



# NEWSLETTER

of

## The American Musical Instrument Society

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### WE ARE ALL LIVING IN A DIGITAL WORLD!



After a one year hiatus, the AMIS community gathered again for its annual meeting. Although travel restrictions and health measures did not enable the meeting to go ahead as planned in New York and New Jersey, the meeting did take place virtually over Zoom. The meeting was held from June 4 through June 6, with events taking place during the day to accommodate attendees joining from overseas. Members had the opportunity to attend presentations, lecture-recitals, and a round table and virtually tour museums. Participants had the opportunity to chat with each other in various breakout groups and see on their screen the familiar faces we all yearn to see in person. In total, 25 papers were presented over the three-day conference, 9 of which were given by students. It was truly a packed three days of events.

The virtual format, although no replacement for an in-person meeting, did allow for members to attend from all over the world without the extra expense of travel and accommodations. The much reduced \$25 fee to attend the conference, and free registration for students, meant that financially, the conference was incredibly affordable, and more than 200 people registered.

The conference was well organised with Cullen Strawn manning the helm (and any potential tech-

nological difficulties) throughout. Organisers were able to put together an interesting program exploring a wide variety of musical instrument related topics. All papers were pre-recorded with time after the presentation for live questions for the presenter. This format ensured there were not any difficulties with people's connections during their presentations and also ensured that paper sessions did not run over time!

The conference began on Friday morning with a session focused on musical instrument museums as vehicles for education programmes and research and explored the programmes at the Musical Instruments Museum at the University of Leipzig and the Musical Instrument Collection at Pavia University. The next session explored two

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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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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear AMIS members,

I hope that you're all safe and healthy. It has certainly been another unusual year.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 AMIS conference took place online, which had both good and frustrating aspects. Many of us missed the camaraderie of discussions and meals together, but presenters joined us from distant places, and the convenience of being able to attend from home attracted some new attendees who might not otherwise have participated. The online collection tours and lecture recitals were fascinating. The technical aspects of the conference were admirably handled by Cullen Strawn, Byron Pillow, and Aileen Marcantonio.

We expect to hold the 2022 conference in person, June 8–11, at Studio Bell, home of the National Music Centre/Centre National de Musique in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Arrangements are taking shape, and I look forward to seeing you in this lovely venue for a conference that promises to be unique and exciting. The program and further conference information will be published shortly.

AMIS is celebrating the fiftieth anniversaries of our founding and first meetings. 2021 AMIS members received a commemorative publication filled with thought-provoking essays on the past, present, and future of our society and our discipline, by Carolyn Bryant, Darcy Kuronen, Cynthia Adams Hoover, Anne Acker, Kathleen Wiens, and Arnold Myers. The publication includes a wonderful selection of pictures from past meetings. Another publication, celebrating fifty years of the Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society, is in the works.

This year's election has an online voting option. The election is administered through ElectionBuddy, a service used by many societies like ours. Electronic ballots were sent out on January 31, and voting will close on March 15. Please take this opportunity to vote!

We welcome a new editorial team to the Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society. Robert Bigio will succeed Jim Kopp as Editor, beginning with the 2023 volume, and Ed Johnson and Saskia Keller are already at work as Reviews Editor and Assistant Reviews Editor, succeeding Al Rice. Please send JAMIS your best work, and let Ed know if you're interested in writing reviews.

I am also pleased to report that the Organology Study Group (OSG) has been approved by the Board of the American Musicological Society. The group is planning a session at the joint AMS-SEM-SMT meeting to be held in New Orleans, November 10-13, 2022. I congratulate OSG co-chairs Matthew Zeller and Lidia Chang for their success in getting this group going; it will bring our field to the attention of new audiences. A website is under construction. If you'd like to be added to the mailing list, send an email to [OrganologySG@gmail.com](mailto:OrganologySG@gmail.com).

And finally, on a sadder note, this past year we lost several valued members of AMIS, who were also personal friends to many of us: Joe Peknik, long-time employee at Metropolitan Museum of Art; Jeannine Abel, who served as AMIS secretary for a decade; our astute former treasurer Joanne Kopp; and our very efficient registrar Don Sarles. All were delightful personalities and will be thoroughly missed.

I hope to see you soon in Calgary!

☞ Janet Page  
President

musical instrument makers, the well know Léon Leblanc, and the lesser known Charles Clagget. Following the morning sessions, the AMIS working groups met separately.

After a quick lunch break, our first student paper was presented in a session focussing on technology. The paper “Sounds of Futuristic Nostalgia: The Cultural Legacy of Blade Runner (1982) and the Yamaha CS-80 Synthesizer” by Julin Lee was an innovative look at the relationship between film, music and musical instruments and earned Julin the Selch Award for the best student paper. Continuing the examination of technology, the next paper looked at technology as musical instruments, with an exploration of mid-twentieth century devices.

The exploration of technology and musical instruments was interrupted by the much-delayed presentation of the AMIS awards for 2020. The presentation of the awards was originally scheduled to take place in Calgary in 2020 but had to be postponed when the conference was cancelled. The awardees for 2020 were John Watson, who received the Curt Sachs Award, Robert B. Winans, recipient of the Nicholas Bessaraboff Prize, and Jaime E. Oliver La Rosa, who was awarded the Frances Densmore Prize.

The first day of the conference ended with two more papers focusing on technology and musical instruments. The papers took a step back in time compared to the previous paper session as participants learned about Elisha Gray’s Musical Telegraph of the late-nineteenth century, as well as the “magical” history of a zither-playing Android.

The second day of the conference saw a wide variety of topics presented. This first session focused on keyboard instruments, with papers exploring spinets made by David Tannenberg, the reconstruction of a Cristofori piano and the destruction of a piano as part of performance practice. The second awards presentation of the conference followed the paper session, this time with the 2021 awards being presented. The recipients were Prof. Dr. Em. Eszter Fontana, who was awarded the Curt Sachs Award; David Lasocki, who was presented with the Bessaraboff Prize, and Dr. Rachel Beckles, who was awarded the Densmore Prize.

The afternoon kicked off after a short lunch break with a session on harps, both Parisian and Welsh. The papers then shifted to Northern Ireland and Brazil with presentations on the musical instrument traditions of those two countries. In this session participants were introduced to the Lambeg drum of Northern Ireland and the *rabeca* of Brazil.

The final session of the day shifted to “harder” topics, with papers exploring metal aspects of instruments.

This included information on keyed trumpets and the mouth-watering exploration of cooking utensils as musical instruments in comedic settings.

The final day of the conference was again a full programme. The day started off with a round table discussion investigating the response of musical instrument collections to the pandemic. Presenters from the Horniman Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, Morris Museum, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Musical Instrument Museum (Phoenix) gave short presentation of projects, initiatives, and reflections of how their institution handled these difficult times.

During the lunch hour the general meeting took place. In addition to the annual reports, the important ceremony of the passing of the gavel from the outgoing president, Jayson Dobney, to incoming president, Janet Page, took place. This was slightly difficult to do via Zoom, but through the magic of online meeting platforms, the handover was complete.

Woodwind instruments were the order of business after the general meeting ended. An overview of a large project taking place to study small-sized bassoons through new technologies was presented by researchers at Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland. The theme of technology and 3D printing continued with the next paper that argued that replicating techniques could be considered in the context of repatriation of indigenous artifacts.

Bowed strings were the focus of the next set of papers with topics from the sixteenth century to today presented. This diverse, yet related series of presentations included papers on the luthier’s workbench as a research tool, an investigation into the transition of the cittern from a humanist to domestic instrument, and a paper looking at the guitar strap and what it reveals about the player and associated music.

The final session returned to woodwind instruments. The first paper looked at nineteenth-century conceptions of gendering of musical instruments and their long-lasting ramification for today. The final session of the conference examined the expanding instrumentation of early eighteenth-century Ireland through the notebook of John Sigismond Cousser.

As always, the papers and information presented at the conference showed the various ways researchers can investigate musical instruments and how much there is still to discover. If you missed any papers, presentations or virtual tours, or would like to view them again, they are available on the AMIS YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtLZgBe1b-RGB9y4M8cE0yA/videos>.



# DOMINICK E. RAGOT AN UNKNOWN FRENCH-AMERICAN LUTHIER

Darcy Kuronen

During my lengthy tenure at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, curating its collection of musical instruments, one of the tasks on which I spent considerable time was basic housekeeping regarding inventory and registration issues. Which is to say, dealing with instruments that, for one reason or another, had slipped through the cracks in terms of being properly documented as either donations or loans. Among these UFOs was a curious five-string viola (accession no. 2007.74) of indeterminate date or place of origin, bearing no authentic marks of a maker (fig. 1). The guitar-shaped body, reverse scroll, and banana-shaped sound holes are reminiscent of instruments designed by French naval engineer François Chanot (1787–1825), but the workmanship and styling suggest that it is not actually from the shop where his violins originated. Chanot himself was not a luthier, and instruments bearing his name were actually constructed by his brother, George (1801–1883), and by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume (1798–1875). Chanot’s “cornerless” design for a violin was, however, presented to the French Academy of Science in 1817, and later emulated by various other makers. This viola seemed to fall into that category, so a French origin seemed logical to me at the time, as did a date of manufacture sometime during the 19th century.

As I began to study the MFA’s violins more, and showed them to visiting researchers, a theory was put forth by some that this unusual viola might have been made in the United States. Joseph Pe-

knik, former technician for musical instruments at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, was the first to propose this, based on the appearance of the maple used for the instrument’s back and ribs, which has distinctive pith flecks that are commonly seen in this genus when grown in North America, but not found in European maple. Peknik further suggested that this instrument might have been made by a luthier named Rodet, based on another violin he had once seen. Various violin makers who examined the instrument likewise confirmed that the maple looked like that grown in the United

States. As for Paul Rodet, he is included in Karel Jalovec’s *Encyclopedia of Violin-Makers* from 1968, where it states that he worked in Memphis (Tennessee), New Orleans (Louisiana), and Buffalo (New York). Jalovec further indicates that he was born after 1850 in Lyons and was an assistant to Silvestre in Paris, as well as to Gérard in Roubaix before emigrating to the United States. Thomas Wenberg’s *Dictionary of American Violin Makers* from 1986 repeats most of Jalovec’s information, but adds that Rodet also worked for Gail in Lille, and that his shop in Buffalo (where he primarily did repairs) was active about 1921.

By itself, the MFA’s cornerless viola yielded few other clues about its history. No maker’s label is present inside, but a later, handwritten one states: *This instrument is by / François*

*Chanot / Paris 1817–1824 / W.S.G.* It seems likely that W.S.G. stands for Walter Salon Goss (1853–about 1925), who operated a violin shop in Boston and might well have worked on this viola. He was



Figure 1: Museums of Fine Arts accession no. 2007.74.

certainly not correct, however, in his attribution of the instrument to Chanoit's shop. An equally unhelpful set of markings are roughly scratched into the back of the pegbox, which read: *Marquis de Maire / J.G. / I.H.S. / 1675*. The Marquis de Maire might have been an early owner, but the initials and date following his name would seem to be overly wishful thinking that the instrument was made in the late 17th century by the legendary Cremonese maker Giuseppe [Joseph] Guarneri (1698–1744), who included the initials I.H.S. on his labels (*iota-eta-sigma*), a Greek acronym known as the Christogram, leading to Guarneri's moniker of *del Gesù* ("of Jesus"). But a date of 1675 predates the birth of Guarneri considerably, further muddying the meaning of these markings.

As is often the case with research, random pieces of information began to serendipitously turn up that helped provide further clues about this mysterious viola in Boston. The first was the discovery of a violin belonging to the Smith College Music Department in Northampton, Massachusetts, which is part of an instrument collection purchased in 1938 from music professor Rebecca Wilder Holmes. It bears a striking resemblance to the MFA's viola, not only with its guitar-shaped body, reverse scroll, and distinctive sound holes, but also with the presence of purfling (or binding) in a barber-pole pattern of alternating light and dark woods, which also borders the sound holes (fig. 2). What was especially exciting about this violin is a printed label, albeit one that was fragmentary. It reads: *D. E. Ragot / [effaced] City of Paris [effaced and torn away]*. There was clearly more information on this label at one time, but at least a surname was present, along with two initials and the appearance that the maker might have formerly worked in Paris, but was now residing in a place

where English was spoken. Regrettably, the name "Ragot" did not turn up in any of the standard dictionaries of violin makers, so there was still little to go on in that regard.

A few years later, I was contacted by Evan Jay Getz, who at the time was an assistant college professor of literature in Houston and an amateur violin player. Getz owned another guitar-shaped violin with similar decorative binding and sound holes and, most importantly, an intact label that was clearly like the damaged one inside the Smith College instrument. The complete label in Getz's violin reads: *D. E. Ragot, / (Late from the City of Paris.) / Piano, Bass Viol, Vi- / olin & Guitar maker. / Old Instruments repaired, / In a superior style*. Of additional interest was a pencil inscription on the underside of the belly that reads: *D. E. Ragot 1840*

*[or 1846]*. The presence of a date was starting to make the picture a bit clearer about Ragot, but there was still no indication of where he worked or what his Christian name was. It did, however, lend credence to the idea that the MFA's viola might also have been made by D. E. Ragot.

The state of research about these three instruments remained somewhat static for several more years until I showed the MFA's viola to violin expert Philip J. Kass in 2017 and told him what I had deduced thus far. With lightning speed, Kass went on the internet later that evening and shared with me his findings from census records and a couple of newspapers that a Dominick Ragot (spelled Ragaut in the 1840 census) was present in or near Buffalo, New York, during the middle of the 19th century, although his actual residence, at least for a time, was Black Rock, a town directly north of Buffalo, now part of the city proper. In 1850, Ragot's profession is listed as "Fiddles," while his wife, Margaret, is listed in 1870 as "dressmaker." Census records further indicate that both were natives of



Figure 2: Violin, Smith College Music Department, Northampton, Massachusetts.

France and, based on the ages he provided in two of these reports, Dominick was born about 1799 or 1800; Margaret was about 15 years younger. Neither are listed in the 1880 census. Ragot is also reportedly listed as a musical instrument maker in city directories for Buffalo in 1840 and 1844.

The relatively recent availability of digitized and searchable census records, other legal documents, and newspapers from all over the United States, dating as far back as the late 1600s, has been a boon to all sorts of historical research. One can thus now search for information about someone like Ragot with relative ease. For example, the *Buffalo Daily Gazette* of May 29, 1843, ran the advertisement shown in fig. 3, providing further details about Ragot’s output. Later that same year, on October 3, a listing in the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* reveals that “E. D.” Ragot (surely a simple reversal of his initials) exhibited a bass viol and double bass at the local Mechanics Fair, held at Franklin Hall in the American Block. Ragot’s name regrettably does not turn up much more in online



Figure 3: Advertisement, *Buffalo Daily Gazette*, May 29, 1843.

searches of 19th-century newspapers, apart from the inclusion of his name regarding some real estate transactions in 1852, 1859, and 1860, where property he owned is referenced in passing.

As is often the case, stories about local citizens are often provided by someone a generation or two later as a historical remembrance. And they must always be taken with a grain of salt, not only because of the passage of time, but also because they often have tendencies to romanticize some of what is reported. Nonetheless, the only information about Ragot’s personal background and his work that has been discovered thus far is found in

two newspaper articles from the early 20th century that reveal some curious, but limited, information about Ragot. A lengthy piece in the *Buffalo Courier Sun*, from December 29, 1907, discusses numerous rare old violins owned by residents of Buffalo, including a collection belonging to Paul Rodet, mentioned above. That same article casually mentions a Ragot cello worth \$300, as well as three of his “valuable” violins owned by Byron M. Casten. The writer further relates that “this splendid French maker” was active in Buffalo from 1849 to 1857. More intriguing, however, is a statement that Ragot had an “interesting” history.

Some of that interesting history of Ragot’s career in France and the United States is provided fourteen years later in an article from March 9, 1921, published in the *Buffalo Evening News*. Titled “Fiddles Recall Old Buffalo Character,” this piece states that in the 1850s, Mr. and Mrs. François Ragot operated, respectively, a violin school and a millinery store. Use of the name François would appear to be an error, as everything in the story that follows

accords with what is known about Dominick Ragot and his wife, Margaret. The couple reportedly fled to the United States about 1848 to “escape capture by French officials” as a result of “revolutionary disturbances” in which the government connected the Ragots with some “daring plot.”

The article goes on to state that violins produced by Ragot were in high demand in Buffalo, while “fashionable women and debutantes” of the time sought out hats made by Margaret. Rodet is quoted in the article as saying that the Ragots were “an interesting couple,” and that he owned some violins made by Dominick, who had

been part of the Parisian school of makers led by Nicholas Lupot (1758–1824). The Ragots might briefly have been Buffalo’s power couple of the day, but marital troubles soon caused Dominick to move from town to a nearby “forest,” where he built a cabin using “four standing trees as corner posts.” Regarding Ragot’s withdrawal from urban Buffalo, Rodet remarked that, “He was a temperamental individual and lived a hermit’s life. I think he was happy only with his violins.” In his bachelor’s cabin, however, Ragot continued to make what were said to be “exceptional” instruments,

hoping to win back his wife's heart by making the "choicest violins." It was to no avail, however, as Margaret eventually returned to France, while her husband was buried in Buffalo's Pine Hill Cemetery.

Rodet confirmed that Ragot sometimes made violins with a reverse scroll, and although most of his instruments were "original" in design, he sometimes patterned his work after Stradivari. Another statement in this article that Ragot "became regarded as the best violin maker in America, and from far and near came requests for his fiddles," would seem to be a bit of local puffery, given that virtually nothing was subsequently recorded about Ragot in the standard violin literature. Notwithstanding this pride for one of Buffalo's former and "interesting" citizens, the article's author states that violins made by Ragot were owned by a few noted Buffalo musicians, such as Julian Casten of Shea's Criterion (presumably related to Byron Casten, mentioned in the 1917 article) and Lender Koons of The Majestic. (Shea's Criterion and The Majestic were both theaters in Buffalo.) Ragot's most important order, however, reportedly came early on from a Roman Catholic Church in St. Louis, which procured eight of his violins, along with two cellos and two "bass violins."

A third short article about Ragot, titled "A Pioneer Violin-Maker of Buffalo," was featured in *Museum Notes*, vol. 1, no. 2, from June-July 1930 (p. 6), published by the Buffalo Historical Society (now the Buffalo History Museum). Mention is made here that Rodet had recently donated to the Society a handmade frame saw, fret saw, and calipers that he inherited from Ragot. (The presence of these tools was confirmed by Walter Mayer, Senior Director of Museum Collections at the Museum.) As fellow Frenchmen, one wonders how well Rodet and Ragot

knew each other, as Ragot would likely have been rather elderly by the time Rodet set up his own shop in Buffalo. This article appears to again draw principally on information from Rodet, indicating that Ragot first established his shop on Genesee near Oak Street (sometime between 1838 and 1840), with subsequent shops at 155 Main Street (starting in 1844 and continuing for thirteen years), then at 14 Niagara Street, and finally on Delavan Avenue, near Main Street (in 1864). He reportedly marketed his instruments through a place called the "Mansion House." The writer further states that Ragot "had

the sagacity" to somewhat alter his copies of Cremonese instruments "to overcome the difference in density between the American spruce and maple and the similar woods of the old world." Regarding the several instruments that Ragot made for the church in St. Louis, the article reports that two violas were included, but that "most" of this set was regrettably destroyed in a fire in 1885 that burned "both the church and the old Music Hall." On a personal note, the writer observes that Ragot enjoyed gardening in his spare time, and was "a striking figure upon the streets of Buffalo, immaculate in his attire and dignified in his bearing."

Two further instruments labeled by Ragot have surfaced recently, one while researching this article. The first is a cornerless violoncello belonging to the Morris Steinert Collection of Musical Instruments

at Yale, in New Haven, Connecticut (accession no. 4828.1993, fig. 4). An intact label by Ragot is adhered to the underside of the belly, with the same text and format as the label in the Getz violin described above. That label is amended at its bottom in a slightly different typeface (or perhaps carefully rendered using an ink pen) with: *Buffalo, 1840*. A second printed label is also present on the interior



Figure 4: Violoncello, Morris Steinert Collection, Musical Instruments at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut.

of the back, beneath the treble sound hole, that reads: *RAGOT / CREMONO*. This is obviously an attempt on someone's part (though perhaps not Ragot himself) to capitalize on the fame of Italian instruments made in Cremona, in spite of the misspelling of that town's name. This cello has a reverse scroll with geared metal tuners and bears the same barber-pole binding around the edges of its belly, back, and banana-shaped sound holes as is found on the other three bowed string instruments described above. The presence of geared tuners would be unusual for a European cello, but they were common on cello-type "bass viols" made in the northeast part of the United States between about 1820 and 1850.

Matt Umanov, an instrument dealer in New York City, owns a guitar (currently in pieces) in which handwriting on the underside of the sound table says: *Ragot à Buffalo / NY 1861* (fig. 5). Additional penciled marks below this suggest that the guitar was repaired by Fred J. Busch of Niagara Falls in 1957. In keeping with Ragot's apparent interest for "original" designs (to quote Rodet), this guitar has a somewhat non-traditional outline with an upper bout that is flattened at the top, resulting in a sort of shield shape. Such an outline is not unknown in European guitars, but it is rare for ones made in the United States. It is also slightly curious that with this guitar Ragot chose to express his workplace as "à Buffalo," in the French manner. Of additional interest is that the binding on this guitar appears to be very much like that seen on Ragot's bowed string instruments. Guitars are clearly mentioned on Ragot's labels and in the one known advertisement cited above, as are pianos. None of the latter have surfaced, though, and it seems a bit of a stretch for Ragot to have operated a lutherie shop that also produced pianos, even if

he had the skills to make such instruments. This somewhat begs the question of whether Ragot was in fact an actual luthier or someone who simply imported and sold musical instruments, perhaps doing repairs on the side. But that theory is betrayed by the presence of American maple in some of his labeled instruments, a wood unlikely to have been imported to Europe and used by luthiers there during this period.

As to what prompted Ragot to make primarily cornerless instruments, we cannot know for certain.

Living in Paris prior to 1840, he was likely aware of the similar violins produced by Chanot's shop, whose design was aimed at preserving the length of wood fibers in instruments as much as possible. Ragot may have subscribed to Chanot's acoustical theories, but it is equally possible that he simply liked the cornerless design from an aesthetic standpoint. But like Chanot violins, the instruments labeled by Ragot have ribs constructed from two continuous strips of maple, seamed at the center of the lower bout. The sound holes used are also similar to those on Chanot violins, but somewhat pointed rather than rounded at their ends. In Chanot's violins, the strings are fixed at their lower ends by wooden pins inserted into a hardwood plate glued directly to the belly, much like the



Figure 5: Guitar back, Matt Umanov Collection, New York, New York.

bridge/saddle structure on 19th-century guitars. Ragot's violins, however, utilize a normal tailpiece for this purpose. Rodet does not specifically say that Ragot made cornerless violins, but only that most of his instruments were of an original design, and that some had reverse scrolls.

As mentioned above, two extant violins and a cello labeled by Ragot, as well as a five-string viola attributed to him, all bear important similarities to each other, which obviously includes their corner-



less outline, along with barber-pole binding bordering the edges of the belly and back, and outlining the distinctive sound holes. For unknown reasons, the Smith College instrument has circular wood inlays about 6 mm in diameter at each end of its sound holes. That violin and the MFA viola have reverse scrolls, while that on Getz's violin is oriented in the normal fashion, which accords with Rodet's statement about Ragot's output. Although he no longer owns the instrument (having sold it to a student performer in Houston), Getz states that his Ragot violin was in very good condition, showed no signs of having ever been opened, and that the scroll is finely cut and not a later graft to the neck. He also recalled that it had a nice big sound, which he felt might be a result of its body being a bit longer than that of traditional violins. The backs of the three Ragot treble instruments are of one-piece flamed maple, and the bellies of the Smith College and MFA examples appear to be two-piece medium-grained spruce. Regular upper and lower blocks are present, along with normal linings. The varnish on each instrument is a brownish orange. The flamed maple back for the cello at Yale is made in two pieces and its belly again appears to be spruce, all with a varnish of similar color to the two violins and viola.

Dimensions are not available for the Getz violin or Yale cello, but the Smith College example has a body length of 370 mm, 10 to 15 mm longer than more traditional violins. The width of the upper bout is 169 mm and the lower bout is 213 mm, again a bit larger than normal, especially for the lower bout. The string length is approximately 332 mm, which is a bit long, but accords with the increased body length. Comparing the dimensions of the five-string viola to regular violas is not especially useful, both because it is an unusual instrument to begin with and because classical violas vary greatly in size. That said, the viola attributed to Ragot has a body length of 381 mm, an upper bout of 183 mm, a lower bout of 220 mm, and a string length of approximately 344 mm, none of which are especially outside the norm for a viola. A brief recording of the MFA's viola can be heard at the Museum's website ([www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org)) by using the collections search function to locate accession number 2007.74.

Why Ragot may have chosen to produce a viola with five strings is another mystery, but the musical reasoning would be that the upper four strings on such an instrument could be tuned like a violin and the lower four like a viola. With such an instrument a player could perform music written for either violin or viola and would have access to a larger range than is available on either one alone. Such an instrument is thus perhaps best termed a violin/viola. A five-string violin/viola is owned by the National Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota (cat. no. 10011). Dated 1819, it is attributed to the partnership of Chanot & Lété. The instrument's body dimensions are quite close to those of the Ragot viola described above, though its vibrating string length is noticeably shorter. It would seem to demonstrate that the idea for a five-string violin/viola hybrid was in the air, and perhaps Ragot saw such instruments before leaving France. Chanot himself did not patent his cornerless design for violins, nor were any American patents taken out by Ragot for similar instruments.

More remains to be learned about Ragot and his instruments, and there are surely other examples of his work out there that would bear study and comparison to the five mentioned above, allowing a clearer picture of his output. Further research should also be undertaken about his history in both France and the United States. It is surprising, however, that a luthier with such a colorful background and a penchant for making somewhat unusual instruments has stayed relatively hidden from view in the 150 or so years since his death. Moreover, the information uncovered thus far about Ragot suggests that there are very likely other instrument makers who worked in 19th-century America whose stories are equally interesting and likewise awaiting discovery.

I'm most grateful to John Koster and Christina Linsenmeyer for offering useful suggestions for this article and for passing along information about the instruments at the National Music Museum and in the Morris Steinert Collection of Musical Instruments at Yale.



# SIBYL MARCUSE AND THE YALE COLLECTION OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS (1952–1960)

Eleanor Selfridge-Field

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**\*Author's note\*** I first met Sibyl Marcuse in the late 1970s. My quotations and chronology come from her (typescript) memoirs. Out of respect for her wishes that these writings not be published, I have paraphrased, synthesized, and otherwise omitted most details of her engaging commentary.

Sibyl Marcuse (1911–2003), credited with organizing and documenting the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments, had wide-ranging interests and unflagging energy. She grew up with limited options and was steered towards a career in librarianship. This was considered to suit her prodigious language skills. She emigrated to the US in 1938 and put her command of seven languages to use in seeking to reunite displaced persons with surviving family members on opposite sides of the Atlantic. The details of Sibyl's early life and schooling are unknown, but she had a deep-seated familiarity with chamber, choral, and keyboard music and a secure knowledge of Latin literature. In the New York of the 1940s she spent her spare time attending concerts and rehearsals, with a predilection for early music. By the late Forties, when refugee work was drying up, she became the secretary of Arthur Mendel's Cantata Singers and soon thereafter decided to develop skills that would enable her to work in the music field.

This led her to train to become a piano-tuner. By 1950 she was especially interested in the harpsichord, primarily for its methods of construction and tuning. She was fascinated by tuning systems and the mechanical means of supporting them. Her first "case," requiring her to fix a broken string on a Pleyel, was a challenge because Pleyels were atypical in their action. She devised her own solution to deal with this, and in coming years she was inclined to seek practical solutions instead of using "textbook" approaches. During the post-war years many conventional parts were unavailable.



*Figure 1: Sibyl Marcuse tuning a Challis harpsichord in the 1950s. Originally printed in the November 2003 Newsletter. Photo courtesy of Frederick Hammond.*

In reading through her memoirs one can see how enterprising Sibyl was, for she and her peers had few intellectual resources available. She necessarily based her early instrument identifications on available information, but in recent discussions with John Koster, it became clear to me that some of them were based on details less complete than those available today.

Sibyl had immigrated to the US from Belgium in 1938. She had spent much of the thirties in transit between East Asia (mainly China) and Europe. She made one trip by land (via the Trans-Siberian Express), another by sea (with an unplanned land expedition from Ecuador to Panama on the Europe-bound route), and a third (from Japan) by sea as far as San Francisco, then by land to New York. Tuning harpsichords may seem a dull career by comparison with international journeys, but in her retellings, perils made life exciting both in tuning and in traveling.

During one of her early tuning jobs she worked on a two-manual (unattributed) instrument she believed to be “a Ruckers from the early seventeenth century” and subsequently acquired it at auction. Koster decoded Sibyl’s note that it later found a permanent home in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to point to the maker as Joseph Joannes Couchet (1680). This Couchet was the son of Ruckers’s nephew Jan Couchet, the last member of the Ruckers family to make harpsichords (see Koster’s *Keyboard Musical Instruments in the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, 1994, pp. 47-61). A subsequent “restoration” desecrated the soundboard painting, much to Sibyl’s dismay. [Her examination of “Transposing Keyboards on Extant Flemish Harpsichords” was published in the *Musical Quarterly* 38/3 (1952); <http://www.jstor.org/stable/739768>.]

Apart from single instruments, harpsichord collections long interested her. In 1948 she had been invited to Rome to meet Evan Gorga (1885–1957), the noted Puccini tenor. Gorga had invested his high fees from leading opera houses in vast collections of Etruscan artifacts, hand-blown glass, and early musical instruments (the last two chiefly Venetian). During the war nearly all of these riches were “stored” in the Castel Sant’Angelo as collateral for the taxes he was alleged to owe the state. When Sibyl arrived in Rome, he had only three harpsichords to show her, and she was not impressed by any of them. He said he would part with them for \$1,000 each but she declined the offer. (Gorga’s instruments, including the Cristofori fortepiano originally belonging to Alessandro Marcello, reside today in the Museo Nazionale di Strumenti Musicali, while his other collections are housed in the Museo Nazionale Romano.)

In 1952 Sibyl was invited to tune for Wanda Landowska (1879–1959), who was preparing to record Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The commission required her to travel to Lakeville, CT often. It also led to her becoming Landowska’s tuner in New York. Late in life Sibyl recalled that Landowska insisted upon having all the jacks in condition to allow plucking of any set of keys simultaneously.

As Sibyl’s network of contacts in Connecticut grew, the Yale Collection began to occupy her attention. Formed in 1900 with a substantial donation of instruments from the piano dealer Morris



Figure 2: Landowska’s favored instrument, the Pleyel Grand Modèle de Concert (Paris 1927) - Berlin, Musikinstrumentenmuseum.

Photo by Gérard Janot.

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10576165>

Steinert, it was housed on the third floor of Woolsey Hall, where pigeons nested overhead. The Collection was rich in keyboard instruments but poorly documented. Its care and maintenance had been the province of the music librarian, who was retiring in 1952. Ralph Kirkpatrick (1911–1984) asked Sibyl whether she was willing to “do some work” on it. After accepting, her initial enthusiasm was dampened by the discovery that a few early strings and woodwinds were also included. She had no expertise in their care and maintenance, but she compensated for that by recruiting an Austrian violinist to teach her the basics of making nuts, fixing soundposts, and straightening bows. She later found an oboist to teach her how to cut reeds. She began an apprenticeship in harpsichord-making with John Challis (1907–1974) of Detroit in the summer of 1952. It continued over several summers, with interruptions. She admired his skills in building sturdy instruments capable of staying in-

tune while also furnishing them with “half-hitches requiring extremely exacting tolerances.”

Sibyl’s contacts with collectors grew extensively in part because she sailed to Europe most summers and availed herself of opportunities to see private holdings and to attend organ concerts on historic instruments. She was readily accommodated by various family members in Oxford, London, Paris, and Brussels. In the aggregate her visits were interspersed with walking and sight-seeing tours in Spain, Italy, Greece, and sequestered Swiss villages in breath-taking locations. In winter she rarely commuted between New Haven and New York without the company of books on loan from the Yale School of Music.

Sibyl also had a substantial interest in historical organs. She counted among her trophy invitations to private organ concerts those to Notre Dame de Paris and to San Petronio in Bologna. She was interested in pipe measurements but never to the exclusion of organists’ own accounts of their experiences with an instrument. Based on her pipe measurements, she maintained that organ pitch rose as one went north. She dissented from the widely adopted early-music tuning standards (e.g. 392 or 415), for she maintained that in music requiring an organ the pitch used in the original venue should be considered. In Baltic ports she found that organ pitch could be as high as 460.

The triangular commute that Sibyl regularly took between New Haven, Manhattan, and Europe was disrupted in 1957 by an invitation from the dean of Yale’s School of Music to consider giving up tuning to become the designated curator of its instrument collection—and to move to New Haven. Since it would take a year to work out the details, he suggested she take advantage of the chance to take the academic year 1958–59 off entirely. He mooted that her salary might amount to somewhat less than her combined tuning fees but that the intangible benefits would be considerable. She tentatively accepted the offer. She was attracted to the prospect of increased intellectual stimulation, regular access to a library rich in cherished resources, and involvement in a lively musical community.

Sibyl must have known before she sailed to Europe in 1958 that William C. Skinner was considering the donation of his late sister Belle’s collection

to the Museum. It is Sibyl who is credited in later accounts as having been the person who carried out the negotiations and, in the process, sought new premises to house the expanding roster of holdings. The most attractive building, as judged by its inclusion of an acoustically suitable concert space for early music, proved to be a structure at 15 Hillhouse Ave. It was being vacated by the Chi Phi fraternity.

While the negotiations continued, Sibyl sailed to Europe. There she stayed for some time in Basel, where she took an interest in the university library, the musical instrument collection, and the city’s invigorating concert life. The collection (a cornerstone of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis) was then managed by Walter Nef, through whom she was invited to attend the lectures of Leo Schrade. [Nef’s “Die Basler Musikinstrumentensammlung” in *Das Basler Kammer-orchester unter Leitung von Paul Sacher 1926–1976*, ed. Veronika Gutmann, Zürich and Freiburg im Breisgau, 1977, 161-185, gives details.] Sibyl was offered a continuing appointment at the fledgling Institute of Musicology that Shrade was trying to set up, but she was eventually lured away by a forthcoming meeting of instrument specialists at The Hague.


Upon her return the US in 1959, she was informed by the dean that while preparations were going well, her prospective salary had been further reduced. This owed, he explained, to a Yale policy by which no staff member could be paid more than the lowest-paid faculty member. He offered as consolation the possibility that she teach a course on musical instruments and expressed his full approval of her seeking complementary income. [The dean of Yale’s School of Music (1954–1970) was Luther Noss, a pupil of Alban Berg and Marcel Dupré who in retirement served as curator of the Paul Hindemith Collection.]

Sibyl eased into complementary work that must have been distant from what the dean imagined. She had been intrigued by the little red ticker in the window of a brokerage she regularly passed en route from the train station. She stopped by one day to ask for a brief explanation. The broker offered her what was to become a series of lessons on bond-trading. Under his guidance, she developed an uncanny skill in anticipating movements in their prices. Her success put into high relief the

fact that the curatorial position offered no pension, and this caused her some concern. In later years her trading skills replenished her savings as fluctuating balances required, and she had many stories to tell about her successes.

By the autumn of 1959 she decided that complementary career options were greater in New York than in New Haven and declined to relocate to New Haven. She had already brought the collection out of mothballs. She had documented the provenance of many of its holdings. She was involved in preparing an exhibition in the university's art museum, and she had initiated negotiations to move it to larger, more suitable premises. Feeling satisfied with these accomplishments, she agreed to return to Yale for one year while the collection was put in order in its new premises. The exhibit opened on February 19, 1960.

As her Yale departure date approached, Sibyl was invited by Doubleday to write a history of musical instruments. She declined the offer but proposed instead a dictionary of instruments (published in 1964). She then headed to Europe with an open agenda. She worked for a time in the RISM office in Innsbruck, transcribed an inventory "The Instruments of the King's Library at Versailles" for the *Galpin Society Journal* 14 [1961], and did some contract research in the Venetian State Archives.

Sibyl spent most of the next decade in New York City. She moved from Washington Square to Midtown and worked briefly in Bloomingdale's perfume department, where she was allowed to speak only in French. She spent several years in an editorial position at Harcourt Brace. Family affairs drew her back to England in 1968, after which she remained abroad for several years. She did research in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), prepared the *Survey of Musical Instruments* (New York: Harper, 1975), and continued to visit instrument collections. On her return to New York in 1975, she was dismayed by the state of the city and decided to resettle in San Francisco, where she lived from 1976 until her last months. She died in Mill Valley, Calif, in 2003. Those who knew her personally valued not only her musical expertise but also her countless tales of adventure and her ready enthusiasm for new languages and dialects. Among her many qualities, her resourcefulness and her unconquerable spirit stand out. 



## AMIS VOTING GOES ONLINE

**The 2022 election of officers and members of the Board of Governors of the American Musical Instrument Society will be online, but with a paper ballot option. The election is administered through ElectionBuddy.**

**A ballot will be sent to your e-mail address on 31 January. You will receive a unique key that allows you to vote only once. There will be two options:**

- vote online through the link provided
- wait for a paper ballot if that's what you prefer. These will be sent out only to people who do not vote online within two weeks of receipt of the invitation.

Questions?

Contact Aileen Marcantonio at [aileen.marcantonio@gmail.com](mailto:aileen.marcantonio@gmail.com)

**Mail-in ballots must be postmarked by March 15, 2022, and online voting ends on that day at 11:45 pm, EST.**

**Léon Leblanc 1900-2000 un homme, un siècle/A man, a century. [catalogue de l'exhibition] du 5 septembre 2020 au 28 mars 2021. La Couture-Boussey: Musée des instruments à vent, 2020, 148 pp., illus. ISBN: 9782957352906, available from the La Couture-Boussey Museum, €12 (paper).**

This bilingual book in French and English was published for the Exhibition at the La Couture-Boussey Museum of Wind Instruments from September 5, 2020 to March 28, 2021, celebrating the life of Léon Leblanc who was the heir of the last musical instrument making family in La Couture-Boussey. His father, Georges Leblanc (1872–1959), worked and bought the Noblet firm in 1904 from Denis Toussaint Noblet (1850–1919).

The Leblanc firm is known for producing high-quality instruments of the clarinet family, from the Ab Sopranino clarinet to the Octo-Contra Bass clarinet (p. 76). Léon Leblanc was perhaps the most innovative clarinet maker of the 20th century. He had more than 50 patents aiming to improve mechanical and/or acoustic aspects of his instruments, mostly clarinets.

Prior to the publication of this book, all the information regarding G. Leblanc or G. Leblanc Corp. was limited to Leblanc's own promotional booklets and catalogues. This book provides chronological details and information about the Leblanc's family, the firm and its challenges, and the influence it had on its community. The book is printed on high-quality glossy papers and contains over 100 illustrations of Georges and Léon Leblanc's early family photos and their workshop (pp. 54-61); Leblanc's sales ledger from October, 1947 including the sale of instruments to G. Leblanc in Kenosha, Wisconsin; a technical drawing by Charles Houvenaghel of a 1953

Bb-Mechanism for a U. S. patent (p. 87), newspaper clippings from their two devastating factory fires in 1950 and 1968 (pp. 106, 110-113), and color photos of a clarinet and flute by Noblet brothers, Denis Nicolas Noblet (Aîné) (1796–1874) and Prudent Noblet "jeune père" (1798–1861) from the La Couture-Boussey Museum of Wind Instruments (pp. 62-63). A 14-key clarinet made c. 1870 with boxwood and ivory ferrules and Lyonnais-style pillar mounting for its E/B and F#/C# keys, has a swivel thumb key for E/B by Denis Nicolas Noblet (Aîné) used earlier by J. F. Simiot of Lyon, and is more likely pitched in C not in Bb as described (p. 62).



The Preface of the book is written by Guy Lefrand, the mayor of Évreux and Vice-president of the Normandy Regional Council, this is followed by a foreword written by Emanuele Marconi, who is the Director and Scientific Head of the La Couture Museum collections. There are 15 chapters contributed by five authors, from the city official, Bernard Groulier, former mayor of La Couture-Boussey (1994-2008) to a family member, Nicole Chenesseau, first cousin twice removed of Léon Leblanc. On pages 44-45, a timeline of Léon Leblanc's life (1900–2000) is presented with important events

listed. Another author of a chapter is the only son of Léon Leblanc's business partner who was named after him, Leon Pascucci, former president of the Leblanc Corporation (Kenosha, Wisconsin, USA). Leon's father, Vito Pascucci (1922-2003), a young repairman for the Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band, met Léon Leblanc in France in 1944 (p. 95) and two years later the Leblanc Corp. was born. The partnership between Léon and Vito brought Leblanc to the international market with 70% of their instruments exported to England, Switzerland, Japan, Australia, and around the world (p. 20). Unfortunately, the serial number database of instruments (Leblanc, Noblet, Normandy, and Vito) was not presented in this book.

Léon Leblanc studied clarinet at the Paris Conservatory in the class of Prosper Mimart (1859–1928) and Auguste Périer (1883–1947). In 1919 he was awarded the second prize and in 1920 the first prize (p. 69). By having a background as clarinetist, Léon Leblanc was able to effectively investigate solutions to improve his clarinets from the player's practical point of view. He collaborated with Charles Houvenaghel (1878-1966), a Belgian born bass clarinetist and master acoustician whom young Léon Leblanc had met in 1908 (p. 67) and who in 1911 became his teacher at the Saint-Nicolas School. The results from their collaboration include many new and important instruments, such as a full Rationnel-system saxophone (p. 82), the Octo-contrabass clarinet (pp. 68, 85), the "Paperclip Form" Metal bass clarinet (p. 89) and more than 50 patents. This book is a must-have for clarinet enthusiasts and readers who are interested in the history of the Leblanc Corporation and musical instrument manufacturing in La Couture-Boussey.

**Nophachai  
Cholthichanta**  
✍

## ESZTER FONTANA RECEIVES THE CURT SACHS AWARD 2021



*Photo courtesy of [www.amis.org](http://www.amis.org)*

Born in Budapest into a family of musicians, Eszter—aged eighteen—started a four-year training in 1966 as a conservator for musical instruments at the Musikinstrumentenmuseum in Leipzig. Following her studies in Leipzig, she worked as a conservator for musical instruments at the Hungarian National Museum (Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum) in Budapest, and was appointed curator and head of the department of musical instruments and clocks in 1974. Extensive research into the history of piano makers and piano manufacturing in Budapest formed the basis for her thesis: *Piano Making in Pest and Buda, 1800–1872*, which earned her a PhD from the Franz-Liszt-Music Academy in Budapest in 1993.

In 1995, Eszter Fontana was appointed the director of the Musical Instrument Museum at the University of Leipzig. From 1995 to 2012 she taught organology, acoustics, and paleography at the University of Leipzig.

In 1996, she founded the Verlag des Musikinstrumentenmuseums Leipzig to facilitate the publication of organological research projects, and in 1998 she founded the Institute for Musical Instrument Research “Georg Kinsky” to help finance musical instrument research.

From 1998 to 2004, Eszter served as the president of CIMCIM. In 2006, she was awarded the title of Professor. Over the course of her career she was responsible for more than 25 exhibitions, including the complete reconceptualization of the permanent galleries at the Musical Instrument Museum at the Grassi Museum in Leipzig (University of Leipzig). Following her retirement, Eszter continues to be active as researcher, writer, and editor.

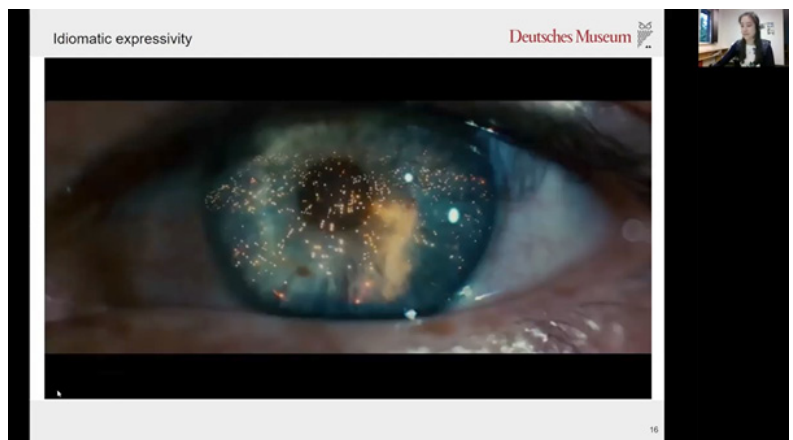
Eszter’s lifetime accomplishments are manifested in her focus on musical instruments as the primary subject of her research. In that regard her work ideally reflects the society’s central goals as a musical instrument society. Eszter’s significant contributions to instrument conservation (including Beethoven’s iconic Broadwood piano from 1817 in Budapest in 1992), her research into manufacturing techniques and makers (ranging from keyboards to wind and string instruments), and her contributions to the interpretation of musical instruments in a wider context of music history, reveal a wide variety of approaches to musical instrument studies. Her extensive activities as university professor, editor, and publisher have earned her significant recognition and allowed her to disseminate knowledge about musical instruments in many ways.



## THE FREDERICK R. SELCH AWARD

The winner of the Frederick R. Selch Award for 2021 is Julin Lee, for her paper “Sounds of Futuristic Nostalgia: The Cultural Legacy of Blade Runner and the Yamaha CS-80.”

Lee is a fellow of the research group Materiality of Musical Instruments at the Deutsches Museum. She is also a PhD candidate in Musicology at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany. She studied Chemical Engineering at the University of Cambridge and graduated in 2014. In her research she actively cultivates her interests of the intersection of science and music.



*Screenshot of Julin Lee's presentation  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaJ\\_VrjLgmU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaJ_VrjLgmU)*

## THE NICHOLAS BESSARABOFF PRIZE DAVID LASOCKI



Photo courtesy of David Lasocki.  
<https://davidlasocki.com>

The Nicholas Bessaraboff Prize is awarded annually for the most distinguished book-length

publication written in English. The 2021 prize was awarded to David Lasocki for *Jean-Baptiste Lully and the Flute: Recorder, Voice Flute, and Traverso*, published in 2019 by Instant Harmony.

David is viewed as one of the world's foremost researchers of the history of woodwind instruments. He holds a Ph.D. in musicology from The University of Iowa (1983), and his dissertation won a national prize. He received a lifetime achievement award from the American Recorder Society in 2011. In February 2011, David retired as Head of Music Reference Services in the Cook Music Library, Indiana University-Bloomington.

He lives in Portland, Oregon where, in addition to researching early woodwinds, David does healing work and intuitive coaching.



## THE FRANCES DENSMORE PRIZE RACHEL BECKLES WILLSON

The Frances Densmore Prize is awarded for the most distinguished article-length work in English that best furthers the Society's goal of promoting "the study of the history, design, and use of musical instruments in all cultures and from all periods."

The 2021 Densmore Prize was awarded to Rachel Beckles Willson for the article "Orientation through Instruments: The 'ūd, the Palestinian Home, and Kamīlyā Jubrān" in *the world of music (new series)*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2019.

Rachel Beckles Willson is a composer, multi-instrumentalist and widely-published researcher, who is currently a Professorial Research Associate at SOAS, University of London and Honorary Research Professor at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester. Her current interests are in practice-led and practice-based research in museum contexts, and the opportunities and challenges brought by new technologies.

Prior to her role at SOAS, Professor Beckles Willson worked full-time in academia, most recently



Photo courtesy of [www.amis.org](http://www.amis.org)

as Professor at Royal Holloway, where she taught courses on Intercultural Performance, Music and Orientalism, and Ensemble Performance among others, and supervised doctoral research on topics from the Hungarian folk revival to Kuwaiti song.





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## IN MEMORIAM

### JOANNE SWARMER KOPP

1953 – MAY 1, 2021

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On May 1, 2021 Joanne Kopp, former treasurer and administrator of AMIS, passed away peacefully at her home in Portland, Oregon. The cause was cancer.

Joanne was elected treasurer of the AMIS in 2008 and served until 2019. Closely following the precepts of Marlowe Sigal, her predecessor as treasurer, she oversaw the continuing growth of the society's assets from a modest surplus to a substantial reserve, placing the society on a firm financial footing. She also inherited the society's administrative duties from Guild Associates, and eventually ceded the membership portfolio to Donald Sarles. She is survived by her husband James Kopp, who has served since 2018 as the editor of the society's Journal.

Joanne received a BA degree from Duke University cum laude and an MBA degree from Emory University. She worked as a corporate treasury official for the Coca-Cola Company, Ford New Holland, and Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. From age five to age twenty-one she studied piano; in the 1990s she became an able chamber musician in the New York City area and later, from 2017, in Portland, Oregon. For ten years in New York, she volunteered for Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (now known as Learning Ally).

Jayson Dobney



*"Joanne did so much for AMIS. We were so lucky that she was willing to step in when Marlowe retired from being treasurer. Joanne's work experience in finance made her the perfect person to follow and build on his work. She could seem a bit of a fussbudget, but that is what AMIS needed to keep our finances straight and to build the AMIS portfolio. I worked closely with her especially when I was president and she was always on time and completely prepared. And she kept adding extra duties to her job! We surely must say 'Rest in power and peace.'"*

*- Carolyn Bryant*



*Joanne enjoying lunch at the National Piping Centre, Glasgow, during the 2017 joint AMIS & Galpin conference.  
Photo by Carolyn Bryant.*



*Joanne giving her annual report in 2017.  
Photo by Aurelia Hartenberger.*

# BOALCH-MOULD ONLINE



Makers of the  
Harpsichord  
& Clavichord  
[www.Boalch.org](http://www.Boalch.org)

**One of the foundational publications in early keyboard studies is about to be published as a free online research database.**

Boalch-Mould Online (BMO) is a research database named in honor of Donald H. Boalch and Charles M. Mould whose groundbreaking work *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440–1840* was first published in a print edition of 1956 and updated by Oxford University Press in 1974 and 1995.

The new online edition continues to refine, update, and carry forth their findings into the digital age. With updated biographies of known makers and an extensive and growing catalogue of surviving instruments, BMO is a searchable database available on the Internet at no charge to all researchers, owners, collectors, caretakers, and enthusiasts of historical harpsichords and clavichords. The eventual online publication of his database was envisioned by Dr. Charles Mould whose preface to the 1995 edition predicted, “that in due course it will be available free of charge to all scholars via the internet.” Dr. Mould has given his strong endorsement to the online edition.

Photographs of instruments will be a major new addition for Boalch-Mould Online. A new pre-1925 date limit increases the timeframe covered by the print editions to include the beginnings of the early keyboard revival. Also added for the first time will be important harpsichords and clavichords by unknown makers.

An interactive user interface is currently being developed, and the database is being updated and expanded. The database is a transatlantic effort with John R. Watson in Williamsburg, VA as General Editor and Lance Whitehead, based in Edinburgh, as Biographies Editor. A board of contributing editors for the catalogue of surviving instruments is being formed.

BMO receives funding from the Musical Instrument Research Catalog ([www.MIR-Cat.org](http://www.MIR-Cat.org)), a non-profit 501(c)3 charity that solicits funding from individuals and organizations in support of Boalch-Mould Online, Clinkscale Online, and other closely related digital resources for musical instrument research.

Watch for Boalch-Mould Online to appear at [www.Boalch.org](http://www.Boalch.org) in the coming months, and please send updates and new information to [Editor@Boalch.org](mailto:Editor@Boalch.org).