

Glass Music World

SPRING 2002

Britney Spears' Love of Glass Music

By Peter Bennett

In early February a couple of MTV producers stopped at my pitch on Bourbon Street in New Orleans and asked me to be part of a Mardi Gras special they were to film on Jackson Square with Britney Spears as host.

"Would there be a fee involved?" I asked.

"No," they said, "but you would get national exposure!"

"That, along with an additional \$1.57 will buy me a cup of coffee here in the French Quarter. Thanks, but I'm not interested."

A couple of hours later they came back, said they had reconsidered, met my pay request (a tad more than \$1.57 plus access to the craft services table) and handed me a Britney Spears' CD with the proviso that I learn *I'm Not a Woman* with which to serenade her. I had three days to learn the song before the dress rehearsal on Monday. They said I would have a sixty-second spot



on the program. It turns out that the insipid melody was devilishly difficult to learn -- I transcribed it from the CD, but watching her perform it as she hosted *Saturday Night Live* the very next day helped considerably. It's in the key of "Eb," not one of my favorite keys in the first place, and runs the usual three and a half minutes, so not only did I have to memorize it, I had to cut it back to one minute and make it recognizable as her song.

The rehearsal was a ten-hour day -- nine hours and fifty minutes being wait-time. The cast-call was eight a.m. for the show on Tuesday. Clearly I had not quoted them a high enough fee. But I was going to be within pinching distance of one of the premier teenie bopper stars of her generation!

please see **BRITNEY**, page 4

New Dennis James / Linda Ronstadt Glass CD Released

Edited by Carlton Davenport



Composer Garry Eister (left) with Linda Ronstadt and Dennis James behind the *Baschet Cristal* at the Capitol Records recording of a chamber version of Gabriel Faure's *Pavane* on January 27, 2000.

Dennis James has been performing and recording with the Glass Armonica since 1988, including several recent and scheduled upcoming CD releases and performances with singer Linda Ronstadt. Their latest CD, a Sony Classical recording, *Cristal - Glass Music Through the Ages*, was released on January 15th 2002.

In reviewing the CD, *Entertainment Weekly* states, "The performers - assembled by glass aficionado Linda Ronstadt,...are first rate." The recording features Linda, Dennis, the Emerson String Quartet, and Soprano Ruth Ann Swenson. Dennis plays three glass instruments on the recording: the glass armonica, the *Baschet Cristal*, and the seraphim (a set of tuned crystal glasses) in original historical compositions for glass by Mozart, Scarlatti, Schnaubelt, and Faure as well as an Irish folk song and contemporary works.

One of the signature voices in American pop music for over 30 years, ten-time Grammy award winner
please see **NEW CD**, page 4



PRESIDENTIAL NOTES

By the time you read this newsletter, we will be less than two years away from our next GMI Festival in Paris. If you know whether you will be attending or not, please let Thomas know by sending him an email at thbloch@club-internet.fr, or writing him at 59 Bld Fichot, 93 360 Neuilly Plaisance, France, or sending him a fax at 33 1 43 08 45 45. Also, if you will be performing at the Festival, please let him know that.

Liz Mears, our GMI Vice President, who now writes our GMI Happenings column, is a very busy person these days. Besides running her own business, she has a June deadline for the preparation of her book and is also preparing for two shows. As a member of GMI, you can help her out by sending her your "Happenings" in plenty of time for the publication of each GMW issue. Inputs to this column are greatly appreciated and inputs for the next issue by the end of May, if possible, and by mid-June at the latest, will be very helpful.

The New York Times article, "Glass, Wet Fingers and a Mysterious Disappearance" by Michael Pollak was reprinted in this issue since only about 25% of those who receive our newsletter have web access and can see the article on the NYTimes website. The Times required that we pay a fee to obtain permission to reprint the article. In going through the process to obtain this permission, I discovered that we would be required to pay an additional fee to include the picture of Carolinn Skylar that they included with the original article. We decided to save the amount of that fee by including the GMI picture of Carolinn taken at the Philadelphia Festival in 2000.

I received a listing of all the musical scores currently in our GMI Library in Paris from Thomas Bloch. The listing of documents other than the musical scores has not been completed as yet. The listing of musical scores is some sixteen pages long and, therefore, it is not feasible to include it in a newsletter. It has been growing day by day. With very few exceptions, the listing, at this time, consists of music owned personally by Thomas. Anyone who has email and would like to have a copy of the listing, can obtain one by requesting it from him at the email address which appears above. Any member who does not have email can get a hard copy mailed to them by requesting it from me through the regular mail or a phone call.

You will notice that an increasing number of websites are being listed in our newsletter with each issue. Any member who does not have web access can obtain a hard copy of any specific website material by contacting me by mail or phone (P.O. Box 228, Princeton, MA 01541, 978-464-2657).

Respectfully Submitted,
Carlton

GMI Member Email Addresses

Ralph Archbold ben1776@aol.com
 Ken Archbold karchb01@astro.temple.edu
 Liselotte Behrendt pelobe@bluewin.ch
 Peter Bennett glassharper@glassharper.com
 Real Berthiaume realb@videotron.ca
 Thomas Bloch thbloch@club-internet.fr
 David Bowen dave342@go-concepts.com
 Cecilia Brauer brauerarmonica@webtv.net
 Bob and Mary Bray benjie@execpc.com
 Celia Canty mauiharps@aol.com
 June and Carlton Davenport GMIPres@earthlink.net
 Toby and Lynn Drye drye@commspeed.net
 Brien Engel glasssharp@mindspring.com
 Robert Esch resch@madisonstelco.com
 Roy Goodman rgoodman@amphilsoc.org
 Anna Hillier anahillier@aol.com
 John Hillier john_hillier@msn.com
 Clemens Hofinger hofinger@glasharfe.de
 Michele Hogan michele.918@mindspring.com

Visit The Website

<http://homepage.mac.com/glassmusicintl/>

Members: If you have not received login information via email, contact Jonathan (jstuartm@middlebury.edu).

Glass Music World

Published quarterly by Glass Music International, Inc.

Editors — Lynn Drye, Carlton Davenport
Associate Editors —
 Peter Bennett, Elizabeth Mears
Layout: — Jonathan Stuart-Moore

Glass Music International, Inc.

President – Carlton Davenport
 Vice President – Elizabeth Mears
 Secretary – Roy Goodman
 Treasurer – Norman Rehme
 Member-at-Large – Thomas Bloch
 Membership – Alisa Nakashian-Holsberg

GMI HAPPENINGS

by Elizabeth Mears

Glass music is alive and well and on the move.

Brien Engel, Decatur, GA, spent 2001 performing for local Atlanta schools, festivals and retirement facilities. These events were interspersed with trips to South Carolina and extensive tours in Texas and New York. In October he performed in Singapore. The latter was a direct result of his website, as the call came after a Singaporean agent was surfing the web. In the pipeline are two CD's which he hopes to release later this year and a return trip to Asia in early summer.

Brien included news of **Sascha Reckert**, formerly of Oberschleissheim, Germany, a former Vice President of GMI and manufacturer of glass instruments. He has moved to Heidelberg and may have access to a second place for a second music library if there is a need.

Our member, **Carolinn Skylar**, formerly of Chelsea, MA, has also moved. She now lives in Philadelphia where she is making glass music her full time career. In November she performed a concert of music written for the Glass Armonica by composer Garry Eister at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Penn. Garry is composer of the quintet which is on the Dennis James CD (subject of another article in this newsletter).

On the move this spring is **Peter Bennett**, New Orleans, La, who has his new website up and running (<http://www.glassharper.com>). First stop on the agenda was Key West then by mid April he was in Louisburg, N.C. for his first trip to the international Whistlers' Convention. When not on the road, he can be found at Jackson Square, New Orleans from 11 AM to 5 PM and Bourbon Street, New Orleans, every night from 6 PM to 8 PM. He reports that someone left him a 33-1/3 RPM album of Bruno Hoffman's "Music for Glass Harmonica". Since he no longer has the equipment to listen to the original, he is grateful that it has been remastered to CD.

With **Jonathan Stuart-Moore**, Chapel Hill, NC, away at college, **Ann Stuart** reports that her glasses are in a down time, as she contemplates their reconstruction-getting ready for Paris!

Performing for the Glendale Public Library's concert series in Arizona for the 3rd time, **Lynn Drye**, Prescott Valley, AZ, relays that the concert hall was "standing room only," and, in fact, approximately 60 people had to be turned away. She also appeared on the Phoenix television show "Good Morning, Arizona" performing on the glass harmonica with a 2-3 minute interview as well. Apparently the performance was so engaging that even the camera crew and staff stopped their headset/mic chattering and listened in complete silence.

On tour since the beginning of January, **Thomas Bloch**, Neuilly Plaisance, France, has already given 50 concerts and will continue this tour with another 30 before it is over the end of May. He is "running from rehearsal to concert, from town to town and countries to countries. I spend more time in cars and planes than at home."

On a personal note, after **June Davenport**, Princeton, MA, joined husband **Carlton** in retirement last year, they have traveled to California, Texas, Florida, Ohio, Maine, New York, Spain and Italy visiting family and friends, as well as, vacationing.

The Albany Institute of History and Art hosted a travelling exhibit from the Smithsonian in late March. **Alisa Nakashian-Holsberg**, Westford, MA, performed at an evening of "Colonial" entertainment along with Robert Conant who played the harpsichord. He is President of the Foundation for Baroque Music and was curator of the instrument collection at Yale some years back.

Liselotte Behrendt, Rorschacherberg, Switzerland, made a CD in December 2000 using music of a Swiss musician and composer which was written for piano. She played her arrangement for Remigio Nussio on the glassharp (he was unfamiliar with this instrument) over the telephone while he was in the hospital before he passed away that summer. Liselotte enjoys playing pieces not composed for glassharmonica and also includes the spoken word in her concerts alternating the stories with the glass music or reciting a poem simultaneously with the music.

Elizabeth Mears, Fairfax Station, VA, is writing this while in the last throes of finishing her book on beginning frameworking, scheduled to be published spring of 2003. A crew from LARK books will be up to her studio in May for a photo session. She is participating in a three person exhibit at Harvard Museum of Natural History in early June, as well as, a nationally juried glass exhibit, "North American Glass 2002". She won second place for one of her glass books, a collaborative effort with photographer daughter, Lindsey. She will be teaching in three nationally recognized venues this summer and hosting a 40 person family reunion in late June.

The next newsletter is scheduled for summer. Please submit your "doings and happenings" by mid June to Elizabeth @ Elizwndhil@aol.com or 10160 Hampton Road, Fairfax Station, VA 22039. Thanks for all the interesting information

BRITNEY from page 1

Jackson Square was taken over completely for the show. They brought in a million-dollar portable stage. They had hand picked an audience of screaming 17 to 21-year-olds, which they penned in front of the stage with portable fencing. Occasional chilly rain settled in for the day. "No Doubt" was the warm-up act. There were, apparently, a whole bunch of other celebrities there, but I didn't recognize any of them.

Several hours later, when MY time came, they led me thru the milling throngs. "It's the Glass Man!" I heard several young people shout over the general din. They bucketed me up onto the stage about a mile from the STAR (so much for "pinching distance,") and the M.C. shouted in my ear, "You've got thirty seconds!" So much for my carefully planned sixty-second rendition of *I'm Not a Woman*. It really didn't matter, anyway, because the general crowd noise level was so high I couldn't hear the glasses myself - I was playing by "touch" alone. I checked over my shoulder. Brit was smiling as if in appreciation, but I know she couldn't hear it either!

The whole shebang was broadcast on MTV the weekend after Mardi Gras and mainly showed the seamier aspects of Mardi Gras, a holiday taken very seriously by New Orleanians who insist on having just as much fun as possible prior to the dark and dreary days of Lent that follow! The sound was flawless. I don't know how they managed to mask out the overwhelming din of the rock-and-roll crowd, but the sound of the glasses and my introductory comments were completely clear. Probably had something to do with the \$5,000 microphones they were using! Thank goodness I had learned the song well enough to let my "fingers do the walking."

The three-hour special has been rebroadcast several times since and I am amazed (if not appalled) at the number of people who spend these halcyon days of spring inside watching television! Time and again folks have come up to my pitch exclaiming "Oh, I saw you on MTV -- play *I'm Not a Woman!*" I'm getting as sick of THAT song as I am of my former signature tune, *Somewhere Over the Rainbow!*

NEW CD from page 1

ner, Linda Ronstadt, is the driving force behind *Cristal - Glass Music Through the Ages*. This recording is the result of years of fascination with, and pursuit of what she calls the "small and exquisite" sound of glass instruments. She has been quoted as saying, "The glass sound is seductive and beautiful, with a spin that draws you in and holds you."

Dennis James has seven solo record albums and three compact disc issues to his credit, along with appearances on various other artists' projects. He has been the subject of broadcasts on NBC, ABC, CBS, PBS, NPR, APR, BBC, and CBC. He has appeared on French and Belgian national television. He has also been featured in a full-length television documentary filmed by the Australian Broadcast Commission. He has also appeared or recorded with entertainment personalities Bob Hope, Vincent Price, Ray Bolger, Red Skelton, Michael Feinstein, Branford Marsalis, Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, Myrna Loy, Olivia DeHavilland, Fay Wray and Ginger Rogers.

Cristal - Glass Music Through the Ages was co-produced by Linda Ronstadt and Grammy Award winning producer John Boylan who has 8 gold, 22 platinum, and 7 multi-platinum albums to his credit.

The CD *Cristal - Glass Music Through the Ages*, Sony Classical Recording SK 89047 is available in stores now and can also be ordered through amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

The information in this article was extracted from the following websites:

<http://www.sonyclassical.com/music/89047/home.html>

<http://www.hokumhall.org/FEB02/MusicaCuriosa.html>

<http://www.fix.net/~geister/recordings.html>

The editors would like to thank Polly Sveda of Sveda Productions for her assistance in the development of this article.

GMI Member Websites

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| • Peter Bennett | New Orleans, LA | http://www.glassharper.com |
| • Thomas Bloch | France | http://www.chez.com/thomasbloch |
| • Cecilia Brauer, Glass Armonica | Merrick, LI, NY | http://www.gigmasters.com/armonica/index.asp |
| • Lynn Drye, Glass Instruments | Prescott Valley, AZ | http://www.glassvirtuoso.com |
| • Brien Engel, Glass Harp | Decatur, GA | http://www.glassharp.org |
| • Clemens Hofinger, Glass Instruments | Germany | http://www.glasharfe.de |
| • Dean Shostak | Williamsburg, VA | http://www.glassmusic.com |
| • Ann Stuart and Jonathan Stuart-Moore | Chapel Hill, NC | http://homepage.mac.com/jwsm/glassharp/ |
| • William Wilde Zeitler, Glass Armonica | Seattle, WA | http://www.glassarmonica.com |

Glass, Wet Fingers and a Mysterious Disappearance

By Michael Pollak

The glass harmonica is a beautiful, rare instrument with a haunting past. Hand-blown, finely tuned crystal bowls are mounted on a spindle like an angel's version of an industrial lathe. The musician touches the turning edges with wet fingers. The music is crystalline, too, and can fill a room, seeming to come from everywhere and nowhere.

Equally haunting is that the harmonica's only modern American builder disappeared without a trace three years ago.

The instrument was invented in 1761 by Benjamin Franklin after he had heard a concert of water-tuned goblets and wondered how to improve them. Franklin devised what he called an "armonica" with spinning bowls to make it easier to sustain notes and play chords.

The harmonica was most popular in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when roughly 400 works were written for it by composers, including Mozart and Beethoven, said Thomas Bloch, a present-day glass harmonica virtuoso and composer. Marie Antoinette played it, Dr. Franz Mesmer used it to relax his patients and both Goethe and Thomas Jefferson praised it, Mr. Bloch wrote.

It fell out of favor partly because of claims

that its otherworldly vibrations could shatter one's nerves, and in some German towns it was banned. Donizetti wrote a glass harmonica into the mad scene of "Lucia di Lammermoor" in 1835 but later substituted a flute.

In the last couple of decades it has made a comeback, as some musicians took a liking to its ethereal sound. It is used infrequently in concert performances by the Metropolitan Opera, primarily in "Lucia," but its use in smaller regional and chamber music events seems to be increasing. Mr. Bloch cites more than 25 composers who have recently written for it.

Dennis James, a glass music virtuoso from California, has played the glass harmonica on three of Linda Ronstadt's CD's and has recorded another album co-produced by Ms. Ronstadt, "Cristal: Glass Music Through the Ages," to be released Jan. 15 by Sony.

But perhaps the most important factor in its recent popularity has been a German immigrant glass blower named Gerhard Finkenbeiner, who ran a scientific instrument company in Waltham, Mass.

please see DISAPPEARANCE, page 7

Historical Glass Harmonica Discovered in Colmar, France

By Thomas Bloch

In September, I received a phone call with news that an historical glass harmonica had been discovered in my hometown of Colmar in the east of France. According to the caller, it was in a museum and seemed to be in good condition although it had three or four broken glasses. They said that they would send me a color photograph of it and asked if I would come to Colmar, where I often go, to see it and give information on it to the Museum which owns it.

I went to the Museum, which is the Musée Unterlinden, on September 17th, 2001, examined the glass harmonica, and took several pictures of it with my digital camera. I found it to be a great instrument and I could make sounds on some of the glasses. A very nice sound, indeed.

There were only two glasses broken and two missing. The range is from C to E (three octaves and four notes). It seems that it is from the beginning of the 19th century according to Mr. Antoine Stroesser, the



furniture specialist who will work on it for the Museum. Through his analysis of the wood, he will try to determine what region the instrument came from.

Along with the instrument there is an original copy of the Röllig method, "Über die harmonika" (1787) and the

cello part of a manuscript of an unknown trio for glass harmonica, violin, and cello.

I have included two photographs of the instrument with this article.

I hope the Museum will want to make the instrument playable and I suggested that to Mrs. Sylvie Lecoq, co-curator of this wonderful place, who kindly invited me to discover this instrument. It would be great if it would work for the next GMI Festival in Paris.

Note: We would like to thank Mrs. Sylvie Lecoq and Mr. Antoine Stroesser for their efforts regarding the discovery and restoration of the instrument.



FINKENBEINER
Glass Harmonicas

The Brilliant Sound of Quartz

G. Finkenbeiner Inc.
33 Rumford Ave
Waltham, MA 02154 USA

781-899-3138 FAX 781-647-4044 www.finkenbeiner.com

DISAPPEARANCE from page 5

Mr. Finkenbeiner, who had seen a glass harmonica years before in Paris, realized he had the makings of music in the bowl-shaped ends that had to be cut off giant furnace tubes he was preparing for I.B.M. Starting in the early 1980's, his company made about 140 glass harmonicas. On the afternoon of May 6, 1999, Mr. Finkenbeiner, 69, cheerily told house guests and co-workers at his factory that he would be back in a little while and drove out to the Norwood, Mass., Memorial Airport, where he kept his Piper Arrow. He and his plane have not been seen since, and authorities say they don't know what happened.

"Things were going exactly in the direction that he wanted," said Bertrand Finkenbeiner, one of Gerhard's three sons. "My suspicion is that he was just taking off on a routine flight" and "something went terribly wrong."

For many years, colleagues say, Mr. Finkenbeiner was the world's only glass harmonica maker. Co-workers helped with tuning and assembly, but until his disappearance only he blew the bowls, which were pure quartz, not leaded glass.

"Gerhard was the central figure in the renaissance of glass music," said Carlton P. Davenport of Princeton, Mass., president of Glass Music International, an association of about 100 players and devotees of the glass harmonica and related instruments.

"When he disappeared, it was like an earthquake," said Mr. Bloch, who is organizing a glass music festival in Paris in 2004. In his forthcoming glass harmonica CD, he includes a new composition dedicated to Mr. Finkenbeiner. "More than to say that his loss meant something for the instrument, I prefer to say that his life meant something for the instrument," he said in an e-mail message. "In fact, he lighted the fire, and now thanks to him we can continue."

Like an endangered bird that has attracted the attention of naturalists, the glass harmonica has an uncertain but promising future. In Waltham, the Finkenbeiner company still makes 8 to 10 glass harmonicas a year, about the same as before. The work is slow and painstaking. Thomas Hession, 37, the vice president, who apprenticed for years to Mr. Finkenbeiner, has taken over the job of blowing the bowls. Timothy Nickerson, 32, manager of the music department, estimated that a harmonica requires 50 to 60 hours to produce. The instruments are priced from \$6,000 to \$36,000, depending on the size of the instrument, with the median about \$12,000.

The quality of the instruments may have improved in the last two years, through new techniques and an extra intensity of effort. Carolinn Skyler of Philadelphia owns the largest glass harmonica ever made, an instrument designed for concert performance, with 61 bowls, covering five octaves plus a note. Mr. Finkenbeiner started making it for her in 1999, and his assistants finished the job. It took some persuasion before he would make an instrument that large, she said. "I just wanted to play the most music I could from the historical repertoire to contemporary and to play it at concert pitch."

The people at the company, she said, are like a family to glass harmonica musicians.

Glass music has different factions. Mr. James said he thought Mr. Finkenbeiner had been a self-promoter whose instruments were not historically accurate. He

plays a harmonica made by Sascha Reckert at the Eisch glass factory in Frauenau, Germany.

William Wilde Zeitler, a Seattle musician, said it had long been a concern to him, even before Mr. Finkenbeiner disappeared, that so much of the fate of the instrument rested on one man. He said the process Mr. Finkenbeiner used to make an instrument "required a world-class quartz glass blower like Gerhard with a full-fledged scientific quartz glass shop." He added, "I really want to see this instrument get off the endangered musical instrument list, and that won't happen until making them is within the reach of capable glassblowers with typical glass studios." Mr. Zeitler has been working with Seattle glass blowers to fashion glass harmonicas more in the style Franklin would have recognized.

But the Finkenbeiner company stands by its use of pure quartz. In its tuning room one can watch a quartz bowl change shape like jelly under strong sound, a demonstration of quartz's elasticity. A leaded-glass bowl would shatter. "The sound is a lot more pronounced because it can vibrate at a higher volume without breaking," Mr. Nickerson said, standing near a bust of Benjamin Franklin. Alisa Nakashian-Holsberg of Westford, Mass., recalled how Mr. Finkenbeiner let her help tune and test her own instrument to save money when she was a college student. "He was insistent," she said. "This was not about money for him. This was a passion."

Mr. Finkenbeiner, she said, would want the music to progress. "We're continuing our part in continuing his dreams," she said, "because it has touched each of us in some way."

Copyright © [2001] by The New York Times Co.
Reprinted by permission.



Join GMI today, and help glass music flourish again

Sustaining Membership.....	\$ 40
President's Membership.....	\$ 55
Golden Membership.....	\$ 100
Corporate Sponsor.....	\$ 250
(up to 10 members)	
Crystal Award.....	\$1000 & up

Dues are annual and benevolent contributions are welcomed.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State & Zip _____
Country _____
Work Phone _____
Home Phone _____

Make checks payable to:
Glass Music International, Inc.

Send to:
Glass Music International
P. O. Box 1393
Westford, MA 01886

MUSICAL INSTRUMENT INSURANCE

- **No Deductibles**
- **\$100 Minimum Premium**
- **No Exclusion for Instruments Stolen from Vehicles**
- **No Exclusion for Breakage**
- **No Charge for Borrowed Instruments (up to 30 days free coverage)**
- **Loss of Market Value**—If a loss reduces the market value of your instrument the difference is paid.
- **Right of Repurchase**—Permits you to repurchase recovered instruments for only the amount paid to you.
- **Inflation Guard**—Permits you to collect more than the insured value for newly manufactured instruments.
- **Rental or Replacement Coverage**—Automatic coverage for replacement instruments while yours is being repaired due to a covered loss.



Contact: 1-800-VIVALDI
Clarion Associates, Inc.
1711 New York Ave.,
Huntington Station, NY 11746
E-mail: Clarion@villagenet.com
Web: www.ClarionIns.com

Glass Music International Inc.

2503 Logan Drive
Loveland, Colorado 80538 USA

