

# Glass Music World

FALL 2006

## *The Baschet Brothers and Their Cristal*



*Francois and Bernard Baschet*

*by Carlton Davenport*

Along with most of the Paris Festival attendees, I visited the Baschet Brothers' Atelier in the Latin Quarter of Paris the Sunday morning of the Festival and Bernard and Marguerite's home and studio that afternoon. At both places I was fascinated by the Baschet Cristal instrument and the proficiency of those who played it.

While at the Atelier, I purchased the book, "Les Sculptures Sonores", written by Francois Baschet and have now read and re-read it in great detail. I enjoyed it so much that I felt that I had to share my enthusiasm with the GMI membership.

The book combines Francois' life story, which would make a wonderful book in itself, with the story of the two brothers' worldwide travels and successes over some fifty years or so. In doing so, it includes a very interesting discussion

on acoustics by Francois, descriptions and illustrations of the many different sculptures the two developed which led up to today's Cristal, and many interesting, and often humorous, anecdotes about their experiences and encounters with numerous artists and others throughout the world.

Francois and Bernard complement each other so well. Francois' ambition was to be a great sculptor and he achieved that in the area of metal sculptures which were displayed in many cities throughout the world and at different world fairs. Bernard, on the other hand, developed a knowledge of music which Francois did not have and provided the impetus to develop sculptures on which talented musicians could produce beautiful classical, jazz, and experimental music.

The book documents the two

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## **Michel Deneuve: Master of the Cristal Baschet**

*the text below was written by  
Michel in 2000*

**Michel Deneuve** (born 1955)

After five years of Percussion classes, he studied Composition with **Alain Kremski** and **Horia Ratiu**, and then, Orchestra Direction at **l'Ecole Roumaine**. He composes for solo instruments as well as orchestra and creates music for theater, choreography, poetry and films. For six years, he worked with **Bernard Baschet** on his sound research. They gave many concerts together under the name of "**Structures Sonores Baschet**". He gives musical initiation courses to teachers and pupils for the diffusion of **Bernard Baschet's musical pedagogical work**.

In 1977, he decided to concentrate only on the "**Baschet Cristal**". He developed a special technique for this new instrument, unveiling the unique sound of this exceptional instrument. He has composed a solo and orchestra repertory for the "**Cristal**". He transcribes both contemporary and classical works. He has received commissions from all over the music world. His work has inspired other composers such as **Jean Cristophe Adam Walrand**, **Paul Hertel**, **Alain Labarsouque**, **Marcel Landowsky**, **Francoise Legrand**, **Aubert Lemelland**, **Horatiu Radulescu** ... to create original works for his repertoire. He has played with such soloists as composer and organist **Jean Guillou**, the baryton-bassist **Jose Van Dam**, the pianists **Pascal Amoyel** and **Alain**

see **DENEUVE**, pages 7



## PRESIDENTIAL NOTES



In the last issue of GMW, I reported that there was a serious proposal for a festival in 2007. Alain Pacquier, of Sarrebourg, France who had made the proposal along with Patrick Kochersperger, of Colmar, France, has regrettably informed me that "we must cancel all projects about Glass Music in Sarrebourg because we have a tremendous 'gap' of money in 2007." I will let GMI members know immediately if there is any change to this in the future.

You will find a proposal from Sascha Reckert in this issue. It is for a website that would work in cooperation

with our GMI website. Please send any comments on this proposal to Sascha ([Sascha.Reckert@sinfonia-di-vetro.de](mailto:Sascha.Reckert@sinfonia-di-vetro.de)) and myself ([GMIPres@earthlink.net](mailto:GMIPres@earthlink.net)). All comments will be reviewed by Sascha and the GMI officers and we will report more on this in the next issue.

The complete updated lists of GMI email addresses and GMI websites are being put up on our website at this time. Please let me and Jonathan, who is the webmaster, know if you have any further changes.

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### Glass Music World

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## Photo of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Glass Music Artist Found



Sherwin Borsuk bought a picture of a young woman 19th Century glass music artist at a flea market in Western Connecticut. The text on the back specifies: "The German Rose - Age 23 years - Born in Hamburg Germany - Height 51 in. - Weight 116 lbs - Musical Artist"

## GMI Happenings

– By Liz Mears –

The news has been coming in about the activities in which our members are participating. Glass music is being promoted in quite a plethora of different venues:

**Tom Degnan** writes that at Franklin Court in Philadelphia their Ben Franklin glass armonica is being kept in good playing condition. The new Independence Park Institute, with classrooms to better orient school children to the park, has a new Finkenbeiner demonstration model glass armonica, which is much like the original one.

In May, **Dennis James** gave two wonderful concerts for the visitors at the Franklin Court Underground Museum in honor of the Franklin Tercentenary, and **Carolyn Skyler** again charmed the visitors to Independence National Historical Park this summer at the Living History Center.

From **Sascha Reckert** we learn that his *Ensemble Sinfonia di Vetro* had the following activities: They performed Mozart chamber music at the Salzburg Festival accompanied by an orchestra and a dance company under the direction of Joachim Schlomer. That was followed by a performance of the opera, *Lucia die Lammermoor*, in the Scala Milano and in Iford (GB). They also designed a completely new instrument; sadly, it was destroyed in an accident with a truck - he promises to build a new one!

Glass music was represented on America's Got Talent! **Douglas Lee** performed on the musical glasses on Thursday, August 17<sup>th</sup>. He has a copy of his performance from the month before on the same show and will send it out to anyone who might be interested.

Glass music also made an appearance on Extreme Makeover Home Edition (where will it go next? *Editor's note*). **Diane Hession** at G. Finkenbeiner and her two children, Daniel and Jaymie, had quite the adventure in March. G. Finkenbeiner was contacted to see whether an instrument could be donated for the Py family in Philadelphia. Two days later a contingent from G. Finkenbeiner: Diane, Tom, Shaun, and the two youngsters drove to Philadelphia and delivered the instrument the next day to the Ben Franklin room of the house being renovated. While Tom and Shaun were being interviewed and filmed, the other three walked around in official blue EMHE shirts, and "It was so cool!" They got autographs. They took pictures. They chatted with everyone. The episode aired on April 30<sup>th</sup>, and, even though their interview was cut, they had an awesome experience - "My kids and I will remember it forever".

Across the country in Los Angeles in June, **Thomas Bloch** played the glass harmonica, the Cristal Baschet, and the ondes Martenot in the Ahmanson Theater located near the opera and the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Up and down the east coast, **Cecilia Brauer** performed quite a few school programs on Long Island, in New Jersey, and in Connecticut. She delighted the audiences at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY, the John Jay Homestead, the Mohonk Mountain Resort, at the National Bottle Museum in Saratoga Springs, and gave two performances at Villanova University. At the second of the latter... "who surprised me but Bertrand Finkenbeiner, Gerhard's son. It made me so

happy; it was like having Gerhard there, as he resembles his father so much". In April, she participated in the premiere of a chamber composition, which was commissioned by the American Philosophical Society. The piece, "Useful Knowledge, a Franklin Fantasy", was composed by Paul Moravec, a Pulitzer Prize winner in music in 2004. Cecilia and the Armonica were in a feature article in the official magazine of the National Federation of Music Clubs, and in September she will entertain the Friends of Franklin on the Glass Armonica.

The vagabond, **Peter Bennett**, spent a great deal of his summer exploring Alaska and performing there. The following is an excerpt of one of his adventures: "The macadam road starts out smooth and wide, but slowly becomes narrow and pot-holed. Then, unceremoniously, the pavement ends. Just as good. About the same time the scenery becomes so riveting the only safe speed is under thirty-five miles-per-hour anyway. No matter what way you look there is precious scenery of unimaginable magnitude: mountains, glaciers, raging rivers, valleys, meadows, out and out swamp. At one point the road straddles a ridge for miles - no guard rails, a thousand foot drop on either side, a pullout for passing only every mile or so. And dust so fine it even found entry to my new and, I thought, tight car. I've driven plenty of dirt roads in my time, but I doubt I'll find another hundred and thirty miles of such splendor. And, remarkably, no harm came to my instrument in the back of the car!

And this just in, **William Zeitler** reports that he was hired by Production Limited to give five performances in the New Town Plaza in Hong Kong to play for "Golden Week". Golden Week is a week-long shopping holiday and shopping malls hire entertainers to attract shoppers. It is huge!

A few changes to your lists of GMI email addresses and websites:

- Sherwin Borsuk is at [Borsuks@cox.net](mailto:Borsuks@cox.net).
- Jean-Claude Chapuis is at [jc.chapuis@glassmusic.org](mailto:jc.chapuis@glassmusic.org)
- Stephane Leach is at [stephaneleach@minitel.net](mailto:stephaneleach@minitel.net).
- Alexander Lemeshev is at [AlexanderLem@yandex.ru](mailto:AlexanderLem@yandex.ru).
- Paul Messier is at [glasmusikpablo@verizon.net](mailto:glasmusikpablo@verizon.net).
- Sascha Reckert is now at [Sascha.Reckert@sinfonia-di-vetro.de](mailto:Sascha.Reckert@sinfonia-di-vetro.de).
- Nevine Sabet d'Acre is at [nevboyer@gmail.com](mailto:nevboyer@gmail.com).
- Lynn Drye's website is now <http://www.glassvirtuoso.us> instead of <http://www.glassvirtuoso.com>.
- Paul Messier's website is now <http://glassmusic4you.com>.

### 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: [glasssharp@mindspring.com](mailto:glasssharp@mindspring.com).



— **BASCHET** from page 1 — brothers' amazing success in the sixties and seventies. During this period their sculptures were featured in major periodicals such as Time, Life, and the New Scientist magazines, in many films, and on highly prestigious tours and exhibitions all over the world including the 1970 Osaka World Fair, where their exhibit had five million visitors. They also exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and even appeared three times on the Ed Sullivan Show.

The book also includes numerous amusing anecdotes detailing meetings, working relationships and friendships with major forces in the art world such as Jean Cocteau, Yehudi Menuhin, Edgard Varese, Ravi Shankar, John Cage, Edith Piaf, and Jacques Brel.

The Baschet Brothers are very caring people as was shown by their work with the New York School for the Deaf during the late sixties when they were very successful in developing musical instruments for the deaf. This included instruments for those who are profoundly deaf, but remain sensitive to vibrations such as those felt through the floor of a train. With the help of the mechanics teacher and his students, they made instruments designed to vibrate against the floor so they could be sensed by the foot. Then they made other instruments whose vibrations traveled along Kleenex-covered extensions that the children could bite down on.

I found it very interesting that Francois stated that the Baschet Brothers' "many years of experience proved that one is assured a great success with water, harmonious shapes and sounds, visitor participation, game-like activities, and the motion of animated objects".

The book includes photographs of Baschet Cristal musicians including GMI members Michel Deneuve, Catherine Brisset, Cathy Tardieu, Ingeborg Stein, Frederic Bousquet, Thomas Bloch, and Dennis James.

A page at the end of the book provides an excellent description of how the Baschet Cristal is played.

"The musician dips his fingers into a bowl hanging under the keyboard. The wet fingers stroke the glass rods. The water works like the rosin of a classical violin bow.

The acoustical principle of the instrument is the creation of the sound inside heavy metal pieces, contrary to normal instruments that are as light as possible.

The sound is created by the vibration of tuned metal bars. (The glass made no sound. It works like bows.)

These bars are anchored onto a heavy plate, collecting the vibrations. Vibrations are funneled towards acoustical amplifiers (sound radiators), made out of a stainless steel sheet folded by hand by the sculptors Baschet and two fibreglass cones. These cones amplify the sound and add harmonics (overtones) and echo.

No electric, no electronic devices are involved."

## A Proposal from Sascha Reckert

*The following is taken from two emails from Sascha. Please review send any comments to Sascha Reckert (Sascha.Reckert@sinfonia-di-vetro.de) and Carlton Davenport (GMIpres@earthlink.net).*

### 1<sup>st</sup> email:

The idea is very simple. We want to create a web page with all information about glass music including performers, instruments, historical information and notes. We can put scores on the internet to have composers look at them so that they know about the musical possibilities. We often have to do that and it would make it much easier. We can post links to everybody. I would suggest that there will be no costs for GMI, not even the hosting. I suggest that I use the 200 Euro dues money that I wanted to give you from me and Martin. When I don't have to pay my dues, I would take all costs for this website. It is much easier and cheaper than to transfer the money and sending cash seems a risk for me. Of course everybody can send us information that they would like to publish there. We also would like to install a forum for discussions, like I started with Zeitler about how Franklin got the idea. We also would like to make the GMW Newsletter online and that could help to save a lot of money for GMI. It can be printed, but perhaps only for them who want to or need it. The language will be English and others

see **SASCHA**, back page

I strongly recommend the purchase of this book. I am sure that GMI members would enjoy reading it. Anyone wishing to purchase it should contact Michel Deneuve by email ([micheldeneuve@aol.com](mailto:micheldeneuve@aol.com)).

Festival attendees who visited the Atelier and Bernard's studio enjoyed a rare opportunity made possible by the fact that the Festival was in Paris. We owe Thomas Bloch a debt of gratitude for his inclusion of this wonderful day of activities in the Festival program. We are extremely grateful to those at the Atelier (Michel Deneuve, Therese Braunstein, and Mary Lyons), and Bernard and Marguerite Baschet and the others at the studio in St. Michel Sur Orge for their warmth and generosity.

My glass music experience was greatly broadened that day as I'm sure it was for the others who participated. The genuine enthusiasm and interest of the GMI members present was clearly apparent when they were trying out the instruments. I know that Dean Shostak has purchased a Cristal since the Festival and know of others who indicated an interest in doing the same.

We in GMI are so fortunate to have Francois and Bernard Baschet and their wonderful Baschet Cristal in our organization.

## Greetings from Gdansk, Poland

by Anna i Arkadiusz Szafraniec

Hello, Anna and Arkadiusz from Poland are speaking! We play the musical glasses and we do it as the GLASS DUO ensemble. We would like to say hello to every GMI member. We hope we have some interesting news for you from our place - Gdansk, where we live. So...

A few months ago we started to talk about our performance at the Mozart Festival in Gdansk. There were many ideas and suggestions as to which way should we do it, but after a long talk with the organizer we found the solution. We were really surprised when we found more information about other musicians invited to the "Mozartiana". It was the first of this kind of festival organized by Mr. Jan Lukaszewski and his Polish Chamber Choir so it was going to be unusual.

We looked at the festival program and read about Schola Cantorum Gedanensis, Ryga Philharmonic Orchestra, Silesian String Quartet and other interesting groups that make classic as well as jazz and electronic music. We could also find information about concerts by Jozef Skrzek, Emil Kowalski Jazz Quintet and Zbigniew Namyslowski. It was fantastic enough but we didn't think we would have a much bigger surprise. It turned out that we would have a unique occasion to meet other glass musicians there. In addition to our GLASS DUO, the festival organizer invited the Schönfeldingers - from Vienna. We were truly excited.

We must say that we hadn't met other glass musicians before. Just one time - a few years ago, we were in Warsaw and heard Mr. and Mrs. Schönfeldinger. There was not enough time to speak that evening - what a pity... We also didn't have a look at their instruments very carefully.

Now we were dreaming about the possibility of touching and playing these extraordinary instruments. Until now we saw the glassharmonica just in the museums, and the verrophone we know just by the photos.

A few days before the festival beginning we contacted Chris and Gerald. We made an appointment.

The evening we met each other was really nice. We first spoke about problems and doubts concerning playing glass instruments, being on the stage... And we made another



The Schönfeldingers, left, and the Szafraniecs, right.

appointment in order to try the instruments. The next day we played an armonica and the verrophone. And we were so surprised. We thought we could play well, but we couldn't. The technique was probably similar but, for sure, not the same.

Both the Vienner Glasharmonika Duo and GLASS DUO concerts had aroused a great interest. There were a lot of people sitting and standing in Abbot Palace. The atmosphere was really good. We played the second part of the piano concerto, thinking: why Mozart didn't write it originally for musical glasses???

After all we can say what was the most important for us:

1. - a great satisfaction and a new experience we made there. Two months ago we played a concert just with Chopin pieces. Now we performed only Mozart.
2. - a possibility to meet with other glass musicians. Not only on the occasion of rare instruments festival. It was really nice!



## News from Saint-Petersburg, Russia

*I have recently participated in a Russian cultural event in Venice, which was a response to 2005 "Venetian carnival" in Saint-Petersburg. I have attached to this message my picture from this event.*

Alexander Lemeshev  
[AlexanderLem@yandex.ru](mailto:AlexanderLem@yandex.ru)



— *DENEUVE* from page 1 —

**Kremski**, the flutist **Philippe Bernold**, the trumpeter **Guy Touvron**, the cellist **Herve Derrien**, l'altiste (Viola) **Jean Baptiste Brunier** and the prestigious **Fine Arts Quartet**. He has performed in concert under the direction of **Constantin Simonovitch**, **Cristophe Escher**, and **Francoise Legrand**.

In 1998, he opened the first international school for the Cristal at Paris's **Academie Musike**, directed by **Gerard Sutton**, musical historian. The school offers a complete curriculum of study leading to the **Academie's** degree in classical music. He has a Cristal class in the musical conservatory of Brive (centre of France).

### History

As a teenager, I learned to play Piano and Organ. When I was eighteen, I decided to devote myself to the study of Music.

First, I attended percussion classes in Dijon conservatory, participating at the same time in a formation of contemporary jazz, but the desire to create my own music was becoming more and more urgent. Looking for new sounds, by chance I bought a record of the Baschet brothers' "Structures Sonores Lasry Baschet". This was my first meeting with the Cristal, its sounds went directly through my heart, and suddenly, I decided to play this instrument. That was it, I wanted to express myself with this instrument.

After some inquiries, I finally met the Baschets in 1977. During a training session, Bernard Baschet agreed to listen to my desire to play the Cristal. It was too expensive for me. We decided to work together, and to build a new Cristal which was more sophisticated. We invented an improvement of the structure with a larger keyboard of four octaves and a half. Progressing in my musical research, I took composition classes in Paris. I discovered the fascinating world of the Baschets' instruments (Percussions, Strings and, of course, Cristal).

In 1980, Bernard Baschet and I, started to give concerts of experimental music, all over Europe. Rapidly, the Cristal became very essential for me and I decided to devote myself to this instrument. Amazingly, the Cristal, invented around 1955, was still, in the seventies, largely unknown. Nobody was really playing or studying it seriously. I had heard many remarks about the limitations of the instrument. They said it was beautiful, but technically limited. I still wonder to which side were the limitations, the Cristal or the musicians?

Then, I started an intense work of research on all the possibilities of it, playing pieces of classical music which were more and more complex, and writing pieces for Cristal. Perceiving that it was wrong to isolate this complete instrument, I started to include it among others from duo to symphonic orchestra, performing both contemporary and classical music, plus my personal compositions. Putting the Cristal in the middle of an orchestra was really a "premiere".

To improve my knowledge of music and to make an old dream come true, I studied conducting around 1985. This interesting adventure is "en marche". Today business



companies, private cultural associations as well as public services are asking for concerts all around the world. Many times those performances need special custom-made compositions.

I am still working with Bernard Baschet to improve the acoustical and technical performance of the Cristal. This quite new instrument is on its way to more and more interesting sounds. The technical skills acquired during the years and the wide range of possibilities, have attracted other musicians who practiced it. It is famous because of TV and radio programs, and also music movies. In the near future, I intend to create the first Cristal school. Now in 2000, it has been 23 years since I started to play the Cristal...interesting anniversary isn't it?

The first ten years were full of enthusiasm as well as difficulties. When I started, I had no background, no references, no teacher. I had to be the researcher, the teacher and the pupil. As I was progressing, I had to invent the right technique before I was able to learn it. Having foreseen the fantastic possibilities of this instrument, to meet this challenge. I had to work very hard.

The technical difficulties for playing are:

Close to piano touch plus rubbing-pushing of the bow (violin).

The fingers act as a bow, rubbing the glass rods. Each rod is tuned to a specific note (piano range).

The biggest difficulty was to master the nuances of intensity (between piano and fortissimo).

see *DENEUVE*, back page

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Working on the expressiveness of the instrument. I got pure, fluid and light sonorities as well as sounds thicker, rougher.

The glissando techniques on a 1/4 or 1/16 tune, giving possibilities to get close to oriental music.

Today it is possible to consider a very large repertory. My main interest is always to propose new creations made for a specific event (festival, concert). I usually enclose some kind of my proposal.

I think it is necessary to create a new repertory for a new instrument, classical and contemporary. But it is also interesting to keep open the way to other music like Jazz, songs, variety, etc.

I have learned from my experiments that the Cristal fits perfectly into a lot of music. I made some choices. I am sure the next generations will open other ways.

— **SASCHA** from page 4 —

as well. Perhaps we can ask all GMI people if they know translators who would like to help us for little amounts we can organize a translation service. The cheapest one that we found in the world is from Russia. We have a little web company.

**2<sup>nd</sup> email:**

It is all very simple. We will only mention information and publish facts that all of us know and some more perhaps (historical facts, as we find them). To give modern composers a chance to look at glass music, it is necessary that they can look at the existing scores. As with any professional service like that you can see the scores, but not copy or download them. There are special sibelius programs for that. Besides, Alexander Marguerre, who is also a glass player, has his own printing company now and is willing to do that job. He will also look to make sure that there is nothing that we have to wonder about from a legal point of view. He has already all known glass scores in his computer. Every discussion forum will be of course with a membership password. If we find help for the translation it would be great; especially for the main contents. We have German and English. Do we have somebody with time for French? I guess including Italian language would be perfect. Our web company also has very good connections to very cheap translators; so that could also be a plan. When we have it set up in German and English, I can also look for some sponsorship.

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