

# Glass Music World

FALL 2000

## Elemental Design and Glass Percussion

by Jim Doble

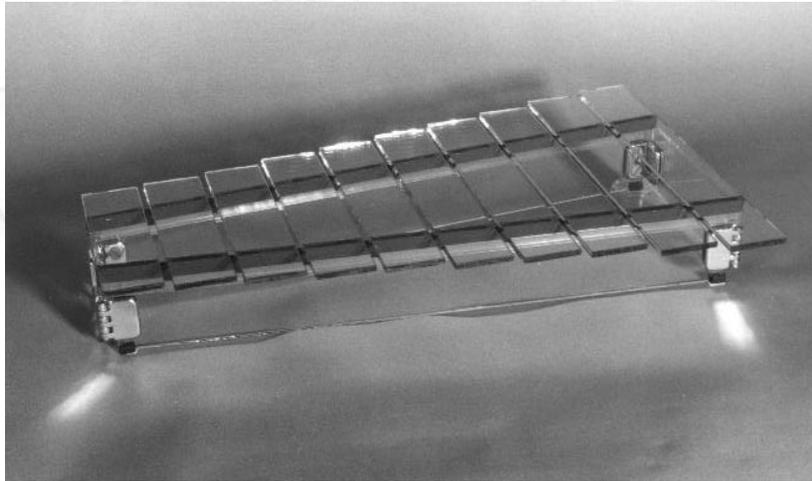
My interest in xylophones began while playing a large, wood-plank xylophone at a Paul Winter improvisation workshop. I was so enamored with the instrument that I set about making one upon returning home. I soon made several others, playing with the design, and quickly became interested in experimenting with other materials. Around that time, I came across the book *Sound Designs: A Handbook of Musical Instrument Building* by Reinhold Banek and Jon Scoville. One of the instruments described was a glass marimba. I jumped on the idea and created my own version of the glassophone, which I called "Aquarion." I arrived at the name Aquarion because of the soft, clear, water-like quality of the sound. The vibration flows gently, soothing the soul.

The keys of the basic Aquarion are 1/4" plate glass glued on a onto a soft, neoprene foam. They are struck with soft rubber mallets, and thus played, are very sturdy. The bases which are trapezoid-shaped are made of either spruce, oak, or glass. The wood-based instruments have a slightly softer quality than the glass-based. The base acts as a resonating chamber (unlike a marimba, which has individual resonators). I also sometimes mount the glass by drilling holes at the nodes with a spear-point bit, and secure the glass plates loosely with

rubber tubing covered nails. This is more work, but makes for better resonance.

Most Aquarions are two octaves with either pentatonic, diatonic, chromatic, or experimental tunings, but my most popular is the pentatonic. I try to make instruments that anyone can enjoy playing, whether or not they consider themselves musical. A pentatonic scale encourages one to play entirely intuitively (since there's little written

music), without the worry or aggravation of hitting "sour" notes. So, it's ideal for kids, mentally and neurologically other-abled folks, and anyone lacking musical confidence, while it's a refreshing change for those of us who have gotten locked into certain diatonic musical patterns. I've seen many musical novices amazed at the music



"Aquarion"

they create on the Aquarion.

On account of the gentle, relaxing tone of the Aquarion, many people find it very meditative. The sound enters one with little resistance and soothes throughout the mind/body/spirit. This makes it an ideal instrument in sound therapy and sound healing work. A few years ago, with the help of some accidental discoveries, I decided to develop some instruments specifically for sound healing work. That was how I came up with "Fountain."

*please see PERCUSSION, page 4*

## PRESIDENTIAL NOTES

In my last column I mentioned that Thomas had mailed out his proposal for a GMI library. Since that time he has received several messages of encouragement and support for it. Those who have not seen the proposal can get a copy of it by contacting him at: Thomas Bloch, 59 Blvd. Fichol, 93360 Neuilly Plaisance, France or thbloch@club-internet.fr.

Briefly, Thomas has volunteered to serve as librarian for the collection, copying, and mailing of copies of documents, recordings, scores, etc. having to do with glass music. GMI will own the contents of the library and Thomas will provide the space and the materials necessary for the copying and mailing. GMI will collect fees from those sent copies with different rates established for members who have contributed to the library, other members, and non-members. GMI will reimburse Thomas for postal costs. Listings of library contents will be published in GMW and on the GMI website. The fees collected will help us grow our GMI funds and allow us to accomplish more in the future in several areas.

I fully support Thomas' proposal and believe that GMI is very fortunate to have someone who not only has come up with a good proposal, but is willing to put his own time, effort, and resources into making it work.

Regarding GMI Festival 2003 plans, Thomas reports that he has not been in touch with the Cite de la Musique recently since everything was closed there throughout the summer. He is on tour this month and will be contacting them when he returns. I sent letters to key people he is dealing with on the Festival planning back in June and those letters have been acknowledged. Thomas has now contacted Air France about possible special airfare prices and has also contacted the Friends of Franklin in Paris to plan visits to the places he stayed there.

I would like to remind those members who have not sent in their dues and completed dues statements that their payments are needed to help us meet GMI expenses such as GMW printing and mailing costs. Alisa is collecting information on member's email accounts. She is also checking to see if those with email accounts wish to continue receiving hard copies of GMW as well as having access to it through our website. Anyone who can get along with the website access copy only will be saving GMI money. June recently printed out some copies from the website on her color printer at work and they really look great in color.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carlton

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## RINGING GLASSES

*by Peter Sterki*

The significance of autophonic friction instruments, with axially rotating glasses, represented by glass and keyboard armonica.

*Bern, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt, New York, Oxford, Vienna, 2000, 230 pages, 28 illustrations.*

*Publications of the Swiss Society for Musicology, series II, volume 39. Edited by Joseph Willmann.*

*[ISBN no. and price]*

The lack of contributions to the research on glass and keyboard armonicas contrasts with the significance of these musical instruments during the last quarter of the 18th century. This significance is apparent through the size of the repertoire for the instrument as well as what can only be described as "armonica euphoria" of this time. With the glass armonica, Benjamin Franklin

developed an instrument that has to be valued as a technical masterpiece of the waning 18th century. Composers such as Mozart and Beethoven were fascinated by the sound of glasses, and F. A. Mesmer used the instrument in his controversial therapies. However, the glass armonica was also said to have harmful and even deadly effects. This book is not only a contribution towards extending our knowledge about friction instruments, but also a discussion of a time of change of the esthetics of music.

From the contents: From playing glasses to the glass armonica – Various principles of construction and form of glass and keyboard armonicas – Playing technique and repertoire – Reception and esthetics of listening of the glass and keyboard armonica – The myth of the

*please see RINGING, page 7*

## GMI HAPPENINGS

by Liz Brunelli

It is that time of year to write up the GMI Happenings. Hope you all had a good summer season. Our glass musicians had many 'gigs' all over the world to follow through with the GMI current slogan, "to promote glass music into the Twenty-First Century."

Welcome! to new GMI member, **Dave Bowen**, Waynesville, OH, who joined GMI this summer. Special thanks go to **Tim Nickerson**, G. Finkenbeiner, Inc., Waltham, MA for sending a copy of *Glass Music World* to Dave when contacted by him through the G. Finkenbeiner, Inc. web site. Dave tells he was always interested in 'glass' and at age 21 began a hobby of glass engraving. Now retired, he plans to open a glass engraving shop in his hometown. In July he visited Finkenbeiner's and, after hearing the glass harmonica, he states, he "knew he had to have one!" In his new shop, Dave plans to display his new glass harmonica and eventually plans to share glass music with his community as he learns to play the glass harmonica.

Our condolences go out to GMI member, **Peggy Baird**, Huntsville, AL, whose father died this past summer. GMI extends heartfelt sympathies to her and her family. As Peggy was unable to be with us in Philly in April, she is looking forward to being with us at the GMI Festival in Paris in the year 2003.

Congratulations to GMI president emeritus, **Brien Engel**, Decatur, GA are in order! He has recently released a new CD entitled *Optimistic Voices*. For more info – check out his website: [www.glasssharp.org](http://www.glasssharp.org) or send email to [glasssharp@mindspring.com](mailto:glasssharp@mindspring.com).

Welcome home to GMI President **Carlton Davenport** and his lovely wife **June**, Princeton, MA who spent a month visiting Denmark & Norway in August/September. From all reports, I understand they had a wonderful time, but are glad to be home once again.

**Peter Bennett**, New York & New Orleans, took a trip to Alaska this past summer, mainly to 'hand' carry a Quaker Parrot to a family member relocating to Chugiak, AK. While he was there, he lined up enough 'paid' gigs to justify a return trip next summer, as well as making plans to do 'his thing' on the "streets of Anchorage!" As usual, Peter found an amusing tale to

relate. "While on the road to visit one of his sons living in Girdwood, AK, he stopped at the Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet to watch the Beluga whales carvoting in the out-rushing 20 ft. tide." At one of the other turnouts, there was a plaque that discussed the history of the area and the natural history of the Beluga Whales (The Russian word "beluga" means "white"). It seems the Russian sailors also called these playful whales "Sea Canaries" because they sing and whistle so well. A list of various Beluga sounds concluded with, "...the sound of badly played musical glasses." Peter wonders if the author of the plaque had ever heard "well-played" glasses! Peter Bennett's e-mail address is [glassharper@hotmail.com](mailto:glassharper@hotmail.com).

Our member **William Wilde Zeitler**, Seattle, WA alerts us that there is a new novel out, *The Glass Harmonica* by author Louise Marley. He recommends it highly as "an excellent dreamy science fiction work by a great author." Bill will be appearing with her in November/December at Barnes & Noble bookstores, as well as for an interview on Radio KUON, November 1. Bill will also be performing on his glass harmonica at the Boeing Parapsychology Fair in Kent, WA and at the Bellevue Botanical Gardens, October/November/December 2000.

**Lynn Drye** has recently released her second recording, *The Lighter Touch, vol. II*. It is available on CD or cassette. For more information, write to Lynn at 9717 E. Rancho Vista, Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 or email her at [drye@cableone.net](mailto:drye@cableone.net).

The Glass Art Society 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference was held in Brooklyn, NY this past summer. Several GMI members belong to this prestigious group. It is hoped that at the next annual meeting of G.A.S. a session on the merits of glass music will be included on the program. GMI member **Elizabeth Mears**, Fairfax Station, VA is working to promote us. Thanks Liz.

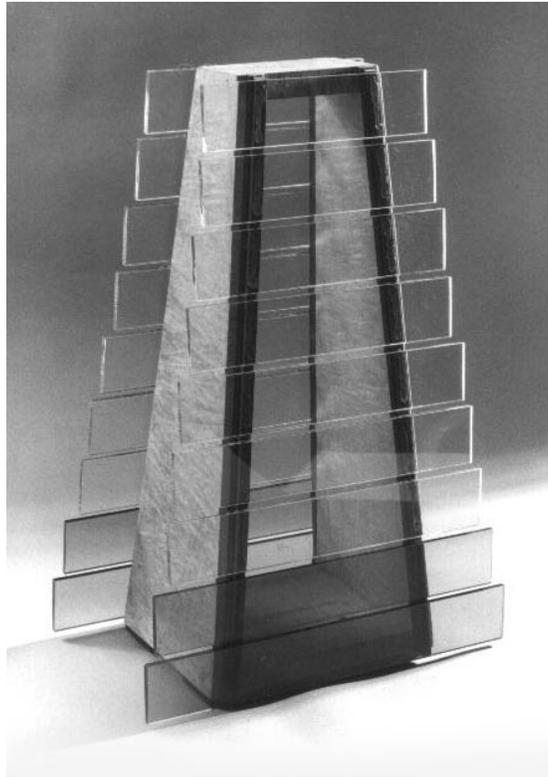
The new **Museum of Glass** recently sent GMI a news release in which Director **Josi Callan** announced the appointment of their new Director of Development, **Lisa Hehr**. The Museum is scheduled to open July 23, 2002 in downtown Tacoma, WA. It

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*PERCUSSION from page 1*

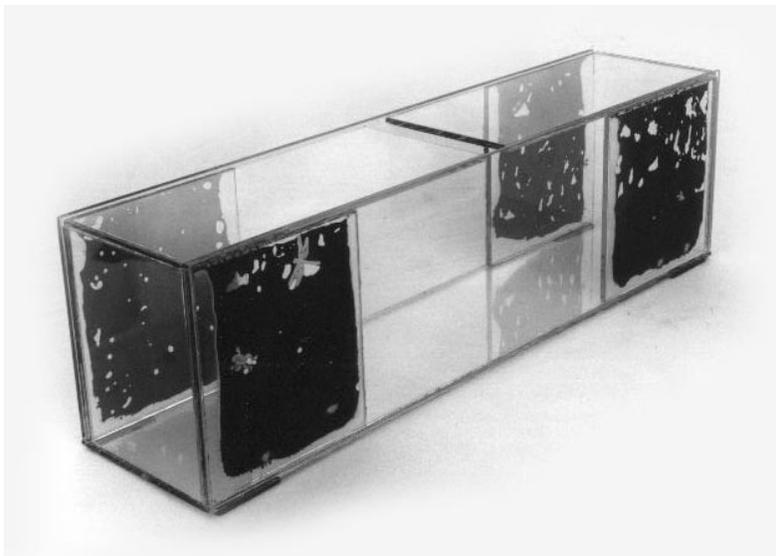
Fountain was designed to gently lead one into a Theta mind state. Theta is happening when you're between consciousness and unconsciousness; the two halves of your brain are synchronized, your brain is literally expanded, and you're at your most intuitive, creative self. Most forms of meditation are geared for reaching and maintaining Theta, as are most "mind machines" and subliminal tape recordings. Countless "primitive" (advanced) cultures induce trance states via Theta through music. The Tibetans and Balinese are the closest I'm aware of to using tuning methods like those described below.

Fountain's tuning is a western pentatonic scale (c, d, f, g, a). The two sides are tuned identically except for a difference of about 5 Hz, so that when the two opposing keys are played simultaneously, there is a "beat" effect. This means you're not only hearing the two notes, but also a third "beat"

*"Fountain"*

(a wa, wa, wa... as much felt as heard), which has a frequency of the difference between the two. The "beat" at 5 Hz corresponds with what your brain is vibrating at when it's in Theta.\* When played long enough, your mind tends to entrain with it, leading you into a Theta state. In addition to the therapeutic qualities of Fountain, it simply sounds beautiful.

I've heard of other glassophones made of glass tubes and other instruments made of place, by have never seen any but my own. I'd be delighted to hear from other readers of Glass Music World about other percussive glass instruments.

*"Glass Tongue Drum"*

\*As measured on an electroencephalograph (EEG), certain brain-wave frequencies tend to correspond with certain brain activity: 13-50 Hz. (Beta) your mind is actively engaged, 8-13 Hz. (Alpha) indicates relaxation, 4-7 Hz. (Theta) as described above, and 0.5-4 Hz. (Delta) is deep sleep.

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*Jim Doble of Elemental Design specializes in handcrafted musical instruments made from a variety of materials. Some of his other instruments include the Glass Tongue Drum, Stonaphone, Raw Log Amadinda, Bass Whale Drum, Bass Tongue Drum, Pipe Harp, and various metal "gongs." He strives to keep all his instruments affordable without compromising quality. For further information about Jim's instruments, write to Elemental Design at P.O. Box 565, Union, ME 04862; call 207-785-2212; email [xylojim@tidewater.net](mailto:xylojim@tidewater.net); or check out his web site [www.tidewater.net/~xylojim](http://www.tidewater.net/~xylojim) and hear what the instruments sound like.*

## THE HARMONICON

by Lynn Drye

Glass xylophones existed as early as 1825 in London, England. David Ironmonger was one manufacturer of these instruments; there may have been more. He wrote two method books for the "Harmonicon Glasses." The first book, entitled "Instructions for the new Improved Harmonicon Glasses." Was published about 1825 by R. W. Keith & Co. "where may be had the above Instruments in the greatest variety." The second book was published about 1840 by David Ironmonger, himself, and was titled "Instructions for the Double & Single Harmonicon Glasses, To which are added a Selection of Popular Airs, Quadrilles, Waltzes, Gallopes, Mazurkas, & c."

The "Instructions for the new Improved Harmonicon Glasses" shows a drawing of a trapezoid-shaped wooden box containing 3 1/2 octaves of glass plate bars (G to C). There is a pair of mallets lying near the instrument. Included in the "Principal Rules or Rudiments of Music for the Harmonicon" are instructions for playing: "In performing on this Instrument the hammers must be held lightly striking the Glasses gently in the Centre over the letters." The text does not specify the material used for the mallets. The heads of the mallets may have been wrapped with felt or some other material.

The "Instructions for the Double & Single Harmonicon Glasses..." includes the same basic instructions (note names, note durations, time signatures, and playing instructions) as the earlier edition of the method

book. There is no explanation for the difference between the "double" and "single" harmonicon glasses. The range of the instruments was certainly made to order. It is unclear whether or not all instruments were chromatic; some may have been manufactured which were strictly diatonic. Double and single may refer to the number of voices used in the performance of the songs.

Both of these method books are available from the British Library in London, England. Write to: Music Library, The British Library, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3DG and specify that these are printed editions (not manuscripts). The references for the British Museum are as follows:

b.160.m Ironmonger "Instructions for the new Improved Harmonicon Glasses"

a.300.b Ironmonger "Instructions for the Double & Single Harmonicon Glasses..."

Further research needs to be done on the history of the glass xylophone. It is unclear how the plates were attached to the wooden frame on the instruments built by David Ironmonger. The construction of the mallets is ambiguous. How old are glass xylophones, anyway? Hopefully, one of our GMI members will have time to undertake further research in this area.

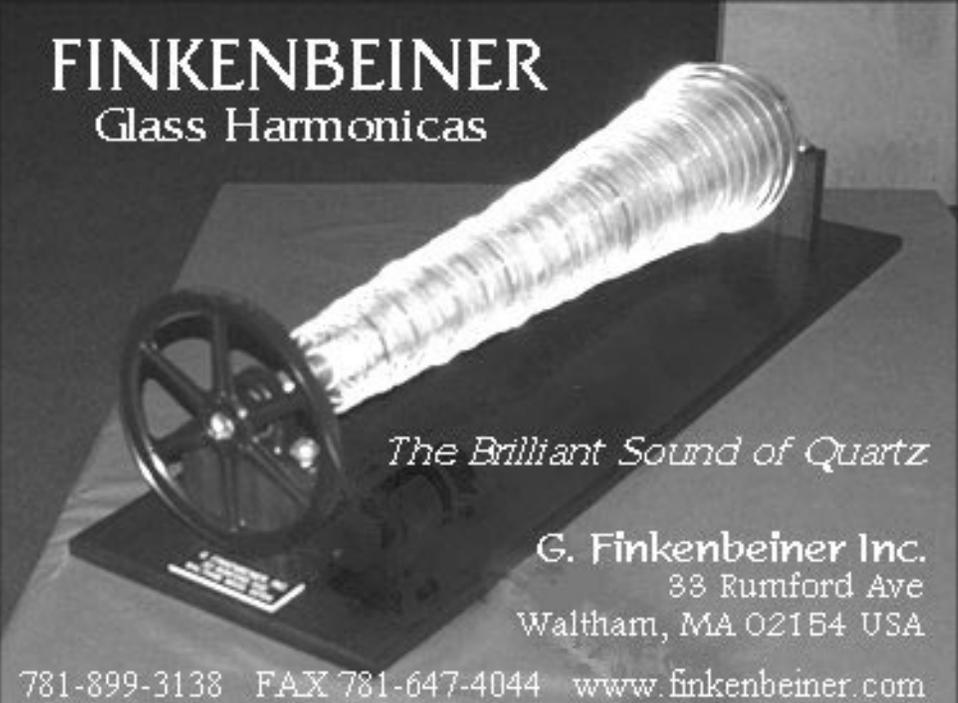
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will be an international center devoted to the exhibition and interpretation of contemporary art. For more information visit their website at [www.museumof-glass.org](http://www.museumof-glass.org).

**Thomas Bloch**, Paris/Colmar/Neuilly Plaisance, France and GMI Member-at-Large has sent out a communication to all GMI members about setting up an 'archives' of glass music information. He feels it is important for each one of us to "play the game" and share glass music's historical elements and new scores in order to enlarge one's concert programs. Thomas points out that it is extremely important for us to "all work together." For a future historical point of view (for musicologists and glass musicians of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century), it will be easier to find all the elements concerning works and performers and to continue what we have rebuilt in just a few years. Thomas has agreed to be the Librarian for the archives. Please send him your list of documents today! Check out his website at [www.chez.com/thomasbloch](http://www.chez.com/thomasbloch) and email him at [thbloch@club-internet.fr](mailto:thbloch@club-internet.fr).

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glass armonica – Virtuosity – Failure of the glass and keyboard armonica – The glass armonica in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The author, Peter Sterki:

Born 1963 in Unterkulm/AG [Switzerland]. 1985, teaching diploma for primary and secondary schools in the Canton Aargau. 1985 to 1992, studies at the Conservatory and Music University, Zurich. 1989, diploma for teaching piano. 1992, diploma for concert readiness. Concurrently, studies in German and musicology at the University of Zurich. 1995, Lizentiat [degree]. Since 1994, Peter Sterki has been head piano teacher at the Canton School Wettingen/AG [Switzerland].

*Note from Liz Brunelli on the above:*

*Congratulations to Dr. Peter Sterki-Lang, Lenzburg, Switzerland on the publication of his book: "Ringing Glasses." A copy can be ordered either by contacting him via e-mail: [customerservice@peterlang.com](mailto:customerservice@peterlang.com) or Internet web site: <http://www.peterlang.ch>. Many thanks to GMI Secretary, Roy Goodman for the translation of Peter's communication.*

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