

# Glass Music World

FALL ~ WINTER 2003

## A Symphony in Glass

*The Glass Instruments of Sascha Reckert and His Ensemble*

— By Sascha Reckert —

— Edited by Carlton Davenport —

Sascha's interest in glass music began in 1985 in the same way many others' did - with the hearing of a recording of Bruno Hoffman's. At the time he was searching for fitting music for a sceneplay of his 60 person music theatre. He was thrilled by a petite impression by the German composer Fred Schnaubelt. Sascha decided that he would play glass on his own and put it into the scene.

The next day, he ordered Hoffman's book and read that there was an instrument made out of tubes named the Clavyzylinder, invented around 1791 by E.F.F. Chladni. He built his first instrument out of tubes with the tubes increasing in length for lower sounds rather than in diameter like the wine glass type instruments. After he had finished his first instrument, he found out that Chladni's Clavyzylinder had only one tube that rotated and rubbed metal bars covered with felt. The bars were each connected with and lifted by a piano key system. Sascha's instrument made with tubes turned out to have an extremely dynamic range compared to other glass instruments. It could be easily tuned and was very easy to handle. The difficult job was to design a working and professional looking frame for all the tubes and a system for mounting. That took him another 10 years of development.

When he finished his first instrument in 1986 he called it the Verillion according to the historical glass instruments. The Verillion and the Verrophon are the same instrument. Both names



**Bruno Kliegl, Sascha, and Martin Hilmer Performing Mozart.**

were known in 1800. Sascha eventually decided on the name Verrophon because with the "phon" it was clear that it was an instrument. He then arranged a lot of music for it and got some contemporary music composed for it in cooperation with professional composers from the University music departments of Detmold and Köln. Bruno Hoffman did not turn out to be cooperative as far as sharing his music, so Sascha had to listen to the original compositions from his records.

The Verrophon has been changed quite a bit over the years. At first it was in a box and later the tubes stood free in the frame. The sound is even more powerful now and the

## *History of Glass Music International, Inc.*

*Part 3 of 6 (1992 - 1993)*

— By Carlton Davenport —

The feature article in the January/April 1992 issue was entitled *Liselotte Behrendt Enjoys Folk Music and Tradition as her Hallmark and Signature* and was written by Carol Rehme. Liselotte inherited her glass harp from her uncle, Hans Graf, who built the instrument in 1960 thinking it to be an original discovery. Hans had proceeded to compose his own music for his instrument and it is these same airy Swiss tunes that his niece has always delighted in playing. Liselotte has attended every glass music festival since the very first one (including those held in Boston and Philadelphia in 1997 and 2000). She also had made numerous public appearances throughout Europe at the time this article was written and, in 1991, was invited to play at the Markgraflichen Opera House in Bayreuth, Germany filling the vacancy that resulted from the death of Bruno Hoffman.

Liselotte was born on the Swiss side of the Bodensee during the second year of World War II and among her earliest memories are howling sirens and falling bombs. She remembers that a very big Swiss cross was

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## PRESIDENTIAL NOTES



We are just about a year away from our next Festival which will be held in Paris and will include the dates from Thursday, 3 February through Saturday, 5 February 2005. Additional dates, Wednesday, 2 February and Sunday, 6 February may be added as Thomas Bloch completes the development of the Festival program.

It is important that we firm up our lists of those attending and those performing at the Festival at this time. I will be contacting each member by either email or regular mail to confirm whether their preliminary plans are still the same. You can help by sending me an email (to [GMIPres@earthlink.net](mailto:GMIPres@earthlink.net)) or a letter (to P.O. Box 228, Princeton, MA 01541, USA) telling me if you are or are not planning on attending, and if you are or are not planning on performing.

The latest information from Thomas is that, in the middle of November, he received a letter of confirmation from Laurent Bayle, the General Director of the Paris Cité de la Musique. Laurent Bayle has now officially approved the project and has let Thomas know that we will have the meeting room for free.

The dates that have been established thus far are Thursday evening, 3 February, for Thomas' concert in the Amphitheatre de la Cité de la Musique. This concert will include Clemens Hofinger and also the Ensemble Stradivaria which played on Hasse's Cantata L'Armonica CD with Dennis James. Thomas will be giving us the concert program soon.

On Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> and Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup> we will have the conference room of the museum, which is called "Salle des Colloques", from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. (1000 hours to 1800 hours). Our conferences will be open to the public for free.

### Glass Music World

Published quarterly by  
Glass Music International, Inc.

**Editors** — Carlton Davenport, Monica Rogers

**Associate Editors** —

Peter Bennett, Elizabeth Mears

**Layout** — Jonathan Stuart-Moore

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During the Festival, some of the GMI musicians will also play in the Museum for visitors. Those musicians, who will be determined during further planning, will play different pieces during a three hour time period. Thomas says that it is not necessary to play long pieces all the time. When he is there, he will play three works, give explanations between them, and then play and give the same explanations again for new people.

Now that Thomas has the dates, he is looking for other places for us to play and to have meetings if we need more meetings. He is also thinking of possible themes for the meetings and conferences. Thomas also will be in touch with the French President of the Friends of Franklin Association. Wednesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup> are optional dates if needed for the additional concerts, conferences, and meetings.

One conference that we will have will be on the "Last state on glass harmonica historical researches: from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries" by Jody Rosen of Brooklyn, New York. Jody is a journalist with the New York Times and the Guardian and will publish a book on the glass harmonica in 2005. He has already spent time at the G. Finkenbeiner factory in Waltham, MA as well as 2 days in Paris and at Thomas' home on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of November. He also met various people in Europe (Sascha Reckert and others). He is now back in New York where he emailed Thomas that he spent two additional days at the British Library.

There will also be a conference on the topic "Is there a specific sound for ancient instruments? First state of a research regarding the possibility to build a facsimile of an historical glass harmonica. Characterisation of a sound, geometry, material, sound radiation..." by Stephane Vaiedalich, Director of the Music Museum Research Laboratory in the Cité de la Musique, Paris.

I thank Thomas for his continued hard work in the development of this Festival at the same time that he is continuing his busy concert schedule.

I wish to remind everyone that membership dues are now due and needed for the financing of the upcoming festival as well as continuing newsletter printing and mailing.

### Glassmusic "egroup"

Members should be aware that a glassmusic egroup exists at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/glassmusic/>. If you are not already a member, you can get involved with a lot of good glassmusic chat by going to this site. If you have any questions about it, email Brien Engel at: [glassharp@mindspring.com](mailto:glassharp@mindspring.com).

## GMI Happenings

— By Elizabeth Mears —

Glass Music International is an organization of enthusiastic and dedicated glass music lovers, as you will note from the following "Happenings." The articles below cover a time period of some months. In some cases the information I received told of activities which were scheduled to occur. If that time has passed, I have written as though the activities did, in fact, take place. I have had to edit some of your reports to accommodate space requirements. I thank each of you for your information.

**Carlton and June Davenport** of Princeton, MA vacationed in Williamsburg, Virginia and had the pleasure of lunching with **Dean and Valerie Shostak**, of Williamsburg, VA at Shields Tavern. Dean is very actively giving concerts in the area and is looking forward to the Paris GMI Festival. Carlton notes that the art store at the DeWitt Wallace Museum contains a wealth of Dean's CDs, including some on which he plays the fiddle.

On September 25, 2003 the Rutland (MA) Historical Society sponsored a visit from Ben Franklin at the Rutland First Congregational Church. Emmy-award winning **Bill Meikle** of Arlington, MA "brings Dr. Franklin's wit and wisdom alive as audiences participate in lively conversations about the issues and events of 1789."

**Liz Brunelli** reports that while watching a classic arts program on cable TV, she recognized GMI member **Evelyn Glennie** of Huntingdon, Cambridge, UK. Evelyn is a renowned percussionist who plays at concerts throughout the world. Her excellent website is <http://www.evelyn.co.uk> and lists some 59 awards that she has received, including the fact that she played on the *Bela Fleck* album *Perpetual Motion*, which won a Grammy for Best Classical Crossover Album in 2002.

From Japan, **Mikio Kozuka** of Yokohama City informs us that he had to keep calm due to a question of possible heart disease last August, but fortunately it turned out that there was no problem. This did not keep him from making his first one-man exhibition of oil paintings and sheet glass objects in September. Over 100 guests attended and he sold 20 pieces, which he considers very successful. He performed on the armonica three times in October and November with each audience enjoying its clear sounds which blend quite well with Japanese songs.

**Tim Nickerson** and his wife **Cathy** of Mansfield, MA are enjoying parenthood so thoroughly that he finds it hard to believe that his son, Luke, is already two years old. Tim had a very busy summer playing bass in a few Boston area bands — "insane summer for me, tons of gigs and driving and working and baby sitting."

One of our European members now resides in the U.S. **Paul Meisser**, who played at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, along with Yatri and Dean Shostak, has settled with his wife in Englewood, FL. His new address is 9358 Casa Grande Avenue, Englewood, FL 34224.

And **Real Berthiaume** of Quebec City, also has a new address in Canada. It is 184 Rang 9, Lefebvre, QC. JoH-2Co.

Performances in Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, and France, have kept **Thomas Bloch** of Neuilly Plaisance, France quite busy. One of the concerts was organized by Arc International, a famous French glass maker, for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Congress of Cristal Makers, in the North of France. Another happening is that his work *Christ Hall*, which was recorded during the GMI meeting at the Sarrebourg Festival, was used in a documentary paying homage to the experimental avant garde film maker, Stan Brakhage. *Keeping an Eye on Stan* has Thomas' work in a section in the middle and again at the end. Thomas is also in the completion phase of the mixing for a new CD composed for voice and piano. He received results from August 2003 (after 18 months) stating that the number of his CDs sold on Naxos, which include the glass harmonica, was 30,790, which he states is, "not bad for such a rare instrument."

Carlton Davenport received a letter from **Dr. Thomas D. Rossing**, who is a professor at Northern Illinois University. He has written articles for GMW in the past and was pleased to see them mentioned in Carlton's articles on the History of Glass Music International. He stated, "Your readers might appreciate a mention of the fact that there is a whole chapter on Glass Music Instruments in my popular book *Science of Percussion Instruments* (World Scientific, 2000). I discuss the glass instruments of Harry Partch, the Sasaki Crystal Company's Glass Orchestra, the glass instruments of Leif Lundborg, etc. as well as familiar faces from GMI." Dr. Rossing offered to write a short piece for GMW and Carlton has taken him up on his offer.

A belated note: **Brien Engel's** new CD, *Christmas Glass*, is now available (maybe for next Christmas) and can be purchased on his website, [www.glassharp.org](http://www.glassharp.org). There are many solo tracks, as well as arrangements using combinations of glass harp, string harp, guitar, hammered dulcimer, and hand bells. He has also recently updated his website to include links to glass music resources, mbira music, and odd and interesting musical sites.

**Peter Bennett** of New Orleans, LA will be a guest presenter at the annual conference of the Glass Art Society, to be held in New Orleans in June. He will do a concert/lecture on the history and physics of glass music. The text of his lecture will then be included in the GAS Journal for the conference.

**Bob and Mary Bray** of Wauwalosa, WI who perform as Ben Franklin and his daughter Sarah, spent three days in Huntsville, Alabama for the Alabama Constitution Foundation in mid-October. Over 1200 area fifth graders were bussed to the great hall at the museum for an hour performance followed by a thirty minute "press conference" with Ben and Sarah after which each class had its picture taken with the two "colonials." There were often many questions about the armonica during the press conference. Two evening events were also included in the appearance.

From **Lynn Drye** of Prescott Valley, AZ we learn that she received an email in October requesting information on how to obtain a used glass harmonica — anyone with information please send an email to [Shannonmgannon@aol.com](mailto:Shannonmgannon@aol.com).

Thanks to all of you for keeping glass music alive and well — have a blessed 2004.

— **RECKERT** from page 1 —

frame has no acoustical function.

In 1987, he heard about Gerhard Finkenbeiner and Glass Music International and was totally overjoyed that there were more glass music performers and even glass music festivals. He decided to go to the Corning Festival and brought his new instrument, the Glass Organ, a further development of the Euphon which was another instrument invented by Chladni. This one was invented around 1789. The Clavyzylinder gave Sascha the idea of using glass tubes. The Euphon gave him the idea of using glass rods to get metal sound. Sascha's instruments were also inspired by the Crystal invented by the Baschet brothers. Sascha's main interest in the Euphon was in the low and bass notes, nearly three octaves lower than any glass instrument. The Euphon is a bass glass instrument that sounds like wood organ pipes and can be deeper than a double bass, when necessary. Its function is that glass rods get metal plates in vibration and are amplified by resonance tubes.



**Room in Sascha's Castle with Glass Instruments.**

Sascha was fascinated by the original Armonica, but the big Finkenbeiner concert model was much too expensive for him. Therefore, he decided to build one in a glass factory in Southern Germany. A group invited him to join them and together they built two instruments, one for him and one for them. Ingeborg Emge has the second instrument now. Later he found out that the group was a sect and he, therefore, did not want to deal with them any more. He completed his first production after the Festival in Sarrebourg. He brought the first small instrument to that festival and some people complained that it was not original because the mounting was not from cork. We know that this is a most important aspect, since it is sometimes called a "Cork-Armonica". So nobody wanted to know more about his Armonica, although the glasses were made like the originals in Mozart's time. They were made from nearly the same glass since the consistence of crystal had not changed much over the centuries. The main difference is that they do not use lead in the crystal glass anymore, because the heating systems are much better than those in Mozart's time and the lead was used to hold down the needed temperature. Then he received a phone call from Dennis James who asked if his Armonica with glasses made like the originals in Mozart's time with the required bass octave in the *Mozart Adagio and Rondo* was available. Dennis had the idea that Sascha could

cover the newly developed mounting system with thin cork so that everyone would be satisfied. The idea worked very well and Sascha sold Dennis his first Armonica and another one in 1991 in A=430 Hz. In 1991, Sascha planned and held the Fifth Glass Music Festival in Munich. It was a Mozart anniversary year and the festival was held in original glass blowing sites.

In 1989 and 1990, Sascha and Gerhard Finkenbeiner began to work together on Armonica development. Gerhard invited Sascha to go to Boston and their idea was to make even better Armonicas out of pyrex-glass, the material of Sascha's glass-tube type instrument. As a tube the notes sound very good and powerful, but formed as an Armonica cup, in Sascha's words, "it was a very sad result." In his opinion, it was not possible because the thickness of the wall does not increase, it is steady and even a stabile neck does not solve the problem. So they tested some new mountings that Sascha had brought with him on the quartz glasses. Sascha's idea was to make a mixed instrument out of crystal and quartz, because the high notes are better out of quartz, since the rim can be fire polished. This would be especially useful for con-



**Armonica Built by Sascha.**

temporary, extreme scores. Sascha met again with Gerhard at the Boston Festival and they tested their two Armonicas together. They had the idea of building the best Armonica by combining both their instruments. Sascha believes that it is best to have thinner walls for chamber music, then the bass cups especially are much easier to play fast enough as is required in the Mozart Rondo. To play with an orchestra or in the pit of an opera, it is better to use cups with a thicker wall, so they sound much more powerful. To produce the best Armonica, they would start with thin cups in the bass and middle region and switch over to quartz in the upper region (from a2-c3 on).

Although this project was never completed, the ideas as presented by Sascha are certainly interesting ones. Sascha says that he and Gerhard had great sympathy for each other and had a lot of fun together.

Several years ago, Sascha established his own glass orchestra, the *Sinfonia di Vetro (Symphony in Glass)*. They play all known glass instruments and the musicians are professional musicians who have studied composing, piano, and the teaching of music. In addition to Sascha, Phillip Marguerre and Friedrich Kern have been with the group most of the time. Bruno Kliegl from

Augsburg, a former member of the ensemble and Armonica player, is a musicologist. The four musicians have formed the nucleus of the group and four more are connected with it. They have done a lot of opera performances, their own festivals with the glass factories and tourist office in Southern Germany, and have performed full sceneplays with singers, glass ensemble, and chamber orchestra. They have established a large repertoire of arrangements and contemporary compositions and premiered the best of them in the famous Semper Opera of Dresden. Last year, Sascha added some actors and designed and directed a full sceneplay to the *Carnival of the Animals* with pianists, orchestra, glass, clowns, giant puppets, and no spoken word. It was a lot of fun for everyone involved.

In December, 2002, the glass orchestra performed with a Pyrophon (flameorgan) and orchestra in the Theatre of Heidelberg, without burning it down. That instrument consists of glass tubes and gas burners make the flames. When they put a key in the burner it sounds like a trombone.

As a manufacturer of glass instruments Sascha is interested in making music rather than promotion or being in competition with any other manufacturer. He is still looking for a possible cooperation and a professional network, to get a professional, technical service and support done for customers in both North America and Europe. He has now produced 17 Armonicas including those which are his own. He has also produced 19 Verrophons, including the prototypes; 11 sets of Musical Glasses; 5 Crystal Baschet type instruments; 4 Euphons, Sascha's creation from the historical instrument; 3 Pyrophons with glass tubes (yes, they are flame organs); 1 Bass Verrophone; 3 Glass Bellsets, one with more than 50 notes; and 7 larger experimental percussion glass instruments for a ballet.

The list of those who have purchased instruments from Sascha includes Dennis James, Alasdair Malloy, Clemens Hofinger, Brien Engel, Vera Meyer, Peter Bennett, the Vienna

Duo of Chris and Gerald Schoenfeldinger, Mathias Kaul - a professional percussion player from Hamburg, and both Bruno Kliegl and Martin Hilmer who have performed with the *Sinfonia di Vetro* and are now playing on their own from time to time.

From the time that Sascha first became interested in glass music, he has been conducting research into the history of the music, especially in Germany, its musicians, instruments and instrument makers. This research has produced a very substantial amount of very interesting information including a paper written on the History of the Harmonica

Building Family Pohl. Members of that family built Glass Harmonicas from the 1780s through the 1940s. [Editor's Note: This paper would make an excellent article for a future issue of GMW.] Sascha also has a great deal of good information about many glass musicians whom he has been in contact with over the last two decades. [Editor's Note: I'm sure that GMW readers would also find this information very interesting.]

At the present time, Sascha has moved into a baroque castle near Heidelberg. The castle has its own concert room with excellent acoustics for his glass instruments. In the last year, he has focused more on music-theatre and on working with handicapped and disabled people. He established experimental instrument orchestras with them and greatly enjoys seeing and hearing them perform. He introduced some small glass instruments into that work and they like it very much. One class spent more than an hour with just three glass notes. In the castle, Sascha has built up an academy for music, building instruments,

and all kinds of theatre, dance, and art. His workshops are mostly for educationalists. His glass orchestra is continuing to perform with orchestras, chamber groups, singers and sceneplay shows, like a wine and music theatre.



**Bruno Kliegl Playing Verrophone Built by Sascha.**

**Join GMI today, and help glass music flourish again**

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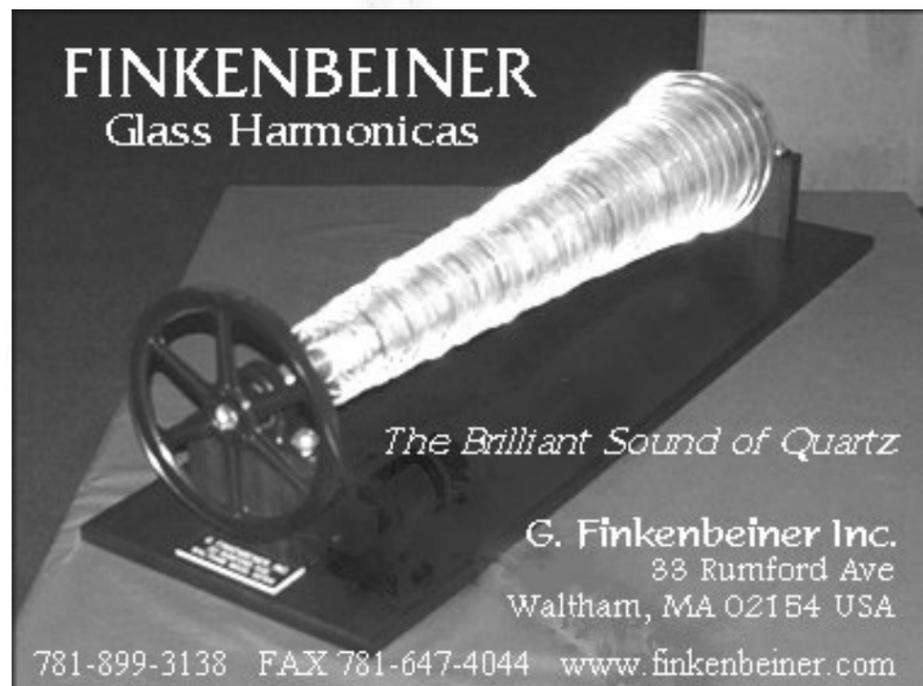
**2. Mail your check and information**

(name, address, country, home & work phone numbers) to:

*Glass Music International*  
P. O. Box 1393  
Westford, MA 01886

Make checks payable to:  
*Glass Music International, Inc.*

Dues are annual and benevolent contributions are welcomed.



— **HISTORY** from page 1 — painted on their house roof to show the allies (and Germans) where the frontier was. She takes great pride in her native Switzerland and says, “I showed early special love and interest in painting, music, nature (especially the Swiss Alps), poetry, literature and sport.” She especially enjoys listening to Swiss folk music.

Liselotte has written a short book in German about the history of glass music, continues to practice and perform, and wholeheartedly supports GMI, exclaiming “we are organized to a fine, friendly, comrade-like group who has its home in all the world.”

Another article in the same issue is entitled *Thomas Bloch Announces Composition Competition and Winners*. In 1991 Thomas held a contest for music composition which included use of the glass harmonica. This was the first competition held and another was open for entries in 1992. The 1991 winning entries were scheduled to be performed by Thomas Bloch on glass harmonica and Patrick Husson, male soprano, in Scala of Milano, Italy, the famous opera house. The 1992 competition was dedicated to the Mozart Adagio and Rondo. The work would have to be written to include the same instrumentation; however, style would be open to contemporary, jazz, folk, etc.

In an article entitled *Finkenbeiner Introduces New Version of Armonica*, it is stated that Gerhard Finkenbeiner was continuing to work on his glass harmonica and the techniques of construction and design. He has now standardized the rim-to-rim distance on armonicas in an effort to allow performers greater ease in play. The concept of equal distance manufacturing goes back approximately 200 years and was described by J. C. Muller in his *Sellstrumterricht*. It was a method of learning how to play the Glass Harmonica. Translated it reads, “The low notes of the kleine oktave should be spaced the width of a thumb, the highest the width of the little finger with a gradual transition between the two.”

The feature article in the July 1992 issue was entitled *Cecilia Brauer Makes History Live with Armonica* and was subtitled *Pianist and Celesta Player Expounding upon Career with New York Metropolitan Orchestra*. Cecilia had begun her piano studies at the age of nine and at fourteen won a scholarship to study with the great Isabelle Vengerova at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. She appeared with the Long Island Symphony and Eglevsky Ballet in the Parks, Merrick Symphony and the Massapequa Symphony, to list only a few of her piano accomplishments across the U.S. At the time this article was written she had played the celesta with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra for twenty years. The celesta is a small keyboard instrument whose bell-like tones are produced by the striking of hammers against small metal plates.

It was by chance that she discovered the glass armonica. She was performing the *Mozart Quintet* with a chamber ensemble when she noticed that the piece called for oboe, flute, cello, violin, and glass armonica. However, she was playing the celesta for the armonica part. After that she learned that the instrument was being manufactured by Gerhard Finkenbeiner and a new world of music opened for her.

Cecilia considers herself very fortunate to have “found” the armonica and added it to her piano career. She is very pleased to be introducing Ben Franklin and the armonica into

the schools. The response of the students has been very heartwarming and exciting. She has put together a program that is targeted for schools. She blends music, history, and stories together for lectures and assemblies. Her colonial costume adds to the atmosphere for the youngsters. She has found that youth get more interested in history because of their experience with the armonica and some even want to play the instrument some day.

The July 1992 and January 1993 issues were mainly devoted to an article written by Thomas Bloch entitled *The Renaissance of the Glass Armonica*. This article was originally published in the French publication, *Crescendo*, in March 1991. The article as it appeared in GMW had been translated by David Robbins. It was considered so outstanding both in content and translation that it was felt that GMI members would probably make it part of their library. The length was such that it was carried over two issues of GMW.

The article discussed in very interesting detail the origins of glass music; the invention of the glass armonica; other glass instruments derived from or related to the armonica; composers, compositions and players; and what many well-known persons had to say about it.... many of them in great praise. Thomas covered the armonica’s period of great popularity during the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and details of the instrument’s virtual disappearance from public view after that. Toward the end of the article he covered the renaissance of the armonica in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with special emphasis on Gerhard Finkenbeiner and his role in it. He also went into detail about the mechanical and acoustic aspects of the instrument.

In a section of the article called *The Quality of its Faults*, Thomas pointed out that “For two glasses, the pitch of whose notes (fundamental frequency) seems identical, it is not rare to perceive in striking them and letting them resonate, that their sound (their mode and their harmonic composition) are very different. Finkenbeiner has thus blown thousands of bowls in order to be able to choose those which will permit the creation of instruments which are in accord. It is not possible to say with precision which parameters must be taken into account in this phenomenon: material, dimension of the cup, thickness, form, hidden flaws.... However, these “faults” personalize armonicas, each one having its own sonorous signature.” He went on to say, “Bernard Baschet recently reminded me of a theory of communication. It is necessary that a thing contain a certain amount of order and disorder of it to be interesting. If one of these elements is lacking, weariness part results. If one were to remove from the armonica its diverse flaws, if its sound were too pure, it would quickly be denuded of interest.”

In his final section called *Vague Conclusions*, Thomas states “... the makers and the musicians have for their mission to create a material, beautiful in itself and which corresponds (often) to a given era. This creation depends on technological evolution, on learning and understanding, on the past, but also on the present: fashion, the ‘air du temps’, the economic climate,.... Sounds and

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*HISTORY* continued from page 7

noises are intimately tied to an era. Bernard Baschet estimates that after a rational period, the sound of the armonica, in the era of Mesmer, corresponded to a certain emotiveness, to the rise of romanticism and to the slipping of popular magic into the salons." He then finishes with, "Is there a tie with the end of our twentieth century which is witnessing the renaissance of the armonica? Each is free to judge."

The October 1993 issue featured the first of a three-part article entitled *A Portable Organ and a Glass Armonica*, which was printed with the permission of its author, Barbara Owen. The article consisted of excerpts from *E. Power Biggs: A Concert Organist* by Barbara Owen.

In 1955, Biggs had started an effort to find out as much as possible about the Franklin armonica through voluminous and library research. He was most interested in a keyboard version of the instrument since he believed that only with a keyboard could some of the most complex music of Mozart be played. When he came to the conclusion that the only way he could have an armonica with a keyboard was to have one built, he persuaded the American Academy of Science to sponsor the construction of one, and the Academy in turn interested the Franklin Savings Bank in financing the project. Herman Schlicker, who had rebuilt a late 19<sup>th</sup> century organ for Biggs was engaged to devise and build the playing mechanism and the Corning Glass Company was to make the hand-blown bowls. As word of Biggs' plans got around, there were offers of concerts, and Columbia (Records) showed some interest in a recording.

By January 1956, the glasses had been completed and were being fitted to the mechanism in Schlicker's shop. However, a series of problems began appearing at that time. In addition to problems with the thickness and shape of the glasses as well as their speed of rotation, the rubber mounting turned out to be too soft and had to be replaced with wood, and they had problems trying to find a suitable covering for the mechanical "fingers". Wet pigskin and dry rubber gave the best effects, but neither was as good as human fingers.

Biggs was still optimistic and a concert featuring the new armonica was scheduled for April 11, 1956. When the concert went on and the program of works by Mozart and Franklin was performed by Biggs, six members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the popular tenor, Roland Hayes, Biggs had to play the Cambridge Portative, a portable organ. The armonica was used for three "divertimenti" and its tone was described as wobbly and erratic and was frequently accompanied by gratuitous squeaks and scrapes.

After that the Franklin Savings Bank was no longer interested in financing the project and Corning lost interest in it also. In a desperate attempt to salvage the project, the armonica was turned over to a "think tank" of MIT engineering students. The students found that their fingers dipped in vinegar still produced the best effect and concluded that the armonica was better as Franklin had left it, without the keyboard. Biggs had hoped to be able to play Mozart's Adagio and Rondo, K. 617, on the armonica with a flourish, but was only able to play it on the flute stops of the organ. In a letter he wrote, "The sound of a delicate flute stop, incidentally, rather resembles that of a glass armonica - though it lacks, of course, the effect of coming from nowhere, and the slow dying away into silence, which is a quite magical effect with the glasses."

The October 1993 issue also showed some significant changes in the GMI organization and GMW format. First, President Norm Rehme initiated the *Presidential Notes* column with this issue, a column that still exists today. In this column Norm apologized for not getting the newsletter out stating that there were two reasons - his personal situation and the difficulty in getting information. Norm and his wife, Carol, were raising four teenagers and one of them had a serious accident and was then going through months of therapy. In this column Norm also introduced Liz Brunelli who had started serving as Membership Chair and Guest Editor of GMW. Another first with this issue was Liz's *GMI Happenings* column, which has been so successful and interesting in the years since then and also still exists, today in the very capable hands of Liz Mears.

*This article will continue in the next issue of GMW.*

