

# THE PLUCK-N-POST



Volume 4 Issue 2

PO Box 92 Sumpter, OR. 97877

Summer 2000

## A Word from the Executive Director

### Hello Jew's Harp Friends,

I hope all of you are having a wonderful summer and are doing your part to keep the Jew's Harp alive!

**NAJHF 2000:** We are "gearing up" for the upcoming **9th annual North American Jew's Harp Festival** in Richland, Oregon on **August 18th and 19th**. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

The festival flyers were mailed out the middle of June and have all the information about the festival. If you know of anyone who would like to receive a flyer (and be added to our mail list) just write or email us.

We are receiving lots of inquiries about the festival and have some new special guests that will be attending. Roland Bades, a Jew's Harp maker from Austria, will be here. John Palmes, a board member of the Alaska Folk Festival will be attending and will also be conducting a mouthbow workshop Friday at 4:00. Matt Glasson, a Jew's Harp player from New York City, will be performing and may even have some of his band members joining him. We are very excited to have these new folks joining us and expect to add other "new performers" in the weeks ahead.

Of course, most of the "regulars" who attend the festival will be returning this year, too ... it will be great to see everyone again.

A few weeks ago, we received 2 emails from Russia inquiring about the festival. One was from the delegates of the Yakut Chomusises who have 6-7 Jew's Harp players who want to attend. The other was from Denis Ermolaev, Director of the Folk Music Group "Russian Soul" and he hopes to come to the festival.

Isn't it great that our festival is attracting more and more people from so many different places?

**NAJHF NEEDS:** We are going to be short a few of our regular volunteers at this year's festival, so if you're interested in helping out at the festival, please write or email us. We need more volunteers for MC'ing, Kid's Events, Parking/Camping and Odds 'n' Ends. Also, please note the new park policies: No Dogs and No RV's (write or email for other RV options).

**GUILD NEWS:** We've had some pretty "cool" correspondence lately ... Alberto Lovatto wrote us from Italy where he has studied Ethnomusicology and production of the Italian Jew's Harp, Scacciapensieri. He is starting a Jew's Harp Guild there and we wish him total success!

As far as I know, formation of the International Guild is still in the works although we haven't received any information yet. Will let you know as soon as we hear something.

Doug Cohen, who filmed footage at last year's festival for a special video production on the Jew's Harp, wrote us in March and said he was planning to start editing the footage with the idea of having something ready for this year's festival. We're all looking forward to the video, Doug!

Christian Valeix, a Jew's Harp player and radio producer from France, recently sent us a copy of his new Jew's Harp CD. We will bring it to the festival so everyone can hear his fine recordings on the Morsing and Austrian harps.

**In closing, I'd like to thank all of you** who renewed your Guild membership this year as well as those many new folks who joined. Your memberships keep the Guild alive and helps us meet the festival expenses each year. Without your support it wouldn't be possible. So a great big THANK YOU to all of our Guild members. And if you have any comments or suggestions, we encourage you to write or email us anytime.

Until next time, happy twanging!

Janet Gohring, JHG Executive Director ♪

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Playing the MouthBow



## E-mail, News & Correspondence

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## Post Your Notes

Date: April 2, 2000

From: Pat Chappelle (patchnet@aol.com)

I am pleased to report I have played a small part in getting some j-harp twangin' onto British TV. How...?

By one of those perhaps-fated coincidences that occasionally come along to make life more interesting, my wife Tessa - who is a veterinarian for the RSPCA here - had just started to learn to play the didgeridoo when she was told that the BBC had decided to use the centre she runs in south London as the base for the next series of their popular "Animal Hospital" program, which is regularly presented by the Australian artist/musician Rolf Harris. Subsequently, during a break in filming, Tessa remarked to Rolf that she was trying to learn the didge but was having trouble getting the hang of circular breathing, and he obliged by showing her how he had achieved it. Since then her playing has come on in leaps and bounds. Later I got to meet Rolf myself, and I discovered that he is also an excellent jew's harpist, though this aspect of his talents is sadly underrepresented in his recorded output. We have exchanged a few instruments: he gave me a bamboo one of the pull-string type which I believe to be a New Guinean "susap", while I got for him one of Zoltan Szilagyi's excellent "Rococo" harps after he took a shine to mine.

Rolf has had a long career in music, from his first hits in the Sixties with "Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport" and "Sun Arise" (based on an old Aboriginal tune, and possibly the first ever World Music crossover hit), to a recent resurgence in interest after he recorded a version of Led Zeppelin's "Stairway To Heaven" accompanying himself on the wobble-board. Yet I found it hard to believe when I learned that Thursday, March 30th was to be his 70th birthday. His enthusiasm marks him as someone much younger. The BBC, who had filmed at our house before (wanting to feature some of the 27 animals we had at that time!), asked if they could come back to shoot Rolf and Tessa playing together, to use in a special tribute program they had planned. We happily agreed (despite the several days we knew it would take making the house respectable from its usual "lived-in" state), and I was pleased to see when they turned up that Rolf had brought the Rococo with him. The clip they eventually used is only brief, but when Rolf is seen approaching down our garden path (voiceover: "Rolf's come to see an old friend for a bit of a jam") you can hear his twangin' along with Tessa's didge, and later you get to see them inside with the same improvisation. They once again show how well these two apparently disparate instruments actually do sound together. The series has sold to several countries round the world, including the USA, so do watch out for it. (That's all the harping there on it, but there's

some great other footage including one magical bit where Rolf is singing to a baby monkey and he actually gets the little creature to sing back to him!) We were so lucky to have that day, but that wasn't the end of the celebrations, as we then got invited to the surprise party thrown for him by the celebrity magazine OK, and later went to a packed-out gig he played with his band in London. No more jew's harping there, nor I think on his new CD, but if I get to see him again, I'll work on him for you - he has far too much talent on it to leave it unshared. - PatΨ

## The Pictorial Archive



↑ PA72 - Jew'sharpone -1930s - A.P. & M. Co.

*From the Bill Gohring collection*

**The Jew's Harp Guild Pictorial Archive** needs photos of your favorite 'harps. Send (*non-returnable*) pics and info to:  
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## HARPING EFFECTS SOME FUNKY RECORDING TECHNIQUES FOR THE TRUMPET OF TOMORROW...

by Matt Glasson

Hello again everybody - Mugwump Jizm here (a.k.a. Matt Glasson) writing from that Big Apple on the East Coast - New York City. As of this moment, I am glad to say that me and my band 'god' have just finished recording and mixing our newest record. This still leaves getting the tiger pressed for us, but the hard part is over - the music is finished (and let me tell you, without plucking my own harp, it's absolutely fantastic). At the close of my last article, I promised to share some of my 'funky' recording techniques for the trumpeter of tomorrow, so here are some of the tricks I have most recently implemented into our new album, 'GOD'S GREATEST HITS Vol. II.'

**MULTIPLE HARP TRACKING** - This one is pretty obvious, so I was initially hesitant to even list it, but it is an option that one should always keep in mind when tracking. As all of you know, when playing a series of different notes with different harps, it's fairly impossible to switch Jew's Harps between each beat and keep in time. With multiple tracking, we now have the option of harmonizing different harp tones as well as creating a sequence of different notes to create a more distinctive melody. The other option is to line up several players with their respective harps (another technique we used) to pluck out the series of harp drones.

**BACKWARDS TRUMPING** - Ever since the sixties, backwards masking has become a major fad in rock'n'roll music and in the sound designs of various films. If it's done right and without too much flash, a backwards track can really provide a strange and disconcerting bed of twisted noise. With the Jew's Harp, backwards tracking seems to exaggerate the unusual volume pull that the instrument already has. The most common tendency with this effect on the harp is for the swell of the pluck to become the highest point that the sound crescendos to. Basically, instead of the trump twang that always follows any pluck, it precedes it and gets louder in volume. In one case of tracking a brief mouth jam on the 'god' record, we laid down a backwards harp track (I was playing the blackfire Szilágyi in 'A' - mighty bright and loud). We then recorded a forward track against the backwards harp, trying to align the forward plucks with the backwards. So, in essence, the harp sound would kinda look like this....

ddddddddddTWANGbbbbbbbbbb

Yes, yes, I know - you think I'm completely deranged now, but it WORKS! The other mouth instruments we did some backwards tracking on were Wayland Harman's Ridgebow (creating some highly unusual beats of music) and the Phillipino Kubing. The Kubing is one of my faves for backwards masking because I like to create various talking noises through it. Played backwards, this sounds like a confused robot that keeps walking straight into a wall over and over.

**PLAY THE SUSTAIN** - One of the major advantages to working in a recording situation with some semi-decent equipment is the control you can have over how much of any given instrument gets heard. In the case of the Jew's Harp, we've generally used the instrument to some recognizable effect in context of our music; however, in one case, we were able to record our harp and then remove the initial pluck, so that only the sustain was heard. Most trumps don't really have too much of a sustain on them - one good pluck on a Schlutter or a Coalfire or even a Whitlow won't hold out more than two or three seconds. As much as I hate to be shameless in my plugs, Bill Gohring's handmade advanced Jew's Harp model has the greatest sustain of any harp I've ever had the pleasure of plucking. Given the right amount of breath behind a single pluck on his harp, the sustain can last up to nearly five seconds. In the case of Bill's model, we inserted the sustained 'buzz' of his harp at the end of certain phrases in a passage of music. We then panned this sound from left to right for the two seconds or so that it was present. The effect is one of a whooshing buzz and nearly suggests a cleansing of the singer's tormented soul in context of the song in which it is used: '7:13 AM.' Ultimately, this use of the harp leaves very little for folks to easily recognize as the Jew's Harp, and that, to me, is a fine and good thing.

**These are two examples** of some of the more unusual recording techniques we used. In many cases, we just wanted the simple sound of the Jew's Harp straight in the recording. For those situations, it was a matter of finding a good microphone (I found our Rode Condenser NT1 worked best straight at the mouth) and throwing a little reverb on the track to give the harp a little more beef. There are certainly many more things that one can do with studio trickery to alter the familiarity of our beloved Jew's Harp, but sometimes a more simple and straightforward approach says a lot more than a skewed one that gets lost in technological haze.

For more information on Mugwump Jizm's newest recording with the band 'god', go to their website online at [www.lickgod.com](http://www.lickgod.com). Ψ

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### North American Jew's Harp Festival 1997 Highlights CD

The CD features 20 of the best Public Domain, spontaneous music, or original composition performances of the 1997 festival. The CD was well accepted at the Molin Congress.



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## More CDs

Reviews by Fred Crane

**In the two years since I last reviewed CDs,** there have been more new issues than you can shake a stick at. It's true-I tried with my own stick, and it can't be done. The present reviews are in no particular order-I just started at the top of my stack and worked down. I have given ordering information as much as possible. The CDs published by commercial record companies can usually be ordered from such dealers as Tower Records and Amazon.com.

**Heilo HCD 7136 (1999), Ånon Egeland. Issued in the U.S. as NorthSide NSD6037 (1999).** Ånon Egeland, Ånon. Ånon Egeland is a much respected collector, researcher, and performer of Norwegian traditional music. He is heard here in his first solo album. A virtuoso on the Hardanger fiddle, Ånon also plays here fiddle, seljefløyte, traditional recorders, English guitar, and munnharpe, with the collaboration of associates on quite a few of the tracks. Four of the 23 tracks are munnharpe solos (and the instrument is listed for an ensemble track as well, but evidently only in a drone function). Ånon is also a master of the unique Norwegian munnharpe style. Much in evidence here are the mixture of tones with closed and open glottis, and the rhythms, in which plucking and phrasing contradict the beat to the extent that my non-Norwegian head spins! (For a little help, see the notation of "Nordafjells" in VIM 8, p. 48.) Incidentally, Ånon is a very gifted calligrapher; the CD's cover has his name magically transformed into a Viking ship.

**NorthSide NSD6011 (1998). Tapani Varis, Jews Harp.** The American issue of Kansanmusiikki-instituutti KICD 46, which I reviewed in VIM 6.

**Tzadik TZ 7216. Makigami Koichi and Anton Bruhin, Electric Eel (1998).** I would have said that there could be no avant garde in the trumping world, but this record is the exception that proves the rule. And, like so much consciously avant-garde music, it falls a bit short of its aspirations. Makigami's work is not without merit and interest, but the kinds of nontraditional vocal techniques he uses have been displayed with more impressive virtuosity and more compelling technique by Joan La Barbara, François Dufréne, Carlos Santos, and others, not to mention (with respect to the heavy breathing) in the traditional music of the Dorzé of Ethiopia and the Inuit of Hudson's Bay. Anton Bruhin plays a background or accompanying role, which probably keeps him from demonstrating the phenomenal art we are used to from him. I don't mean to say that the record is not valuable. It displays an excellent variety of the results that Bruhin draws from his E.T. (Electric Trump). There is much variety among the seven tracks. Tadagawa Leo, and excellent musician and trumpeter in his own right, contributes to two tracks; one of these, no. 4, is a fine showcase for three trumps. Track 5 is evidently played on two very low-pitched Szilyágyi dorombs, whose sonorities are well demonstrated.

**Antropodium ATP002-99PHB (1999). Phons Bakx & musici/musicians, Muziek rond de gedachtenverdrijver/Music**

**and the Dispel of Thoughts.** Charm is the predominant effect of Phons Bakx's second CD. It is the effect of several tradition-derived tracks by Phons and Friends (Ireland, Sardinia, North America, Indonesia), and of the eight tracks that end the record-early (1986-87) overdubbed recordings by Bakx on three to five trumps. Even the six trump duets by Enno Meijers and Bakx that are interspersed, though less rollicking, are not without their surface charms. These are for trumps pitched at various intervals from each other, from a minor second to a fifth apart. They are kind of a revelation-I would have said that duets should be played by trumps in the same key, but these work perfectly, compellingly; each interval between the two trumps brings its own character to the music. (There are more samples on the CD set from the Molln Congress reviewed below.) The detailed booklet comes either in Dutch or English. Order from Antropodium, Van Bourgundielaan 32, NL-4333 LR St. Laurens/Middelburg, The Netherlands. Enclose banknotes for 45 Dutch guilders, or US\$22.00, or 132 French francs; or order from [www.zeelandnet.nl/paclax/jewsharp](http://www.zeelandnet.nl/paclax/jewsharp).

**North American Jew's Harp Festival, 1997 Highlights (1997).** Yeah, it's not the same as being there, but it's a great sample of what's heard. The 20 tracks were recorded live at the 6th annual Festival, at Richland, Oregon, August 15-17. There's a predominance of American country and traditional music, along with several improvisations and a little pop. There's no dull moment in this selection from the Festival's two and a half days of nonstop music. Several of the great trumpeters are represented, including Larry Hanks, Bill Gohring (who played "Turkey in the Straw" for me, when I claimed that it couldn't be done on the trump-I had to publicly admit my error), and Gordon Frazier (brilliant on "Five Foot Two," unlikely though it might seem for a trump solo). The major revelation of the festival for me had been the playing of Jules DeGiulio, represented here by a wonderful improvisation that starts off easy, then turns into a riot of staccatissimo tones joined with a variety of longer tones; at a couple of points, things coalesced into very buzzy strains of (I think) "Turkey in the Straw" and "Rabbit in the Pea Patch." Another of my favorites is "Jew's Harp Bill," adapted by Janet and Bill Gohring from a 1930 recording. Order from The Jew's Harp Guild [www.jewsharpguild.org](http://www.jewsharpguild.org) / or from [www.zeelandnet.nl/paclax/jewsharp](http://www.zeelandnet.nl/paclax/jewsharp).

**Nihon Koukin Kyoukai NKK002 (2000). Fedora Gogoleva, Albina Degtyaryova, and Olga Podluzhnaya, Summer is Coming.** Texts in Sakha, Japanese, and English. This may be the best sample yet of the traditional musical arts of the Sakha people. The three performers are master practitioners of the Sakha vocal and khomus styles. Gogoleva is the daughter of one of the most distinguished of khomus makers; she is recognized as one of the great players. Degtyaryova is outstanding both as singer and khomusist; she teaches the instrument at the National Musical College in Yakutsk. Her student Podluzhnaya is of Ukrainian ancestry, but has devoted herself to the culture of her native Yakutia. She was 13 when these recordings were made-her performance is another example of a worldwide phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st centuries: teenagers who show fully adult technique, musicianship, and interpretive so-

phistication. Of the 25 tracks, ten are vocal solos or duets, nine are khomus solos, three khomus duos, and three combine voice and khomus in various ways. This disk is highly recommended for anyone who would like to gain some insight into Sakha khomus music through familiarity with the vocal styles. And it joins several others that provide great examples of khomus-playing itself. It may be ordered from Nihon Koukin Kyoukai, 1-12-24, Midorigaoka, Ageo, Saitama 362-0015, Japan.

**Robert Zagretdinov, Vargan (1998).** It is wonderful to have a broad sample of the art of Robert Zagretdinov, one of the premier trump virtuosos of our time, notable for the breadth of his repertory, styles, and techniques. Zagretdinov plays kubyz on all 30 tracks; the majority of these are traditional tunes from his native Bashkiria and many other parts of the world (British and American listeners will recognize two familiar tunes whose names have become lost in retranslation). Most of these have the accompaniment of a brilliant but anonymous button accordionist; often in fact, it is the accordion that has the melody, while Zagretdinov plays counterrhythms and -melodies. He also sings, sometimes with overtones. There is great variety here. Some pieces are at breakneck speed. Several are in minor; I have never been able to understand how the trump, which is solidly based in the major triad, can adapt perfectly to minor; maybe the accompaniment's chords take over. I readily confess, though, that my favorites are the six improvisations. These show Zagretdinov's technique and imagination in all their richness. All of them have titles: "The Universe" has electronics as background; "Morning" has recorded morning bird sounds; "Ufa-Moscow" is a train imitation, played on two kubyzes of Zagretdinov's own invention, first on an instrument with variable fundamental pitch, then on an electronic kubyz with continuous tone.

**RecRec 985 000 12. Travels with a Trump. Anton Bruhin, the Jew's Harp Player. Original Soundtrack of Trümpi, a film by Iwan Schumacher (1999).** By now, all the major trumpists I know of are rather well represented on CDs with the exception of the Americans, none of whom have more than a few selections. The present one is Anton Bruhin's second, not to count several on which he has a few tracks only. The record documents a trümpi trip around the world; variety is the word for it. On five tracks, Bruhin plays alone—these already show much variety; three are for his E.T. On ten others, he plays together with from one to six others. From Sakha/Yakutia, there are two solos by the major khomusists Spiridon Shishigin and Fedora Gogoleva, and one duo. The styles vary enormously, from the Alpine folk style, through Sakha improvisation, to the most avant-garde (no. 10, a duo with Tadagawa Leo, is . . . well, not pretty!). The whole is a marvelous sample of what's up in the trumping world today, with one of the all-time great players at the focal point.

**ATS Records CD-0513. International Jew's Harp Festival/Internationales Maultrommelfestival, Molln, Austria '98. 2 CDs (1999).** The prime revelation of the Third International Congress and Festival, held at Molln in June 1988, was of the vast variety of ways in which the trump is used today. Allied to this is the rapid internationalization of styles and techniques, as those indigenous to each area become adopted or adapted else-

where. This double CD, with its well over two hours of music, attests to both the diversity and the cross-pollination that were displayed. In a small space, I can do no more than hint at the diversity. The set has samples of playing from 18 geographical units of North America, Europe, and Asia. Many of today's greatest players are represented. But there is marvelous work here by unknown or little-known trumpists. For example, a composed (as opposed to improvised) solo by Wayne Hankin of the USA, with spoken words simultaneous with the trumping, and the complete 18-minute brilliant performance by Bolot Bairyshev of Altai on trump, top-shur, and with a considerable repertory of different vocal styles. The set also provides a good introduction to traditional wind and string instruments of many peoples, and to many Asian vocal styles. For all this diversity, another CD is on the way with still more samples. The sound of this all-live recording is outstanding. The set comes with a detailed 20-page booklet in two copies, one in German and one in English.

**Heilo HCD 7149 (1999). Hallgrim Berg & Erik Røine, Munnharpa.** Berg and Røine are masters of the European tradition, Norwegian division; they "have a combined total of eighty years experience as virtuoso performers." Most of their 24 tracks are traditional dance tunes. Just half of them are springars; these might be considered to be the heart of the record. The dance is in triple time, mostly with stomping on the third and first beats. It is the plucking that is remarkable. One is used to plucking on the beat, but the rule here is that the plucks instead conform to the beginnings of small melodic figures of one, two, or a few notes, and are thus irregular, and very commonly off the beat. Breath accents are also often off the beat, and sometimes even the stomping is syncopated. The hallings and other duple-meter dances tend to be more regular in their rhythms. But overall, it is variety that most characterizes this record. There are four duos, two with the two munnharper tuned a fifth apart. There are a few "listening pieces." Track 7 has a lovely flute-like melody floating above the done. Track 21 is a hallingspringar, which means that the measure has  $2 + 3 = 5$  beats. And so much more could be said, as is the case with all of these CDs. Ψ

*At no matter what level you play at,  
it is the sound and uniqueness of the  
harp that has taken you there.*

(Quote submitted by Craig Clark of PA.)

## JEW'S HARP & SOLSTICE 2000

### More Molln Memories (June 23-25, 2000)

A report from Pat Chappelle (London)

**The 1998 International Jew's Harp Congress in Molln** was such a successful event, almost doubling the 4000 population of this little Austrian village, that (joint coordinator) Heinz Anzinger - picking me up from Linz airport for the follow-up "Maultrommel & Sonnenwende 2000" - was visibly concerned that this smaller, now hopefully annual, event might be a disappointing anticlimax. He needn't have worried. For myself, having missed the previous event, I had only avid anticipation for a concert bill that included three of my favourite jew's harpists (Anton Bruhin, Tran Quang Hai, John Wright), and the chance to meet and play with people I had never before met, but I knew were friends already due to our shared passion for this little instrument.

Heinz and I, along with Leo Tadagawa of the Japanese Jew's Harp Association and Swiss maestro and innovator Anton Bruhin, were first to arrive at the restaurant/bar which soon filled up for the Friday night get-together, where bags and boxes (some very ornate) full of trumps (ditto) from every corner of the planet were spread out over the tables, for perusal, comparison, trying out, and every so often for a show of virtuosity that would unite the throng in spontaneous applause - a wonderfully non-elitist atmosphere, with appreciation for everyone from Tran Quang Hai's ethereal overtone singing, to the local lad, probably only 12 or 13 years old, who showed great proficiency switching between two harps on an Austrian folk melody. Tired (and not a little inebriated!) I left around midnight for my Gasthaus; the session apparently went on till 3 a.m.!

Next day, we visited the museum in Molln which now has a permanent exhibition showing the history of maultrommel (jew's harp) production in the area. It may be a small village, but for several centuries now it has been the biggest manufacturer of jew's harps in Europe, and possibly in the world, turning out some 2 million a year in the early 19th century, and still around 1 million today. Among a good collection of instruments there it was interesting to see the various types that have evolved in different countries, from the heavy round iron harps of Sardinia to the two-tongued metal and bamboo construction from Formosa (Taiwan).

Next, we drove across the beautiful countryside (wide green valley flanked by mountains) to the home of Franz Wimmer, one of the three craftsmen in the area making maultrommeln. He demonstrated how he first bends the wire to shape the frame of the instrument, then hammers the tongue into position. His workshop is also a mini-museum, with photographs showing him with tribespeople from all corners of the globe - this man obviously likes to travel!

And so to the main event, the Saturday evening concert. The weather had been kind, campers had been arriving all day, and the tent was packed full before the skies suddenly opened to provide a pattering soundtrack on the canvas that continued until just before the music finished. And in that time I was

transported to jew's harp heaven! Ramesh Shotham of India, who was on the bill, didn't turn up, but Jerzy Andruszko (Poland) and Sven Westad (Norway), who weren't, did, and the quality of playing was as high as the variety of performances was wide: from the guitar, tuba and trump trio of the Mollner Maultrommler (featuring co-organizer Manfred Russman), to Anton Bruhin's electro-trump, to the incredible high-speed spoons-playing of the versatile Tran Quang Hai.

Many people left when the final act - known as Fat Booty, a trio comprising glass didgeridoo and two synthesizers (and no trumps) - took to the stage, but they missed the climax of the show when Manfred invited everyone - including drummers, harmonica players, vocalists and trumpists - to join in for a giant jam session. Many people had asked me earlier whether I was going to be performing on stage, and I (being in reality a very bad jew's harp player) had merely laughed and said no way, but such was the exuberance of the occasion that I grabbed my kubin (bamboo jew's harp) and joined the throng onstage, switching after a while to Coke bottle for a little jug-band-style rhythm. I don't know how musical it was (I hope someone recorded it), but the hoopin' and hollerin' told that everyone enjoyed it. People then stuck around for more impromptu jamming around the tables, and the organizers had a struggle getting everyone to leave before 4 a.m.!

### ...the International Congress for 2001 will be held in Setesdal Norway

Sunday was a day to wind down, but the music was not finished, and further brief performance slots on stage allowed us to see more of the previous night's stars, as well as other musicians playing not just jew's harps, but other exotic instrumentation such as pipes, didgeridoos, and a very long and beautiful-sounding wind instrument called a fujara. And then it was over, but my appetite was merely whetted for more. Sven Westad told me that the International Congress for 2001 will be held in Setesdal, Norway, probably in the third week of July, so it's time to start saving!

Monday, music over, but I found yet another strange instrument, in the collection of Leo Tadagawa, who with Anton Bruhin was being driven back to the train station with us. Based on an original invention by Robert Zagretdinov, this was a slide jew's harp, comprising an elongated tongue that produced a lower or higher fundamental note depending where the slide mechanism stopped it. A trigger worked the slide, and the whole thing was in the shape of a pistol - we wondered what reaction it might get if discovered at the airport security check!

Then it was back to earth with a bump, as delayed by striking air-traffic controllers in France and computer failures in London, I arrived home two hours late. I had been disappointed that her busy work schedule had not allowed my wife Tessa to come with me to Austria, but it had been as well, as on the Friday she had discovered a sudden leak in our bathroom that has destroyed the ceiling below - goodness knows what we'd have found on Monday if we'd both gone!Ψ

## MOUTHING OFF with Wayland Harman Playing the mouthbow

The mouthbow is played in a similar manner to the trumpet. Both utilize variance in the mouth cavity to accent harmonics. With a mouthbow, a tunable string allows changes in the instrument's fundamental pitch, while the trumpet is at a fixed pitch. Many mouthbow performances feature pitch changes of the string by flexing the bow; in fact this is the most audible of playing the mouthbow. The harmonics are typically too soft for an audience to hear. Nonetheless, these harmonics are quite apparent to the player and with careful mouthbow construction and very focused microphone techniques, can be made musically useful in a performance environment.

Hold the mouthbow at about its center of gravity with your weaker hand, and with the string away from you. Place the end where it is most resonant up to slightly opened lips. Experiment to find where you get good tones. This arrangement leaves your dominant hand free to strike or pluck the string. A detailed description of each aspect will follow.

The hand holding the bow can, depending on the instrument design, also serve as a string mute. I use my index finger to create a stop in the drone, which adds rhythmic interest. When the stop is released in perfect time with the string pluck, a harmonic is produced similar to that of a guitar. Finding a harmonic node along the string's length may require moving the bow from its center of gravity. When this string harmonic is accurately reinforced by the resonance of the mouth cavity, a strong note can be sounded. This finger can also pluck the string, and will sound slightly different than the plucking or striking of the string close to the end.

**Plucking the string can be done many ways** including: guitar or finger picks, bare fingers and fingernails, struck with a small baton (stick), bowed like a violin or by hitting the frame, such as happens if you rake a stick over a series of notches in the bow frame. In one ancient design, a small quill is placed on the string and the player forcefully blows on the reed followed by a moment of playing the string. This pattern then repeats. This is the only mouthbow I am aware of that uses airflow.

My personal favorite is to strike the string with a wooden conductor's baton (the fiberglass ones break up). It's fairly easy to stay in rhythm and some fancy double and triple bounces can be done. The direction of the baton's impact is a benefit on the style of bow I use as more energy is moving front to back, i.e. toward and away from my mouth. A guitar pick sends more energy side to side which isn't as useful.

I encourage you to try many ways of plucking, striking and coercing the string to life. Each has something unique and all are worth exploring. A current daydream of mine is to build a very large mouth bow, designed for team playing. Several players could strike and bow the string and 1 or more could play the harmonics.

**To say that the mouth performs** the same movements as when playing a trumpet is not quite true but still a good starting point. The mouthbow requires very accurate resonance matches to produce good strong harmonics. Changes in overall mouth

cavity size are more important than the shape. If the mouthbow wasn't such a struggle to get any volume out of then this might not be so inherent in the playing. The wonderful vowel variations possible on the trumpet are much less prevalent with the mouthbow. I believe it is in the very nature of a vibrating reed to have a more complex vibrating pattern; thus more of a cloudy nature which allows vowels and some cheating out of notes which normally would not be found in the harmonic series of the trumpet's fundamental pitch. The advantage in this limitation, is the flutelike purity of the harmonics when you really nail one. Nothing else sounds like a mouthbow!

Although typically unaided by airflow as with the trumpet, the mouthbow still has a long sustain time. The decay rate for a string is much longer than for a free reed. To use this sustain in performance requires extreme microphone placement. It is possible to play into a fairly hot SM57 on stage as long as the rest of the band holds way back to let you be heard. The audience will hear your strikes and plucks and a bit of a whistle from the harmonics. You will need to keep your mouth very close to the microphone, and will most likely find yourself relying on the extra punch of the strike; not the beautiful sustained harmonics.

**There is a solution**, extreme but effective. Instead of mic-ing the area outside of the mouth (an area filled with non-harmonic sound such as the strings drone and the rest of the band and audience); try mic-ing the area inside the mouth. This is where the individual harmonics live.

I have said regarding my mouthbow designs that; any sound, which doesn't go into your mouth, is working against you. This microphone technique takes that approach a step further, by capturing the harmonics before they leave your mouth. It may be necessary to use a second microphone to pick up a little drone sound and mix it into the mouth mic.

Experiments with both electrical and semi-mechanical methods of pulling the sounds from the corner of the mouth have been successful to a point. Obviously having a little microphone tucked into the corner of your mouth while playing these instruments is a bit inconvenient. My especially shaped funnel is not much better but uses a better quality microphone. In addition to the discomfort of the appliance, there is the problem of unwanted mouth sounds, saliva clicks and the tongue hitting the microphone. Some consideration and adjustments must be made in the playing to avoid these problems. The instrument will also need to be shifted from the center, over to the side to keep the string from contacting the appliance.

**OK, so it's not perfect**, however, I find the results are worth the trouble. Now the audience can hear why I am so fascinated by the mouthbow, even when the band is playing. The sustained whispers can be boosted to compete with an electric guitar. The mouthbow can carry the rhythm and the band can follow. It is such a thrill to know that the audience can hear me, now if I can just loose the appliance. Any dentists out there with a strong interest in microelectronics? Ψ