fire Insurance Company, but this was subsequently discovered to be a sham organization that had borrowed \$200,000 from the Bank of The Republic (NYC) at high interest, returned most of it immediately, but continued operations as though capitalized at full value. It is not clear that James Pirsson was aware of the shady nature of the business when it organized, but he was arrested on a charge of perjury in December 1855, and left the city after the charge

was dropped. He returned in 1863 and made pianos in a small way until 1867, after which he moved to North Carolina, where he died in Raleigh, in 1873.

The last Pirsson of interest in the family saga was Talbot Pirsson (November 1819–July 14, 1906). Groce was incorrect in postulating that Talbot Pirsson and A. T. Pirsson were the same individual; Talbot was the son of Joseph Poole Pirsson, and so nephew to James and A. T. Pirsson. While he studied law under his father, he carried a latent interest in piano making, and he listed himself as a piano maker in 1849 after his father’s death. His workshop at 83 Leonard St. was two doors down from that of his uncle James, and he may well have worked with his uncle at the latter’s early piano manufactory.

Talbot initiated a partnership with Peter Provost in 1852, which ran through 1854. James Pirsson advertised in July 1853 (*Newark Daily Advertiser*, July 2, 1853) that he was selling his own pianos from his ware rooms, with “No connection with any other establishment,” meaning that of Provost & Talbot Pirsson.

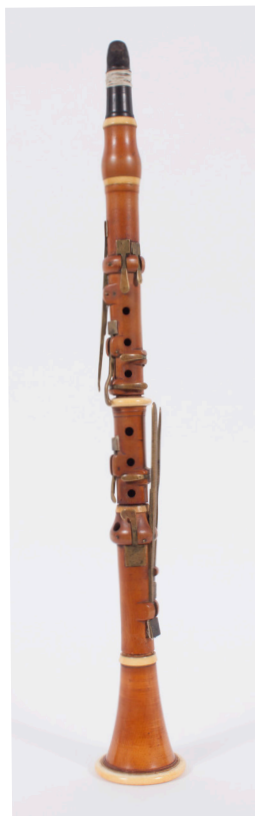
Two surviving pianos by James Pirsson are recorded as of this writing. It will be revealing to explore the sonic capabilities of this piano in the coming years, as well as measuring and documenting aspects of the construction. With a more comprehensive understanding of this builder’s work, we will be more informed about this somewhat dark period in the American piano making tradition.

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## An Interesting Early Clarinet from Providence

### Ana Sofia Silva, NMM Curator

An interesting early clarinet was acquired by the National Music Museum (NMM) in the spring of 2024. NMM 15776 is a clarinet in C, made of boxwood in five sections, with ivory ferules and brass keywork (figure 1). It is a simple-system clarinet with twelve keys with flat, square covers, mounted in blocks and lower bulge, with springs attached to keys. It retains a probable original mouthpiece made of dark wood, with a long tenon and grooves for a thread ligature. Some of its characteristics are typical of English-style clarinets, such as the cranked F-sharp/C-sharp key and the bottom joint with the cut-off bulge, both of which were also used by early American makers. All the joints, including the barrel, are marked “MUSIC SALOON / PROV. E R. I.” (figure 2). To my knowledge, no other early instruments have surfaced with a stamp



for a Music Saloon located in Providence, Rhode Island.

According to current research and extant instruments, American woodwind makers were associated with two “Music Saloons” during the early nineteenth century: Chabrier Peloubet with “Atwill’s Music Saloon” in New York City between 1833 and 1850; and Thomas Weygandt with “Osborn’s Music Saloon” in Philadelphia between 1839 and 1845. But without any further evidence, one can only speculate if these makers were also supplying instruments for the store in Providence.

A “Providence Music Saloon” with known dates of activity registered in local directories and newspaper sources existed between 1823 and 1830. During that period, the proprietor was a Loring D. Chapin, and the business was listed at different numbers



Figure 2. Detail of bell signature, NMM 15776.  
Photo by Ana Sofia Silva.

in Westminster Street. Advertisements in the *Providence Daily Journal* from 1830 confirm that the Providence Music Saloon was then located at the popular Arcade building, which had been built in 1828. While the newspaper ads and directories do not specify Chapin as a musical instrument maker, a curious source could suggest otherwise. According to *The Chapin Genealogy*, as collected and compiled by Orange Chapin and published in 1862, Loring Dudley Chapin (1798–1846)—a seventh-generation descendent of early Springfield, MA, settler Deacon Samuel Chapin (1598–1675)—“served an apprenticeship to the trade of a musical instrument maker” in Hartford, Connecticut. The *Genealogy* notes that Chapin subsequently moved to Providence and followed the business of musical instrument maker until 1829. It also mentions that Chapin was educated among the Quakers in Philadelphia, where he remained “from 12 to 20.” This information puts Chapin in Hartford around 1818 or 1820. So it is unlikely that he apprenticed under known makers such as George Catlin or John Meacham, who by that time had already relocated to Philadelphia and Albany, respectively. On the other hand, in 1820, Chapin married Emeline Aurlia Thurber (1800–1873) in Providence, so he seems to have relocated by then; without further evidence it is impossible to ascertain if Chapin indeed trained as a maker or was just exposed to the maker’s trades in the areas surrounding Philadelphia and Hartford. Considering the little time given for his “appren-

ticeship,” it is more likely that Chapin retained a network of contacts among makers to establish his music store in Providence, where he retailed instruments.

Chapin’s Music Saloon not only offered musical instruments and related goods, such as sheet music and instruction books, but also “rich fancy Goods,” which included perfumes, jewelry, books, prints, drawing materials, etc. It is also possible that Chapin either imported or locally acquired instruments from known English companies that were already supplying instruments in the area.

Sometime in the summer of 1830, Chapin relocated his family to New York City and opened a new store at 325 Broadway, the “Emporium of Arts.” Chapin sold the stock of the Providence Music Saloon to Samuel M. Taber, who, later in partnership with Samuel T. Thurber (Emeline’s brother), maintained a music saloon/store in a different location in Providence until at least 1853. From at least 1844, Providence directories list other music stores, associated with Horace Thayer, Daniel W. Field, William V. L. Flagg, A. M. Leland, Charles F. Wells, John E. and Pardon Taber (Taber & Co.), and Samuel M. Taber (independently listed in 1853 as a dealer in pianofortes). There is at least one “musical instrument maker,” David Darling, listed in 1828, but I have yet to trace any further information about him. All other makers or repairmen listed were working with organs, pianofortes, or other stringed instruments; no woodwind making is specified. Around that time, Thomas D. Paine & Co. in Woonsocket made and supplied brasswind instruments in the area.

According to the clarinet’s donor, Robert Clark from Pilesgrove, New Jersey, the instrument had been in the family since about 1858. Some of Clark’s ancestors hailed from North Attleborough (Attleboro), Massachusetts, which had train connections to Providence, Rhode Island, from the 1830s. Clark has traced lineage and family history with details to 1858 and suspects the clarinet was gifted to his ancestor George Edward Hawes (1853–1933), though he lacks hard proof of this. As

Clark's account goes, a six-year-old George and younger sister Ella were sent to live with their grandparents in North Attleboro after the deaths of their mother and sister, both named Ellen, in 1858. At that time, the family resided in Richmond, Virginia, where the father, John Adams Hawes (1826–1875), worked as a merchant in a millinery trade store. When the children arrived at their grandparents' house, Ella (Clark's great-grandmother) was gifted a unique doll made by Izannah Walker—a now-famous American dollmaker, inventor, and businesswoman from Central Falls, Rhode Island. For a variety of reasons, including which family home it came from, the similarity in age of the clarinet and the doll, and the story of the arrival of the children, Clark thinks the clarinet was given to George, as such an instrument would have also been a common present for a boy at the time. Both the clarinet and the doll eventually ended up with Clark's mother.

While it is possible that the clarinet was gifted to a boy, it is unlikely that it was much used by him, as this was an advanced instrument (12 keys), most probably used by professional players of the time. But perhaps this is a reason for its well-preserved condition? The instrument is also finely built, with small details that hint at particular attention to its construction, such as the turned ridges at the bell flare and top of the middle joint (figures 3 and 4), and the nicely round and smooth blocks and bulge where the keys are placed. Visual comparison with similar clarinets in the NMM collection by known American makers, and also by English companies that were known to sell in the area at that time, did not render any major conclusions on style of making at this point. Because of Chapin's probable connections with the local woodwind industry and the early dates of his business—which was a reputable business that warranted its own stamp on the instrument—I suspect that this clarinet was made by a local maker rather than imported, perhaps quite possibly by someone who had not yet established a workshop. I do not think that this clarinet could have been a blank English import, because I



Figure 3. Detail of turned ridges at the top of the middle joint, NMM 15776. Photo by Ana Sofia Silva.



Figure 4. Detail of turned ridges at the bell flare, NMM 15776. Photos by Ana Sofia Silva.



would think that such a fine instrument would warrant a known company/maker stamp. For now, without any other extant instruments associated with the Providence Music Saloon, it is hard to attribute the clarinet to a specific maker, but one hopes that this story may inspire future research and others to be on the lookout. Please, do reach out if any other important evidence surfaces!

Sources:

Mangler, Joyce Ellen. *Rhode Island Music and Musicians 1733–1850*. Detroit Studies in Music Bibliography 7. Detroit, MI: Information Service Inc., 1965.

Rice, Albert R. "Research Papers on American Musical Wind-Instrument Makers and Dealers, 1761 to 1980s." AMIS ([www.amis.org/american-wind-papers](http://www.amis.org/american-wind-papers)).



## Meet the 2024 Gribbon Scholars, Part 2

The William E. Gribbon Award enables undergraduate and graduate students to attend the Society's annual meeting. In 2024 AMIS sponsored twelve students (stars denote those who presented at the meeting). They are: \*Abigail Byrd (Indiana University), \*Hippocrates Cheng (Indiana University), \*Patrick Connor Dittamo (University of Chicago), \*Devanney Haruta (Brown University), \*Trinity Howell (Illinois University), Patrick Huang (Western University, London, Ontario), \*Christopher A. Miller (Northumbria University), \*Tùng Nguyễn (University of Oregon), \*Arianna Rigamonti (Royal College of Music, London), \*Marta Salvatori (UniPiams Milano), Arantza Sánchez Lira (Escuela de Laudéria, Querétaro, Mexico), and \*Chet Stussy (University of California, Santa Barbara).

If you would like to donate to the Gribbon Fund to support next year's students you may do so at <https://www.amis.org/donate-now>, specifying Gribbon Fund in "Leave us a comment."



**Patrick Connor Dittamo** is a fifth-year doctoral candidate in musicology at the University of Chicago, researching the reproduction of medieval and Renaissance reed and lip-reed woodwind instruments in the long twentieth century. Pat-

rick's research interests are rooted in a fascination with the practical mechanics of music-making, ranging from the material cultures of musical instruments and notation to the working conditions of performers and composers. On a more abstract level, he is interested in the cultural construction of music history. He holds a master's degree in music history and composition from Kansas State University and a bachelor's degree in music from the College of William and Mary. Patrick presented his paper "Punitive Instruments: The Macabre Propagation of the 'Shame Flute,'" at the 2024 AMIS meeting. He is secretary of the American Musicological Society's Organology Study Group.

**Marta Salvatori** is a doctoral candidate at UniPiams (Pontificio Istituto Ambrosiano di Musical Sacra), Milan. She has two fields of research: she is continuing her ethnomusicological work in the region of Ladakh, India, and she also



studies the music of late seventeenth-century Bologna, specifically the Accademia Filarmonica and the Basilica of San Petronio. Marta presented her paper "Riding

with the Horse Headed Lute" at the 2024 AMIS meeting. Writes Marta, "The annual AMIS meeting was truly wonderful, both in terms of the quality of the papers presented and the organization of the event."



**Chet Stussy** is a PhD candidate in musicology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research examines the use and marketing of musical instruments during the machine age (ca. 1880–1930), with specific focus on how early sound-reproduction technologies altered

practices and attitudes of amateur, domestic musicking in the United States. Chet received his BA from Westmont College and his MA from UCSB. He is also an enthusiastic recorder player. Chet presented his paper "Say

It in a Hula-Hula Way’: The Stroh Ukulele and Phonographic Performance, 1899–1925” at the 2024 AMIS meeting.



**Abigail Byrd**, from Greenville, SC, is a first-year PhD student in musicology at Indiana University. An involved student, performer, and scholar, she graduated in spring 2024 as the Outstanding Senior from the Moody School of Music

at the University of Alabama with a BM in Music Theory. Her interests are interdisciplinary: they include popular music, music production, sound studies, ecomusicology, organology, and public

musicology. She has presented work on these topics at the 2024 AMIS annual meeting, the International Association for the Study of Popular Music–US chapter annual meeting, and the Instruments, Interfaces, Infrastructures conference at Harvard. Abigail is an active cellist and bassist in the Southeast, alongside work for churches and nonprofits (like the Nashville Chamber Music Society), and she has also been an occasional spice merchant, barista, and garden center summer employee. In her spare time, Abigail enjoys exploring outdoors, traveling, and good food with friends. Abigail is the 2024 winner of the Frederick R. Selch Prize of the American Musical Instrument Society for her paper “The String Instrument Industry and the Triple Bottom Line,” read at the 53rd annual meeting of the Society at MIM, Phoenix.



## Studying Organology A Preliminary Guide

Collated by NAMIS editor Janet K. Page

This preliminary guide is intended as the beginning of a resource for [amis.org](https://amis.org). Please send additions and updates to the NAMIS editor, [amisnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:amisnewsletter@gmail.com).

Interested in a career focused on musical instruments? Opportunities for study and training include university degree programs, short programs and certificates, and internships. This training can lead to careers in museums, education, research, instrument making, repair and maintenance, or conservation. Some university music programs without specific degree programs in organology have faculty who are interested in the field and may offer related courses, or a university may have resources that lend themselves to research.

**Joining a scholarly organization** such as AMIS ([amis.org](https://amis.org)), the Galpin Society (<https://galpinsociety.org>), the Historic Brass Society ([historicbrass.org](https://historicbrass.org)) or the AMS Organology Study Group (<https://www.organology.ams-net.org>) can help you make contacts and learn about careers and

issues in organology. See [amis.org](https://amis.org) for a list of organizations under Links.

### University Degrees

These bachelor’s, master’s, and PhD programs are dedicated to professional training and research in organology.

**The Royal College of Music, London**, offers the PhD in Music, with organology and music & material culture as possible areas of focus. Facilities include the Royal College of Music Museum and the Wolfson Centre for Music & Material Culture.

<https://www.rcm.ac.uk/courses/researchdegrees>  
<https://www.rcm.ac.uk/museum/about/wolfson-centre/>



Hornbostel-Sachs day in Allison Alcorn's undergraduate class "Musical Instruments as Cultural Artifacts" at Illinois State University, January 2025. Photo courtesy of Allison Alcorn.

**The University of Edinburgh, Reid School of Music** offers the PhD/MSc by Research. Resources include the University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments. St. Cecilia's Hall: Concert Room & Music Museum has a notable collection of harpsichords.

<https://www.eca.ed.ac.uk/reid-school-music>

**The University of Pavia** is the only Italian university to offer a curriculum with a focus on organology. At the University of Pavia, Department of Musicology and Cultural Heritage (Dipartimento di Musicologia e Beni Culturali) in Cremona, the bachelor's program includes courses in organology. There are master's programs in Conservation and Restoration and in the History of Building Techniques of Musical Instruments as well as a PhD in musicology with a possible focus on organology and musical iconography.

<https://en.unipv.it/en>  
[http://www-2.unipv.it/dottorati/Doctorates\\_file/Page3724.htm](http://www-2.unipv.it/dottorati/Doctorates_file/Page3724.htm)

**The University of South Dakota** offers the MM with specialization in the history of musical instruments. The program draws on resources and faculty of the National Music Museum. Besides musical instruments, the collection includes an extensive archive of material relating to musical instrument making in America.

<https://www.usd.edu/Academics/Graduate-Programs/Music>

**Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.** Northumbria offers master's and PhD degrees with a focus on organology. Northumbria University holds the instrument collection, library, and archive of Jeremy Montagu, which is used for teaching and research.

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/>

**The Royal Academy of Fine Arts (KASK), School of Arts of University College Ghent & Conservatorium (HOGENT)** offers degree programs in instrument making.

<https://schoolofartsgent.be/en/study/courses/musical-instrument-making>

## University Courses in Organology

Robert Adelson has taught an organology course at the **Conservatoire de Nice–Université Côte d’Azur** since 2016. The course is in French, but he has just finished writing a book in English that is in large part based on the course. The book, entitled *In the Music Museum: Seeing, Hearing, and Understanding Historical Instruments*, will be published next year by Oxford University Press. Allison Alcorn is using a pre-publication draft version of the text for her undergraduate course “Musical Instruments as Cultural Artifacts,” which she is teaching in Spring 2025 at **Illinois State University**.

The Music BA (Hons) program at **Northumbria University** includes a module on the History of Musical Instruments led by Rachael Durkin.

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/courses/ba-hons-music-uusmux1/>

**The University of Oxford** offers master’s-level courses in organology, including “Musical Instruments, Material Culture, and Museums.”

Contact: [emanuela.vai@worc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:emanuela.vai@worc.ox.ac.uk)

## Programs & Certificates in Museum Studies

Many universities offer programs or certificates in museum studies, which can complement other areas of study. The American Alliance of Museums maintains a listing of Museum Studies programs: <http://ww2.aam-us.org/resources/careers/museum-studies-programs>

As an example, **The University of Memphis** offers an Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies (<https://www.memphis.edu/museumstudies/>).

Robert W. Apple, who completed this program in 2023 in conjunction with a PhD in musicology, writes:

While the UofM Museum Studies Certificate Program was not designed with musicologists or organologists in mind, the program’s director, Dr. Leslie Luebbers, developed a curriculum that provides students with the skills and knowledge they need to develop and design museum programs and exhibits; to apply for grants to help fund museum research projects, programs, and exhibits; and to curate and manage a variety of objects and archival materials. The flexibility of the program allows students to shape it to support their career goals and fit their areas of academic expertise. The curriculum consists of eighteen credit hours of graduate-level courses. Six are the certificate’s core courses, “Museum Practices” and “Museums and Communities”; six are fulfilled by electives related to museum studies; and the final six are completed by internships at two different museums.

Though the program’s core courses focus on day-to-day operations and management and how museum professionals can best work with and serve their communities, the final projects for these courses allowed me to branch out and explore issues of organology and musicology within the museum setting. For “Museum Practices,” we were asked to develop a project that could be carried out in a museum and to draft an IMLS grant application and budget that could hypothetically be used to seek funding for that project. I developed a project that would use CT scanning, CAD modeling, and 3-D printing to create reproductions of three instruments—a cornetto, a field trumpet, and a keyed trumpet—held in the National Music Museum. The models could then be used for research and educational outreach by granting constituents and performers greater access to these instruments, while avoiding the risk of wear and damage to the original objects. For “Museums and Communities,” we were required to complete a research survey on a topic related to museum outreach and community engagement, and to use that research to write a proposal for a museum community outreach program. I chose to investigate the use of community music therapy programs to help prevent/treat dementia and Alzheimer’s in older individuals and developed a proposal for a



Robert W. Apple presents “Thomas Edison and Fort Myers’s First Brass Band (1885–1906)” at the Edison and Ford Winter Estates Museum, November 3, 2023. Photo courtesy of Robert W. Apple.

museum-funded and -hosted elders’ choir community music therapy program.

The program’s internship requirement offered me even more freedom to pursue opportunities in my areas of interest. In summer 2023, I worked as a collections management and exhibit intern at the IMAG History & Science Center in Fort Myers, FL, for which I researched and produced an online exhibit/archive titled *The Golden Age of Fort Myers Bands (1885–1937)* that featured fifty-three Fort Myers band-related photographs, documents, published pieces of music, instruments, and other objects. In fall 2023, I was employed as a curatorial and community engagement intern at the Edison and Ford Winter Estates Museum (Fort Myers, FL), where I helped to inventory and research its extensive Edison Records cylinder and disc collection. These internships allowed me to directly apply the knowledge I had acquired through the

program’s coursework while also building skills that would benefit me greatly in my future career in organology and music museums.

## Museum Internships

Many museums offer paid and/or unpaid internships, with opportunities for students from high school through professional level. Some programs take place during the semester, while others are in the summer, and it is often possible to receive college credit (depending on your school). Programs are offered by The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the National Music Museum (program currently on hiatus); the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum; The Smithsonian; and many others. Check with museums that interest you for possibilities.

## Other training

**Cambridge Woodwind Makers** is dedicated to “preserving and promoting artisanship through participation.” They offer courses in woodwind making, repair, and maintenance, including key-making, oboe reed-making, clarinet barrel-making, and the construction of baroque oboes, chalumeaux, classical clarinets, recorders, natural trumpets, and cornetti.

<https://www.cambridgemakers.org/i-would-like-to/>.

## JAMIS Publication Grant

The American Musical Instrument Society offers an annual grant of up to \$1000 to help defray the costs of preparing an article appropriate for publication in the *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*. The application deadline each year is March 15, for a grant to be awarded at the following annual meeting (in 2025, June 4–7).

For further information see <https://www.amis.org/jamis-publication-grant>

# News of Members

**Sebastian Kirsch** has been appointed Director of the Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, <https://www.khm.at/besuchen/sammlungen/sammlung-alter-musikinstrumente/>.



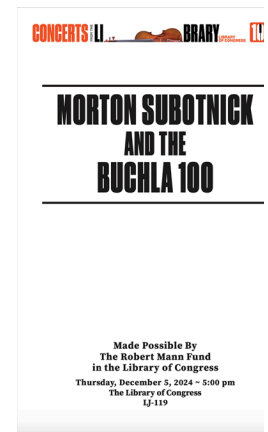
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente, Saal XIV. Photo courtesy of Sebastian Kirsch.



After the retirement of Rudolf Hopfner in 2019, the collection was led by interim director Franz Pichorner (deputy general director of the Kunsthistorisches Museum). Dr. Kirsch took up the position in September 2024. He expects that the museum will continue its present

course for the next few years. But he aims to develop new mediation formats, add new concert formats to the existing Matinée-concerts, and focus on inclusion and accessibility. He also plans to work on the online catalogue, digitization (2D and 3D) projects, and on the lute and guitar collection. The goal is to join MIMO one day or at least to have the whole collection photographed.

**Carol Lynn Ward-Bamford** facilitated the event “Morton Subotnick and the Buchla 100,” which took place at Library of Congress on December 5, 2024. Subotnick’s original Buchla 100, now owned by the Library of Congress, was restored as a joint project of The Library of Congress, MEMS (Modular Electronic Systems: Research Associates Chip Flynn and Mark Milanovich), and Andrew Northrop (Film and Media Technician, Slade School of Fine Art/UCL). The December 5 event included remarks by Subotnick in conversation with composer Steve Antosca, a showing of Andrew’s film *Null Adjustments* (2024), which documents the instrument and its restoration, and a panel discussion. The film will be released at a later date.



**Carol Lynn Ward-Bamford** was part of the team that developed “The Story of a Bugle Carried by a Union Soldier: Exploring American Civil War Musical Instruments from the Library of Congress Music Division” (December 16, 2024), a new “storymap” from the Library of Congress. The presentation, featuring instruments and material from the Liljenquist family collection, tells the story of a musical instrument in a geospatial way.

[https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/96aee5dcb\\_a234a9db1466fd7959c14d2](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/96aee5dcb_a234a9db1466fd7959c14d2)

Flutist **Peter H. Bloom** continues his long tenure with the internationally acclaimed Aardvark Jazz Orchestra (52nd season), which will perform on April 23, 2025, in the Walker Series, a revered concert and lecture series in Concord, NH. During 2024–25, Bloom and his baroque trio Ensemble Chaconne (Bloom, baroque flute; Carol Lewis, viola da gamba; Olav Chris Henriksen, baroque lute) celebrated the late baroque masters with concerts for the Bach Ascending Series

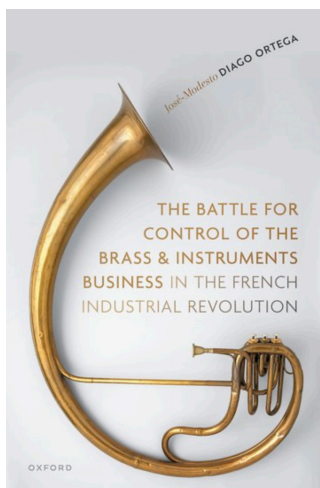
in Savannah, GA, the St John's Concert Series in York, PA, and the Lincoln Friends of Chamber Music in Nebraska. They also performed at Grinnell College in Iowa, the Saint Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, NH, and other venues across the U.S. Ensemble Chaconne will mark its 40th season in 2025–26, featuring a new concert, "Gems by J. S. Bach." Mr. Bloom's other tours include the chamber trio Ensemble Aubade (showcasing the great 19th-century composer Louise Farrenc), The Bloom/Funkhouser Duo (celebrating Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn), and Henning Ensemble (new works by American composers).



Peter H. Bloom with The Aardvark Jazz Orchestra, MIT Kresge Auditorium. Flute by David C. Williams, Boston. Photo courtesy of MIT Music and Theater Arts.

Contact Peter at [phb@amwks.com](mailto:phb@amwks.com) or visit [www.americasmusicworks.com](http://www.americasmusicworks.com)

**José-Modesto Diago Ortega** has recently had a book published by Oxford University Press entitled *The Battle for Control of the Brass & Instruments Business in the French Industrial Revolution*.



<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-battle-for-control-of-the-brass-and-instruments-business-in-the-french-industrial-revolution-9780198895053>

**Robert W. Apple**, together with Vincent DiMartino, Stanley Curtis, and Randal Tinnin, recently presented a concert of solo and ensemble works dating from the late 16th to early 20th century, performed on original and reproduction historical high brass instruments, including natural trumpet, cornetto, keyed trumpet, keyed bugle, early valved trumpet, cornopean, and various early cornets. The concerts took place on January 3 and 7, 2025, at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Fort Myers, FL, and the University of North Florida. The UNF audio-visual crew filmed the January 7 concert and posted a well-produced and edited video of it to the UNF Music Department YouTube channel.

You can check out the performance at: <https://youtu.be/wkl1MYO8EzE?si=M6DqkPzQCPvl2ufE>

**Emanuela Vai** has been appointed Head of Collections at the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments and Archives, and Head of Research and Senior Fellow (Worcester College, University of Oxford), leading on conservation, research, and curatorial aspects in the museum. Dr. Vai has previously held positions at the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (I Tatti), the University of York (CREMS), the University of Turin, the University of Cambridge, and the Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance de Tours (CESR), among others. She is expanding the curriculum by teaching



about historical musical instruments, material culture, and museums and leading academic research on musical instruments, soundscapes, space, and the senses in Renaissance social life.

<https://www.music.ox.ac.uk/article/dr-emanuela-vai-appointed-head-of-the-bate-collection-of-musical-instruments>

# News from Organizations & Museums

**The Musical Instrument Museum, Phoenix, Arizona**, opened a special exhibition on November 8, 2024. *Stradivarius and the Golden Age of Violins and Guitars*

“presents more than 70 exemplary string instruments and bows made by Antonio Stradivari and other pre-eminent European makes of the 16th through 19th centuries.” On display are rare masterpieces such as the 1560s Andrea Amati violin from MIM’s permanent collection, the mandolino coristo made by Antonio

Stradivari (of which there are only two known to survive today), and a 1728 Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù violin. The exhibition celebrates these instruments as both historical artifacts and artistic marvels, drawing connections between violins, guitars, and other instruments such as lutes, violas da gamba, and mandolins. Visitors are invited to experience the instruments in action through captivating video performances by renowned musicians such as Rachel Barton Pine. *Stradivarius and the Golden Age of Violins and Guitars* is open daily through September 14, 2025.

<https://mim.org/extraordinary-and-sought-after-string-instruments-by-iconic-european-makers-coming-to-mim/>

<https://mim.org/special-exhibitions/stradivarius-and-the-golden-age-of-violins-and-guitars/>

**The Organology Study Group of the American Musicological Society** (<https://www.organology.ams-net.org>) is pleased to announce the first installments of what it hopes will become an annual

series of Virtual Organology Discussion Groups. These Zoom sessions are envisioned as a means to link scholars who center musical instruments

in their work, providing opportunities for junior scholars to interact with leading members of the field, and a way for “lone organologists” to engage with interlocutors outside their home institutions. The first two sessions will be topical panels followed by Q&A and discussion:



Stradivarius and the Golden Age of Violins and Guitars. Photo courtesy of the Musical Instrument Museum, Phoenix, Arizona.

## *Careers in Organology*

Tuesday, February 4th 12:00 PM MT / 1:00 CT / 2:00 PM ET

- Eliot Bates, Associate Professor of Music & Head of Ethnomusicology, CUNY Graduate Center
- Bradley Strauchen-Scherer, Curator, Department of Musical Instruments, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- Sebastian Kirsch, Director, Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- Boaz Berney, Historical Flute Maker, Montréal, Canada

## *Pedagogy & Outreach*

Wednesday, April 9th 11:00 MT / 12:00 CT / 1:00 ET

- Emily Dolan, Professor of Music, Chair of Music, Brown University
- Sarah Deters, Curator, St. Cecilia’s Hall: Concert Room & Music Museum, University of Edinburgh



- Lidia Chang, Assistant Professor of Music, Colorado College

Zoom links will be distributed in advance of each session on the AMIS and AMS listservs, as well as the OSG newsletter, for which you may sign up at [organologysg@gmail.com](mailto:organologysg@gmail.com).

**The Historical Keyboard Society of North America (HKSNA)** and the **Western Early Keyboard Association (WEKA)** will be hosting the conference “Historical Keyboards: Musick Making from the Past into the Future” on October 4, 2025. This regional meeting is dedicated to all aspects of music making with historical keyboards throughout the centuries, including but not limited to:

- biographical studies of performers, builders, or composers
- compositional methods, styles or genres and their evolution
- iconography
- instruments and their construction, restoration, action, sound, and decoration
- modern or new music for historical keyboards

- musical manuscripts, printing, collections, notational practices, and editing
- pedagogy of the past or present
- performance practices of the past or present
- social context of keyboard instruments, their music, composers, and performers

The meeting is hosted by WEKA and will be held at Reed College, Portland, OR. The day of events will include paper presentations, lecture-recitals, mini-recitals, and a harpsichord concert performed by Yago Mahugo, professor at the Royal Conservatory of Madrid.

Proposals for 25-minute presentations (papers, lecture-recitals and mini-recitals) will be made via the WEKA website: <https://www.wekaweb.org/historical-keyboards/>. Two harpsichords, a clavichord, and a fortepiano will be available to presenters, as well as audiovisual equipment. CFP deadline: February 1, 2025.

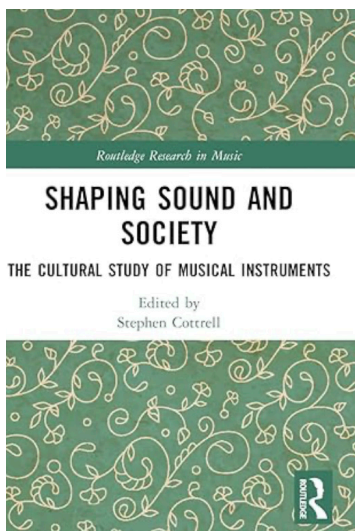
Inquiries: <https://www.wekaweb.org>

**The Bate Collection at the University of Oxford** will be closed during February 2025 as it moves to the new Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities.

## Book Review

Stephen Cottrell, ed. *Shaping Sound and Society: The Cultural Study of Musical Instruments*. Routledge, 2023. 270 pages, 38 b&w illustrations. ISBN 9780367417550. \$144 hardback, \$31.99 e-book.

Lisa Beebe



In this volume’s introduction, editor Stephen Cottrell explains that while *Shaping Sound and Society* includes chapters on a variety of instruments, the unifying theme is a focus on “the links between the instruments and the forces that shape them, the values that become attached to them, and

the people who play them” (viii). To this end, Cottrell’s introduction serves as a literature review and historical survey of organological studies, from 19th-century European classification systems to recent scholarship on musical instruments and material culture. This introduction is a valuable resource, allowing readers from a variety of scholarly backgrounds to situate chapters in the volume within larger conversations in music studies.

Following the introduction, *Shaping Sound and Society* is organized into three parts. Part I: “Ecology, Production, and Communities of Practice” is concerned with the social networks sur-

rounding the production and performance of musical instruments. In the case of the *xeremies*, a Mallorcan bagpipe, Cassandre Balosso-Bardin explains how musicians draw upon networks of artisans with specialized knowledge, rather than a singular builder, to construct an instrument. Eliot Bates analyzes discourse among modular synthesizer communities, particularly the importance of “analog feel” in design approaches. John Baily connects morphological changes of the Herati *dutâr* with technological and cultural shifts in 20th-century Afghanistan, while Kevin Dawe considers the material history of the Cretan *lyra*.

Part II: “The Circulation of Instruments” focuses on case studies of musicians bringing instruments into new or shifting cultural contexts. Stephen Cottrell weaves a “biography” of Grafton 10265, a plastic saxophone once played by Charlie Parker, while André J. P. Elias unpacks the political and artistic strategies behind naming conventions of the Hindustani slide-guitar. Through investigation of historical records, Stewart Carter traces the social contexts of brass instruments in Moravian communities in the United States.

Chapters in Part III: “Reframing History through Instruments” situate instruments in specific historical contexts. Deirdre Morgan traces Austrian *Maultrommel* (jew’s harp) playing techniques from an 18th-century “golden age” to contemporary revivals. Focusing on the late 18th century, Jenny Nex investigates the economic strategies of three London-based instrument firms—Erard, Christian Clauss, and Longman & Broderip—within the broader contexts of class and gender customer demographics. Trevor Herbert chronicles the influence of societal factors on instrumentation and

repertoire of military bands in Europe and the United States in the late 19th century.

What sets this volume apart from other collections is a series of “instrumental interludes” framing each section. The “interludes” are short essays written by contemporary instrument builders, in which they describe their inspiration for their invention, summarize the design process, and offer possibilities for future directions. These “interludes” include: “The Skoog” by Ben Schögler and David Skulina, “The Yaybahar” by Görkem Şen, “Recycled Instruments” by Eli Gras, “The Fluid Piano” by Geoffrey Smith, and “The Pikasso Guitar” by Linda Manzer. These personal essays offer insights into contemporary musical practice, and I found them interesting and enjoyable to read.

As *Shaping Sound and Society* focuses on a diverse group of musical instruments, so too do its authors contribute diverse perspectives. Some authors present new or recent scholarship, while others apply fresh frameworks to reconsider and perhaps draw new conclusions from previous research. Some contributors rely on historiography and archival data, while others employ ethnography and participant observation. I personally enjoyed this variety of disciplinary perspectives and found *Shaping Sound and Society* to be an engaging and interesting volume. While contributors engage with the morphology of musical instruments to varying degrees in each chapter, the data always serves the primary goal of situating instruments within a social and cultural context. This broad scope makes the volume a valuable resource to anyone interested in musical instrument studies.

# MIRCat News

## WIND-INSTRUMENT MAKERS

WIMdb.org

*...the interactive database of woodwind and brass musical instrument makers and their instruments is NOW ONLINE.*



The Musical Instrument Research Catalog (MIRCat) is proud to announce the launch of Wind-Instrument Makers ([WIMdb.org](http://WIMdb.org)). Another of the foundational resources in musical instrument studies is now online as a free research database. Building upon the legacies of Lyn-desay Langwill and William Waterhouse, WIM adds digital search capabilities, flexibility, and continual updating of content for the most authoritative source on makers of wind and brass instruments.

With biographies of known makers and a large and growing listing of their representative instruments, WIM is available online at no charge to all researchers, owners, collectors, caretakers, players, and enthusiasts of historical woodwind and brass instruments. A major and newly updated essay about maker's marks by Herbert Heyde is included, and hundreds more graphic illustrations of marks are filed under individual entries.

General editor of WIM is Dr. Albert Rice, among the major contributors of content to the earlier print edition. Hundreds of instruments and updates have been added from recent publications and the editor welcomes new information from scholars who use the resource. Users of MIRCat's other organological resources will find the web application to have a familiar look and feel.

WIM receives its funding from the Musical Instrument Research Catalog (<https://www.mircat.org>), a non-profit 501(c)3 charity, which solicits donations from users of its digital resources. The American Musical Instrument Society is a major supporter of MIRCat.



**MIRCat**

[www.mircat.org](http://www.mircat.org)

**MUSICAL INSTRUMENT  
RESEARCH CATALOG**

# *AMIS 2025*

## *Georgia Southern University, Savannah, GA June 4–7, 2025*

The 2025 AMIS meeting will be held in beautiful and historic Savannah, Georgia, at Georgia Southern University, June 4–7, 2025. Georgia Southern is home to the Fred and Dinah Gretsch Instrument, Artifact, and Document Collection, comprising thousands of unique instruments, music industry artifacts, and company records within and across collections and three exhibitions in Savannah and Statesboro, Georgia. Most notably, Georgia Southern’s “That Great Gretsch Sound!” Museum is a featured attraction of Plant Riverside District, Savannah’s premier riverfront entertainment center. As part of the Georgia Southern Museum, the Gretsch Collection supports the University’s mission of teaching, research, and service specifically through collections, exhibits, and educational outreach.

The meeting will begin with an opening reception on Wednesday, June 4, 5:30 pm in the lobby of the Fine Arts Hall on the Armstrong Campus of Georgia Southern University, located at 11935 Abercorn Street, Savannah, GA. On Thursday and Saturday, presentations will take place in this building. Lunch will be available on campus at The Galley Dining Commons in the Student Union, a short walk away. A field trip on Friday, June 6 (bus provided), will take attendees to the Gretsch Collection at Georgia State University’s main campus in Statesboro, GA, and the Chris Mitchell Factory (producing CMG guitars and Devilcat amplifiers). Musical events at the meeting will include a presentation of Persian tanbur music and a concert by the McIntosh County Shouters, “master artists of the authentic ring shout,” from the nearby Gullah-Geechee community.

The closing banquet on Saturday will be held at Hotel Indigo, 201 West Bay Street, Savannah, near the Savannah River waterfront. One banquet ticket is included with each registration, and extra tickets may be purchased through the meeting registration page.

A registration desk will be open at Hotel Indigo from noon to 4 pm on Wednesday, June 4, and from 4 to 5 pm at the Fine Arts Hall, Armstrong Campus.

Parking will be readily available on campus near the Fine Arts Hall. Those driving to campus may wish to obtain a parking pass (for Thursday and Saturday—on Friday we will be at the Statesboro Campus). Conference goers should email their name and registration number and the days they will be parking on campus to the email address on the website, [parking@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:parking@georgiasouthern.edu).

For more on parking, visit:

<https://ww2.georgiasouthern.edu/auxiliary/parking/general-visitor-parking-regulations/>

**Register at: <https://www.amis.org/2025-meeting>**

## Travel & Accommodation

The closest airport is Savannah/Hilton Head International (SAV), which is about 12 miles/19 km (20–40 minutes travel time) from downtown Savannah. Ground transportation includes rental cars, rideshare services, and taxis. For transportation options, visit <https://gosouthsavannah.com/visitor-info/transport/savannah-airport-transportation.html>.

A block of rooms is reserved at Hotel Indigo (<http://www.hotelindigo.com/savannah>), 201 West Bay Street, Savannah, for four nights, beginning Wednesday June 4. To obtain a special discounted rate of \$199 per room (\$236 including taxes and fees), visit the reservation link AMIS at <https://www.amis.org/2025-meeting> to book.\* All rooms have two queen-size beds, and attendees traveling alone are encouraged to share rooms to split the costs. For assistance in locating a roommate, please contact Matthew Hill, our Local Arrangements chair, at [mhill@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:mhill@georgiasouthern.edu).

The hotel is about 10 miles/16 km from the Armstrong Campus. On Thursday and Saturday, shuttle buses will convey registrants from Hotel Indigo to the campus in the morning, and from campus back to Indigo in the evening.

Three hotels with somewhat lower rates are less than a mile from the Armstrong Campus: Holiday Inn Express Savannah; Springhill Suites Savannah Midtown; and Towneplace Suites Savannah Midtown. If you choose to stay at one of these hotels, you should be prepared to use Uber, Lyft, or similar services, or possibly to carpool with other attendees. If shuttle bus capacity allows, we may be able to make a stop at one of these hotels (they are close together), but we can't promise this in advance.

\* For details on rate information and parking at Hotel Indigo, click on the “information” icon on the booking page at the link. The “destination fee” at the hotel will be waived for AMIS guests (this fee may appear on your reservation but will be removed at checkout). Free WiFi is available to AMIS guests, but not the alcoholic drinks amenity. If you are not staying for the entire meeting, you may reserve a different number of nights through the reservation link: click on the bar across the top just below the banner that says OUR STORY, then click the box that states “4 nights” and choose the days for which you would like to make the reservation. If you plan a longer stay or have other questions contact Janelle Mahoney, Group Sales Coordinator, [jmahoney@innventure.com](mailto:jmahoney@innventure.com), (912) 944-3373 (direct) or (912) 236-4440 (hotel).



McIntosh County Shouters, <https://mcintoshcountyshouters.com>