



NEWSLETTER

of

The American Musical Instrument Society

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SPRING 2024

AMIS RETURNS TO MIM PHOENIX



A moody sky above the MIM. Image courtesy of the Musical Instrument Museum, Phoenix, AZ

A note from Matthew Zeller

We look forward to welcoming you to the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) in Phoenix in May. Appropriate to our host institution, the program for this year's conference takes a global view of musical instruments. We are excited to have scholars from around the world joining us to share topics as varied as the instruments in MIM's collection.

Although the majority of the meeting will take place in the museum, Saturday morning's events will be held at Arizona State University. But don't worry, AMIS is providing buses and we will meet at MIM that morning. We will have one paper session at the ASU Organ Hall and then enjoy a concert by Bach, Buxtehude, Schlicke, and Frescobaldi by acclaimed organist Kimberly Marshall.

As for practical information, MIM is located in north-east Phoenix, near the Desert Ridge neighborhood. It is about a 25-minute drive from Sky Harbor International Airport, as well as from downtown Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Tempe. The Cambria hotel is in Desert Ridge, less than five minutes from MIM by car. Desert Ridge has a popular shopping center with many restaurants and amenities. The hotel and shopping center are walkable from MIM, but there is a highway underpass between them. A shuttle will be available from the hotel to the museum and back, but multiple runs will be needed each day.

If you are into the outdoors, bring your hiking boots (and sunscreen!). Average high temperatures in May are in the mid-90s (°F) with lows around 70 (°F). Phoenix is surrounded by mountains and beautiful desert land-

scape. There are numerous trailheads within a 15-minute drive of the museum. The Grand Canyon is about a 3.5-hour drive from MIM, with Sedona and Flagstaff on the way. Other great cities to check out include Tucson, Prescott, and Payson. Las Vegas is a 4-hour drive for those wanting to try their luck while in Arizona.

There will be ample time for socializing over coffee and meals built into the schedule. MIM has a café and restaurant on site. There are also many options for eating off-site. A list of area restaurants, activities, trailheads, etc. will be included in your registration packet.



A concert in the MIM's auditorium. Image courtesy of the MIM

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News from the Editor's Desk

NEWSLETTER of the

American Musical Instrument Society

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Sarah Deters, Editor

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Lisa Beebe, Reviews Editor

The Newsletter is published two 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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Dear colleagues,

It is that time of year again – the time for our annual meeting. As many members make plans to head to Arizona to take part in three days of papers, concerts, and togetherness, I hope this *Newsletter* has useful information for your journey. Sadly, I will be unable to attend this year's meeting, so I will have to live vicariously through those who are able to make it. For others who are unable to attend the meeting in person, this Newsletter will give you a taste of the variety of topics that will be presented in Phoenix. Hopefully some of those presentations will be seen later as articles in either the *Journal* or the *Newsletter* (hint hint hint!).

Aside from the provisional programme and logistical information about the conference, this *Newsletter* contains a short article about an unusual discovery that was made by the staff at my institution, St Cecilia's Hall, The University of Edinburgh. I hope you enjoy a little behind-the-scenes look at our work and the interesting turns it can take. Also, there is a bit of a call for help at the end of the article, so please do get in touch if you have any useful information.

The announcement of the winners of the AMIS Awards are also in this issue. Congratulations to the recipients of the Nicholas Bessaraboff Prize, Frances Densmore Prize, and the Curt Sachs Award. Additionally, we have introductions from three of our most recent William E. Gribbon Award recipients. These introductions are a lovely way for our members to get to know a bit more about the students who receive these awards and who are able to attend our annual meeting through this generous fund.

As always, we welcome short submissions (maximum 500 words) as well as short articles (maximum 2,500 words). Email all submissions and suggestions to: amisnewsletter@gmail.com

 **Sarah Deters**
Editor

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE FOR THE 2024 MEETING

Wednesday 15 May

- 10:00–17:00 Registration and museum visit
17:00–19:00 **Opening reception**, MIM lobby (El Rio)
19:00 Board of Governors' meeting (TBA)

Thursday 16 May

- 8:00–8:30 **Coffee**, El Rio

MIM Theater, Session 1

- 8:30 **Welcome**
- 8:45 **Annett C. Richter**, “Music Iconography, Gender, Space, and Sound: The Self-Portraits by Italian Renaissance Women Artists Sofonisba Anguissola (ca. 1535-1625) and Lavinia Fontana (1552-1614) with Keyboard Instruments”
- 9:10 **Addi Liu**, “Computer Keyboard as Instrument of ASMR and YouTube Culture”
- 9:35 **Christopher A. Miller**, “Organologists Are Not Morticians, a Saz Cannot Cry, and Organology Is Object-Oriented: A Sympathetic Critique of the Ethnomusicological Turn to Actor-Network Theory and What New Materialism(s) Could Better Reveal of Musical Instruments”

- 10:00–10:30 **Coffee**, El Rio

MIM Theater, Session 2

- 10:30 **Hippocrates Cheng**, “Harmonics and Design: Decoding the Mystique of the *Đàn bầu* and Its Evolution into an Electronic Instrument”
- 10:55 **Lisa Bebee**, “Creative Avenues for the Fretted Vietnamese *Đàn bầu* Monochord”
- 11:20 **Tùng Nguyễn**, “The Development and Representation of *Đàn Nguyệt*: A Historical and Iconological Study”

- 11:45–13:15 **Lunch**

- 13:15–14:00 **Museum visit**

Event Room 2, Session 3

- 14:00 **Renato Pellegrini, Brian Glasscock, and Lorenz Adler**, “The Future of Sound in Museums”—a special presentation by Sennheiser & MIM

- 15:00–15:20 **Coffee**, TBD (Event Room 3 or El Rio south)

Event Room 2, Session 4

- 15:20 **William E. Hettrick**, “An American Business Romance: The Career of John Valentine Steger, Piano Manufacturer”

- 15:45 **Panel: Catherine Provenzano, Ted Gordon, Clara Latham**, “Marketing the Electronic: Innovating and Commercializing Electronic Musical Instruments”

- 17:00 **Day 1 Ends**



*Family fun in the Experience Gallery.
Image courtesy of the MIM*

Friday 17 May

8:00–8:20 Coffee, El Rio

MIM Theatre, Session 5

- 8:20 **Maya Brown-Boateng**, “Following the Sounds of Dr. Joan Dickerson: Biography, Classic Banjo, and Racial Politics in the United States”
- 8:45 **Chet Stussy**, “‘Say It in a Hula-Hula Way’: The Stroh Ukulele and Phonographic Performance, 1899–1925”
- 9:10 **Joyce Tang**, “Hearing the Sound Visually: Evaluating Pianos at the Chicago Exhibition 1893”
- 9:35 **Allison Alcorn, Trinity Howell, and Keziah Cobden**, “Miss America’s Musical Instruments”
- 10:00–10:30 Coffee, El Rio

MIM Theatre, Session 6

- 10:30 **Eddie Chia-Hao Hsu**, “Beyond Bamboo: Morphology, Iconography, and Sounds of Historical Chinese *Xiao*”
- 10:55 **Núria Bonet and Albert Fontelles-Ramonet**, “The *Barítona*: The Re-discovered Instrument of the *Cobla*”
- 11:20 **Patrick Connor Dittamo**, “Punitive Instruments: The Macabre Propagation of the ‘Shame Flute’”

11:45–13:15 Lunch

Event Room 2

13:15–14:00 **AMIS Business Meeting**

A performance in the MIM’s Music Theatre. Image courtesy of the MIM



Event Room 2, Session 7

- 14:00 **Cassandra Balosso-Bardin**, “The *Sruti Upanga*: the Drone of the *Devadasi*”
- 14:25 **Marta Salvatori**, “Riding with the Horse Headed Lute”
- 14:50 **Colin Harte**, “*Idakka* Drum Performance & Making, The Indian Caste System, and Hindu Ritual”
- 15:15–15:45 Coffee, TBD (Event Room 3 or El Rio south)

Event Room 2, Session 8

- 15:45 **Abigail Byrd**, “The String Instrument Industry and the Triple Bottom Line”
- 16:10 **AMIS Poster Session**
- Robert Warren Apple**, “Two Other Viennese Keyed Trumpet Virtuosi: Anton Khayll and Joseph Werner”
- Stewart Carter and Zhiyu (Alex) Zhang**, “Music, Instruments, and Dance in Tenth-Century Shu: Echoes of the Great Tang”
- Lidia Chang**, “The Woman Clavichord: A Mystery in the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum*”
- Gregg Miner**, “Moving an Antique Plucked String Musical Instrument Collection Cross-Country”
- Stella Smith**, “DEUSGLORIA: The Wurlitzer Bow Ledger, 1931-1950”
- Fangying Wang**, “Heritage of Lingnan Culture, to Build the Spirit of Cantonese People Lingnan Music Inheritor-Lin Xianhui Private Museum”
- 17:00 **Day 2 Ends**

Saturday 18 May

8:00 **Meet at MIM**, load buses
8:00–8:45 Travel to Arizona State University

Organ Hall at ASU Herberger Institute School of Music, Dance, and Theater, Session 9

9:00 **Arianna Rigamonti**, “Re-Inventing Arabesque Motifs in Sixteenth-Century Keyboard Instruments: a Case of Trans-Cultural Exchange between Venice and the Islamic World”
9:25 **William Shull**, “Jonas Chickering and His Company – History, Documents and Pianos”
9:50 **Fanny Magaña**, “The Ixtaltepec Piano: a Preliminary Report”

10:15 **Break**

10:30 **Concert: Kimberly Marshall**, “The Fritts (1991) and Traeri (1742) Organs in the ASU Organ Hall”

11:30–12:15 Load buses and travel back to MIM

12:15–13:35 **Lunch**

Event Room 2, Session 10

13:35 **Christopher Ellis Reyes Montes**, “¡Guaitinaje! The Pipe and Tabor Technique in Pre- and Post-Contact Latin America”
14:00 **Jacob D. Goldwasser**, “The First American Saxophone, ‘No. 1 C.G.C.’”
14:35 **Sebastian Kirsch**, “Fragments of Paper and Parchment in Musical Instruments: Binder’s Waste for the Production and Repair of Lutes from the 16th to the 19th Century”
14:50 **Daniel Fishkin**, “Lost Tongues”

15:15–15:45 **Coffee**, TBD (Event Room 3 or El Rio south)

Event Room 2, Session 11: Instrumental Birth and Death, Edmond Johnson, chair

15:45 **Annie Kim**, “The Theremin’s (Un)familiar Timbres and Exotic Others”
16:10 **Emily I. Dolan**, “On the Aging of Instruments”
16:35 **Devanney Haruta**, “Piano (De)composition and Instrumental Afterlife”

17:00 **Break**

18:00–21:00 **Awards Banquet**, Sponsored by MIM



The world of musical instruments await conference attendees. Images courtesy of the MIM



Surfs Up in Scotland? Well, Maybe Not: The case of a bass with a mysterious inscription

Sarah Deters

In 2023, the Musical Instrument Collection of The University of Edinburgh purchased a number of American-made guitars. The instruments were collected in order to help us tell a more complete history of the guitar in our displays at St Cecilia's Hall and to supplement our already robust collection of predominantly European-made guitars from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. As a curatorial team, we had realized that our collection did not reflect major developments in the guitar's history from the last 100 years and we are actively trying to fill in those gaps in our collection.

Included in our recent purchases are some classic twentieth-century guitar models, such as a National Tricone resonator guitar from 1928 (MIMEd 6653), a Fender Telecaster made in 1956 (MIMEd 6652), and a Fender Stratocaster from 1965 (MIMEd 6651). We were also able to collect some more "quirky" instruments, such as a Magnatone Lyric Double 8 steel guitar from the 1950s (MIMEd 6683).

Of the eleven guitar-family instruments collected



Recently acquired guitars now on display at St Cecilia's Hall.
Left to right: National Tricone resonator guitar, Fender Telecaster,
Fender Stratocaster. Photos by Rui Wang, courtesy of
The University of Edinburgh

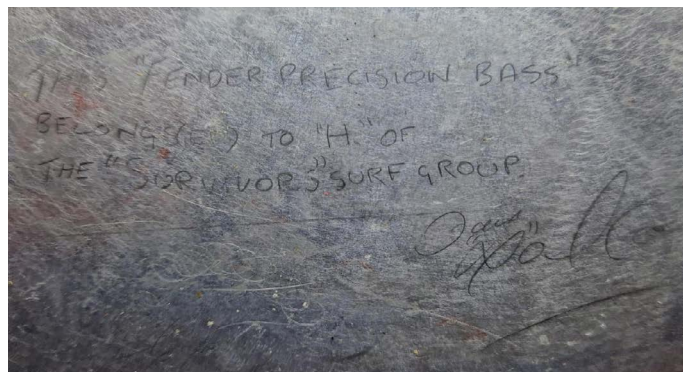
over the last year, one in particular has led me down an interesting rabbit hole of research. The instrument, a Fender Precision bass from 1960 (MIMEd 6679), has caused more questions than answers, taken me along quite a few dead-end roads, and has proven to be a

fun way to get in touch with some legendary musicians along the way.



Fender Precision bass (MIMEd 6679).
Photos courtesy of Gardiner Hougate

As is part of our standard protocols, each instrument brought into our collection goes through a thorough examination by our conservator, Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet. At this time, a conservation report is written and any necessary treatments are carried out. In the case of the Precision bass, the instrument was in very good shape, but it needed a light cleaning. In the cleaning process, Jonathan removed the pick guard from the front of the guitar and what he discovered underneath was the start of this entire mystery. Inscribed on the underside of the pick guard it reads: *This "Fender Pre-*



The inscription discovered on the underside of the pick guard.
Photo by Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet

cision Bass" belongs(ed) to "H." of the "Survivors" surf group. [signature].

Immediately after the discovery, the staff of St Cecilia's Hall began to speculate. Who were the Survivors? Were they a famous band? Who is "H?" Can anyone read that signature? One of our museum assistants, Marga Vazquez Ponte, a bit of a pop music trivia legend, immediately had the answer. In her record collection, Marga had a copy of *Pebbles Vol 4*, a compilation of rare surf rock. Included in the album was a song by The Survivors. After some internet sleuthing (thank you Google), a bit more was learned about this group. The Survivors were a studio-only band that did a one-off single released by Capitol in early 1964, "Pamela Jean"/"After the Game". The group was formed by Brian Wilson and his friends Bob Norberg, Rich Alarian, and David Nowlen.

So, mystery solved right? Well, not really. It appeared that none of the members of the band had "H" as an initial, but I thought that maybe this could have been an inside joke or some kind of nickname. To solve the mystery, I needed to contact the members of the group and see if this was, at one point, their instrument.

Getting in touch with a member of the band was actually surprisingly easy. Rather than trying to contact Brian Wilson, which I thought would be too difficult, I focussed on other members of the group. Sadly, Rich Alarian had died, so I looked for David Nowlen and Bob Norberg.

Through my various searches, I found out that David Nowlen had reported that a number of his guitars had been stolen from his California residence and there was a contact email to a third party if anyone had information. With slight trepidation (perhaps our bass was one of the stolen guitars?) I reached out to this intermediary. Much to my surprise, I got a response from David Nowlen a few days later.

David was very keen to hear about our bass, but after a few email exchanges, we both realized that our recently acquired instrument was (luckily for us) not one of his stolen instruments. We also corresponded over the mysterious description. Off the top of his head, he could not think of anyone who went by "H," but just to be sure, he got in touch with Brian Wilson and Bob Norberg. Brian Wilson played a Precision bass, but at the end of the day, no one recollected owning this par-

ticular instrument and no one could think of who "H" could be or why someone would have written that inscription on the bass. As David said:

"Even though a recording group name is sort of 'trademarked' other groups may form such as "Survivor" did, which was a legitimate USA recording group but no one can copy your exact name such as The Survivors. You may call yourself "Survivors" if the previous group was called The Survivors. The odd thing is that we were a surf group and the idea that another group with the name Survivors attached would be another surf group is in itself very odd as well.



I do not recognize the initial "H" as standing for anyone we knew and cannot make out the signature that apparently wrote this inscription.

Naturally, I had hopes that my stolen bass and guitar would one day show up...but this has provided an amusing segment to my life."

Obviously, I was slightly deflated that I could not connect this bass to members of The Survivors, but, in the process of this "investigation," I had a wonderful exchange with David Nowlen, who I hope will come and visit St Cecilia's Hall the next time he is in Scotland. I also learned a lot more about surf rock and the various groups and individuals who were involved in creating the genre. That being said, for now, the inscription on this instrument will remain an unsolved mystery in our collection.

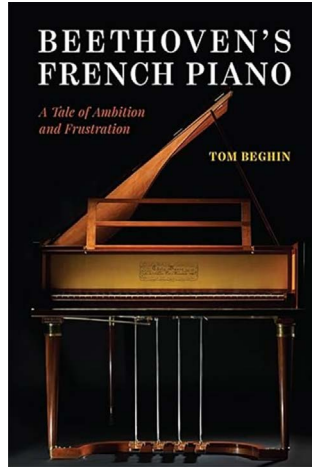
Also still a mystery, is the location of David Nolen's stolen guitars. To learn more please follow this link <https://www.kawentzmann.de/exotic-blog/asides/have-you-seen-this-guitar/>

And of course, if you might know more about "H," please get in touch.



2024 AMIS AWARDS

The American Musical Instrument Society awards the **Nicholas Bessaraboff Prize** annually for the most distinguished book-length publication in English. The 2024 prize goes to *Beethoven's French Piano: A Tale of Ambition and Frustration*, by Tom Beghin, in collaboration with Robin Blanton, Chris Maene, Michael Pecak, and Tilman Skowronek (University of Chicago Press, 2022).



A testament to the productive environment of the Orpheus Institute for Advanced Studies & Research in Music, this book is engagingly written and superbly illustrated. At the heart of this book is the story Beghin and his collaborators tell of Beethoven's complicated relationship to his 1803 Erard Frères piano and their project to replicate the instrument. Bringing together meticulous attention to organological detail and musical insights gleaned from the instrument, *Beethoven's French Piano* opens our ears anew to the early nineteenth-century piano.



Photo of Tom Beghin at the replica Erard.
Photo by Johan Vanbrabant, courtesy of Tom Beghin.

A website documenting the project can be found at <https://orpheusinstituut.be/en/beethovenerard>

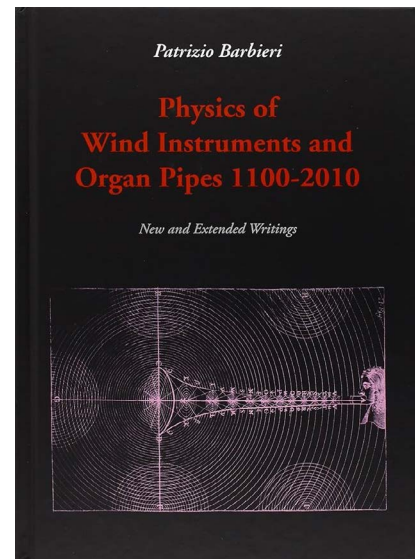
A trailer for the resulting recording can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/476211735>

The 2024 **Frances Densmore Prize** is awarded to John R. Watson for an article titled "A Small Upright Piano from Pennsylvania: Relic from the Origins of the Piano and Made by John Clemm(?)," published in the 2022 volume of the *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*. Watson's article investigates the history of one of the earliest pianos made in America while detailing the construction of a playable copy, made in collaboration with Tom and Michele Winter. The article is meticulously researched and quite detailed, yet accessible to a non-specialist. The Densmore committee felt this to be a persuasive article of benefit to music scholars and beyond.

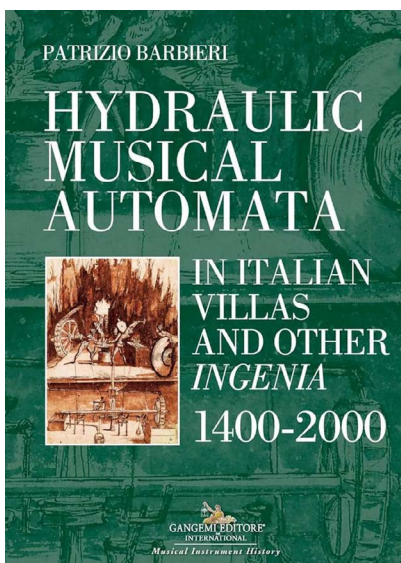
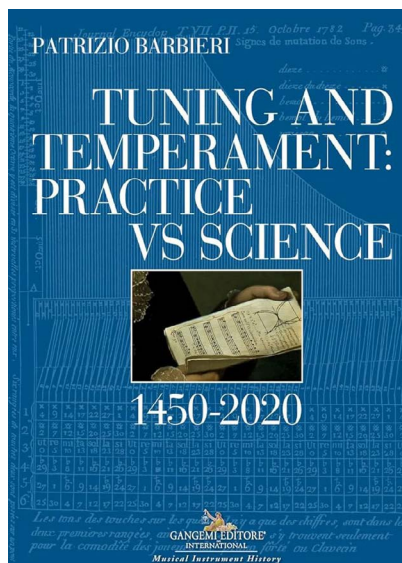


The **Curt Sachs Award** is the highest honor presented by AMIS, for lifetime achievement in service to the goals of the Society. The 2024 honoree is Patrizio Barbieri. Patrizio passed away on January 31, 2024.

Barbieri studied electrical engineering at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" and worked in that field in Europe and the United States. Turning to historical matters relevant to organology, as an independent scholar he wrote five influential books and some 140 articles on musical instruments and related topics, many of which appeared in leading international journals. Barbieri was awarded the 2008 Frances Densmore Prize by the American Musical Instrument Society for the best article in English on musical instruments published in 2006–07. Recent books include *Enharmonic Instruments and Music 1470–1900* (2008), *Physics of Wind Instruments and Organ Pipes 1100–2010* (2013), and *Hydraulic Musical Automata in Italian Villas and Other Ingenia: 1400–2000* (2019). These contributions reflect a



diverse expertise in acoustics and physics, lutherie and keyboard-instrument building, technology and mechanical engineering, harmonic theory, systematic musicology, and economics. Among other subjects, Barbieri taught musical and architectural acoustics, history of music theory and tuning, and history of musical instruments at Rome's Università di Tor Vergata, the Laboratorio di acustica musicale e architettura of the Fondazione Scuola di San Giorgio—CNR in Venice, the Università degli Studi di Lecce, and at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana in Rome. His



most recent article “Die beiden Harmonie-Systeme der Paduaner Schule (1720–1820)” appeared in 2021 in the series *Geschichte der Musiktheorie* of the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung in Berlin. Patrizio Barbieri has produced one of the largest and most important oeuvres in organology, impressive in its scope and variety. As a truly interdisciplinary researcher, he has illuminated profound connections between musical instruments and mathematics, physics, mechanics, economics, and intellectual history from antiquity to modern times, with special attention to Italy from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. The Curt Sachs Award committee acknowledges the extraordinary sophistication and range of Barbieri’s influential publications, and their scientific depth, methodological originality, and comprehensive analyses of historical contexts.

A tribute to Patrizio will be given by Massimiliano Guido during the 2024 Awards Banquet on 18 May.



Minutes from the 2023 General Business Meeting

General Business Meeting

Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music, Memphis, TN
2 June 2023

President Janet Page called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm, welcoming members and thanking everyone for their attention.

Approval of 2022 Business Minutes

Revisions to the minutes were identified by Bobby Giglio, Jim Kopp, and Darcy Kuronen. Motion to approve with corrections by Al Rice; seconded Jim Kopp. Unanimous approval.

Treasurer’s Report

Outgoing Treasurer Ken Moore reported the finances are in good shape. Previous concerns about necessary spending to comply with New York State nonprofit regulations have been dealt with through ongoing Gribbon Travel Awards, Research Grants and other funding requests.

Moore recommends seeking skilled investment management, which may be available through Jitasa. Incoming Treasurer, Constance (Connie) Huff, will need to follow-up with them. Page commented on next steps for consulting with additional expertise.

Secretary’s Report

Secretary Michael Suing shared election results, following review and approval by proxies Jayme Kurland and Carol Lynn Ward-Bamford. Vice President (2023-2024), James Kopp Treasurer (2023-2025), Constance (Connie) Huff Governors (2023-2026), second term – Emily Dolan, Jimena Palacios Uribe and John Watson; first term, Matthew Zeller

Registrar/Membership Report

Registrar Aileen Marcantonio submitted a report with Page. Indicating there are currently 284 members, down from 308 in 2022. Of those 284 members, there are 87 institutions (72 domestic, 15 international) and 197 individuals (167 domestic, 66 international).

Marcantonio will plan to send a targeted e-blast to recently lapsed members, following up with Page in the coming weeks.

Future Meetings

Page shared updates, thanking the committee, including Stewart Carter, Jimena Palacios, and Matt Zeller.

- 2024 Phoenix
- 2025 Cincinnati
- 2026 Vermillion

Finally, there was mention of an international meeting, as is customary periodically. No details were shared.

Journal

Robert Bigio, primary editor of the JAMIS, along with associate editors Carolyn Bryant and Kopp, announced the forthcoming issue should be expected in late September or early October. It will include 8-9 articles, which might need to be reduced with some pushed to the subsequent issue.

He announced that this year's publication grant has been offered to Lisa Beebe. Finally, he expressed his gratitude for being asked to take on this role, voicing particular regard for Bryant and Kopp.

Newsletter

Sarah Deters, newsletter editor, reported that two issues were published this year. The most recent went live just ahead of the annual meeting. Typically, the issues announce what will be happening at the conference, then provide an overview. At the moment, the content is student focused, coming from Gribbon and student research grant submissions. Other content is always appreciated. She did note that, in Aurelia Hartenberger's absence, other members will need to assist in photo-documenting the conference. Deters will follow-up with folks via the listserv and a shared google drive to gather photos.

New Business

Listserv Use and Protocols

Núria Bonet asked about the listserv and its use, wondering if content is being lost, what the procedure is for posting, and if it is the primary communication about and during conferences. Watson shared that Margaret (Peggy) Banks keeps the listserv, who was just in touch with him, as he's helping with membership. Once a month, he sends new additions to Banks. Several years ago, the listserv shifted to a monitor format. Bryant approves each message to listserv, typically doing so within 12 hours. Page has heard from others about

troubles but did not mention specifics. Giglio asked if it is possible to add listserv instructions, guidelines and the address to the AMIS website. Suing questioned whether the monitored format still serves our purposes and was met with a resounding "yes."

Website Manager Transition

Jayson Dobney asked if the website manager had changed? Page informed the membership, effective June 2023, Byron Pillow stepped down. Dexter Edge is taking this on and has been working with Pillow to ease the transition.

Facebook Management

Deters asked about management and oversight of the AMIS Facebook page. Bonet indicated that she, along with Dobney, Bryant, Pillow, and Hannah Grantham can all add content. She did mention that it's not clear what should/not be on there. Should it be articles? Announcements about society? What's the intention? There isn't currently a vision for this. Page added that a follow-up meeting is necessary.

Submitted by Michael Suing

AMIS Secretary

17 June 2023



Meet the Gribbons

Salomé Strauch

The conference in Memphis was the first AMIS Annual Meeting I attended and, I hope, the first of many. Thanks to the William E. Gribbon Award, I was able to attend and present my work in person. I was delighted to meet the many members of AMIS who were present in Memphis and to talk with them about my work, about organology, and many other topics, through both formal and informal discussions.

As a biologist who uses tools and methods from my discipline in order to study musical instruments, in my case harps from Africa, my interdisciplinary approach and the relevance of my work are often quickly criticized. However, this was not the case during the AMIS conference in Memphis, where my presentation gave rise to a number of very interesting exchanges, on very diverse aspects and with constructive criticism, whether with people interested in my approach or not. This was one of the most important things I personally took away from the conference, and I'm delighted that some of the exchanges I had in Memphis are still going on today.

Since the conference, I have defended my PhD thesis "Systematics, cultural evolution and ethnomusicology: an interdisciplinary study of African harps" at the National Museum of Natural History in Paris. In my thesis, I first show the interest and need for exhaustive descriptions of musical instruments, and present the description methodology I developed for African harps (which was the subject of my presentation in Memphis) and used on a corpus of 700 harps. I then used phylogenetic methods (especially cladistics) to reconstruct kinship relationships between harps and identify which innovations are passed on from one generation to the next and which are passed on between peers. Finally, this thesis explores the practice of interdisciplinarity by questioning how concepts can be mobilized in an interdisciplinary context, and by discussing the issues raised by the application of cladistics in anthropology on cultural material.

I am currently applying for funding for a post-doctoral project in São Paulo, Brazil, and I'm preparing several publications related to my thesis work. Even though I will not be able to come to the 2024 Conference in Phoenix, I look forward to attending other AMIS conferences in the future and talking with you all again.



*Strauch holding an African Harp.
Photo courtesy of Salomé Strauch*

Daniel Meachum

Hello AMIS, my name is Daniel Meachum and I am a student at California State University, Monterey Bay. I am a music student studying music theory, composition, piano performance, and sound engineering. I will be graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Music and Performing Arts with an emphasis in Music Technology. My current studies include doing independent study of post-tonal harmony under my Professor John Wineglass, a notable composer of our area, and working on my thesis for my degree. My thesis revolves around the piano and how it developed, not only how it developed as an instrument but also how it developed and affected the music of the time. For the presentation of my thesis, I have elected to write a paper describing my ideas and conclusions, but also incorporate a technical portion in the form of a working 1:1 scale model of a piano action. The piano action will function just like a modern grand piano and give the reader a more hands on experience and physical explanation and representation of exactly what I am discussing in my paper. I will build as much of the model as I can by hand and incorporate a legend or key, to reference the individual parts of the action back into their respective sections of writing. Along with explanations, the paper will include pieces of music that showcase a more specific idea or function of the piano, again to give the reader a better understanding of how monumental and beneficial the evolution of the piano was to classical music, and music as a whole.

Zhiyu (Alex) Zhang

I am deeply honored to have been supported by the American Musical Instrument Society (AMIS) to attend last year’s conference in Memphis, Tennessee, alongside my mentor, Dr. Stewart Carter from Wake Forest University. This year, I am thrilled to share updates on my research endeavors, which span the intriguing fields of organology and musical technology.

One of my current research projects, conducted with Dr. Carter, focuses on historical Chinese instruments. We explore these instruments from a cross-cultural perspective, highlighting their historical significance and evolving roles in music. Our poster, titled “Music, Instruments, and Dance in Tenth-Century Shu: Echoes of the Great Tang” will be presented at this year’s conference, further contributing to the academic discourse on these culturally rich artifacts.

In parallel, I have embarked on an ambitious project to create a new musical instrument, the “Erhulele,” mentored by Dr. John Granzow from the University of Michigan. As the name suggests, the Erhulele is a compact derivative of the Erhu, reimagined through modern technology. This instrument is crafted using digital manufacturing techniques such as 3D printing and laser cutting. My vision extends beyond its current capabilities; I aim to integrate digital signal processing (DSP) languages like Faust, enhancing its sound versatility from that of the traditional *erhu* to the bass tones of the *gehu*.

Another avenue of my research involves spatial audio as a form of creative expression, especially when combined with AI. Working alongside Dr. Julie Zhu and Dr. John Granzow, both from the University of Michigan, I am developing a machine learning model capable of generating visually appealing representations based on audio inputs. This project aims to translate the auditory nuances of handwriting into dynamic visual patterns on a digital canvas, blending the auditory with the visual in innovative ways.

This summer, I will also join the CXD Lab at NYU Shanghai directed by Dr. Alex Ruthmann as an intern, where I will explore web-based music education applications about spatial audio in experimental electronic music. This opportunity will allow me to apply my research in practical settings, further bridging the gap between theoretical research and real-world applications.

I am grateful for the continued support from AMIS, which has been instrumental in allowing me to pursue these diverse research paths. I look forward to sharing more about my journey and the future of musical instrument innovation in the coming years.



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