



THE GALPIN SOCIETY
FOR THE STUDY OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

NEWSLETTER NO. 74
SPRING 2026



IN THIS ISSUE:

Contacts	2
Editorial, and Galpin Society News	3
Advertisements	5
Letters to the Editor	6
Announcements, Events, Calls for Papers & Notices	7
Recent Publications	10

FEATURE ARTICLES

The OHMI Trust – Enabling Music-Making for People with Physical Disabilities, by Rachel Wolffsohn	11
In search of a changeable harpsichord, or two, or three, by David Shuker	15
The rediscovery of an early English bass recorder in Dublin: A preliminary report, by Simon Waters & Colin Hamilton	18
Early Music’s supporting act: Continuo Connect, by Ashutosh Khandekar.	23

THE GALPIN SOCIETY

Registered Charity no. 306012
<https://www.galpinsociety.org/>



In all email addresses replace [at] with @

President and Vice-Chair of the Trustees: Arnold Myers a.myers[at]ed.ac.uk

Vice-Presidents: Margaret Birley, Maggie Kilbey, Graham Wells,
The Master of the Worshipful Company of Musicians

Journal Editorial Committee: Gabriele Rossi Rognoni, Karen Loomis,
Rachael Durkin, Simon Waters, Cassandre Balosso-Bardin

Journal Editorial Assistant: Arianna Rigamonti editor[at]galpinsociety.org

Journal Editor and Advertising Manager: Heike Fricke journal[at]galpinsociety.org

Newsletter Editor, Administrator: Christopher Goodwin admin[at]galpinsociety.org

Reviews Editor: Karen Loomis karen[at]karenloomis.com

Archivist, Minutes Secretary: Diana Wells dianaswells[at]aol.com

Chair of the Trustees: Gabriele Rossi Rognoni g.rossirognoni[at]rcm.ac.uk

Trustees: Cassandre Balosso-Bardin, Sabine Klaus, Karen Loomis, Arnold Myers,
Bradley Strauchen-Scherer, Mimi Waitzman, Simon Waters, Diana Wells,
Owen Woods, Heike Fricke, Gabriele Rossi Rognoni

The Galpin Society Newsletter is currently edited and typeset by Christopher Goodwin. Opinions expressed by authors in this newsletter are not specifically endorsed by The Galpin Society.

EDITORIAL AND GALPIN SOCIETY NEWS



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



Galpin Society Conference, 17th–19th June 2026: Sound Stories Registration now open!

Registration is now open for the joint Galpin Society and UKRI Global Music Technologies conference in Newcastle Upon Tyne this June! Information about the conference, and a link to register your place, can be found here (booking closes 1st June) <https://soundstories2026.wordpress.com/#registration>

Please note that Galpin members are eligible for a discounted rate on both the standard and concession fee. Fees cover refreshments and lunch on all three days, plus one ticket for the closing banquet at The Biscuit Factory.

The Galpin Society Conference will be hosted by Northumbria University in Newcastle Upon Tyne; it is a joint conference with the UKRI Global Music Technologies research group. The conference aims to expand the horizons of organology; to reassess our modus operandi; to not only address gaps in research, but to probe why such lacunae exist. As such, topics addressing overlooked or novel analytical approaches, instruments, musics, eras, geographies, makers, materials, production/distribution methods, and so on, are especially welcome. The conference seeks to bring diverse voices, studies, and musics together to help us better understand the interconnectedness of musical instruments, from the earliest Neanderthal flutes

to the latest virtual instruments, to forge a new definition of what organology is and can be.

To that end, those from academic backgrounds beyond traditional organology and Western musicology, from all career stages (including ECR), and from any sector (universities, museums, independent researchers, makers etc) have been encouraged to present in range of formats. Various training and networking opportunities will be scheduled throughout the conference.

This is the first time the conference has been held in northeast England, and will be marking the donation of Jeremy Montagu's collection to Northumbria University in 2022. The conference will take place 17th–19th June 2026. The call for papers has now closed. Visit the website at <https://soundstories2026.wordpress.com/> as plans advance.

Thank you Michael, welcome Heike!

As Shakespeare said, when sorrows come, they come not as single spies but in battalions. Very shortly after the retirement of Lance Whitehead as Editor of our Journal on grounds of health, we were forced to accept to retirement of Michael Fleming, also for health reasons. Michael had been Editor of the Journal from 2005, taking over from Charles Mould, and also taking on the typesetting which had previously been done by O.U.P. He resigned as Editor in about 2011–2012 in order to concentrate on his research, but continued to typeset the journal and manage its production, also serving as Advertising Manager from around 2019, following Andrew Lamb's resignation from that task. His enforced retirement might have left the *GSJ* in a very difficult position, but fortunately Heike Fricke, who has considerable publishing experience, has taken over this rather technical role and so this year's Journal is now at a very advanced stage of production, and should be with current subscribers not much later than in a less disaster-struck year. So a very hearty thank you is owed both to Michael for past labours and to Heike for labours to come.

It's still not too late to renew your subscription

This slight delay in our activities means that members who have not renewed for this year still have time to do so. If you have received a reminder (three have been sent in recent months!) but have not yet responded, please do so now. Paypal is the easiest way, giving your membership number, at <https://www.galpinsociety.org/subscriptions.htm>. Just ask the Administrator if you can't remember it, or need an invoice, or need our bank details to transfer funds. We always have a few dozen extra copies printed, but these do tend to go quite quickly.

New JSTOR url and passcode

As you probably know, copies of individual articles in *The Galpin Society Journal* are available from the JSTOR website, five years after publication. JSTOR's Register & Read service enables anyone who registers with JSTOR to read online,

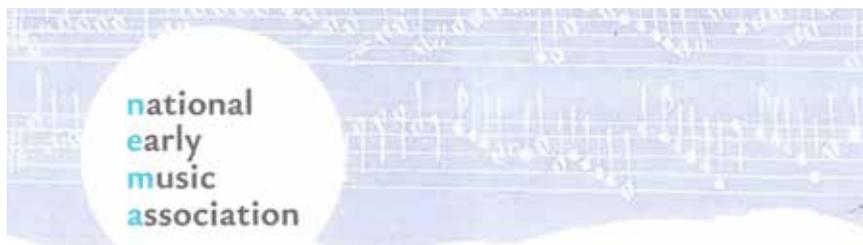
for free, six articles from the archive every 30 days. In addition, a number of universities in the US and GB offer their alumni access to JSTOR.

In addition JSTOR offer non-institutional members of the Galpin Society a 50% discount on JPASS, a 1-year access plan for individuals (\$99 instead of the usual \$199). JPASS includes unlimited reading and 120 article downloads, not only to the *GSJ*, but also to more than 1,500 humanities, social science, and science journals in the JSTOR archival collections.

For more information see <https://www.jstor.org/jpass/>. Once you have paid your subscription in full, contact the GS Administrator for a code to access the purchase website. Here is the url for the JPASS scheme: https://www.jstor.org/action/jpass?lookupKey=S1BBU1MtSS1ZZWFy&discountCode=Z3NqLWpwYXNzLTUwLX-NvY2lldHktZGlzY291bnQ=&utm_source=society&utm_campaign=GSJ. Contact the administrator for the discount code, which has recently changed.

David Rachor

We are very sorry to hear of the passing of David Rachor, in September 2025 after a few months of illness. He had been a faithful member for many years, and contributions by him can be found in volumes 57 and 64 of our journal, and several issues of *FoMRHI Quarterly* to boot, on his expert topic of historical bassoons.



The National Early Music Association was founded in 1981 after the important 1977 conference in London, 'The future of early music in Britain'.

NEMA brings together the main strands of early music across the country, providing a national hub to promote the appreciation, understanding and performance of Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music.

NEMA works alongside the well-established network of regional early music forums which run practical workshops and courses across the UK.

NEMA also publishes research and news through its various journals which are available to all online.

Subscribe to our free mailing list to receive regular updates.

www.nema.org.uk
Registered Charity 297300



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Does anyone know of Stephen Bonner?

I write to inquire about Stephen Bonner, organologist and author of the 1970 *Aeolian Harp* book series. He wrote a review for the *Galpin Society Journal* in 1999, and references to his work have come up in *GSJ* articles a handful of times, including reviews of his books. He was a founder of Bois de Boulogne, a small 1970s imprint out of Cambridge that published books exclusively about organology.

I am an independent researcher in the United States currently writing a history of the aeolian harp. While I have been able to expand on many of the questions proposed by his research into the instrument, I am at a loss in finding very much of anything about the man himself. Is he living? In good health? How might I contact him, if so?

I imagined that the Galpin Society might be a good place to start with these inquiries, given its extensive connections within British organology.

Thank you—L L Gaddy III gaddyiii@gmail.com

Does anyone know of a 1683 Guarracino virginal?

I am working on a list of Guarracino instruments, and write to ask, does anyone know of the whereabouts of the 1683 Guarracino virginal described in Boalch (BMO 595, and illustrated) as belonging to R.T. Boston?

Kind regards

Dr. Denzil Wraight
Burgstr. 11
34311 Naumburg
Tel. 05625 923832
encr4873@denzilwraight.com
<https://www.denzilwraight.com>

ANNOUNCEMENTS, EVENTS, CALLS FOR PAPERS & NOTICES

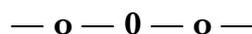
Developments at MIRCat (Musical Instrument Research Catalog)

Margaret Debenham has let us know that by invitation of Tom Strange and John Watson she now has a section on the new MIRcat site archiving her research findings. With a lot of technical help from John, has consolidated her 2013 article on the instrument maker and inventor William Southwell (1736/7–1825) with a supplement of all the various timelines to make one book-sized downloadable pdf. A list of her other research papers in the field are mostly available for free download via the site (just one or two journal published ones requiring an institutional log in). See: <https://mircat.org/moa/exchanges/x-debenham.html>

The MIRCat Library at <https://mircat.org/moa/> provides open access to archival resources of four types: **MIRCat Exchange**, where you can browse published and unpublished research, notes, examination reports, lecture texts, and photographs, shared by scholars and researchers; **Archival Editions** where you can read or download new electronic publications or antiquarian and archival editions of books, monographs, and catalogues; **Journals**, namely *Archive of the Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*, and *Harpichord & Fortepiano Magazine*; and **Special Collections** where you can explore the catalogued papers and photographs of significant scholars in the organology specialty.

Of these, MIRCat Exchange has sections headed AMIS, SIGAL music museum, Laurence Libin, David Rachor, Margaret Debenham, Peter Adams, and David Hunt.

The website says: ‘If you have original or copyright-free resources you wish to share, please contact the archivist to discuss. We welcome constructive contributions that explore all aspects of musical instruments. To maintain a respectful and trustworthy space, submissions must be free of plagiarism, libel, and copyright violations. Content is subject to review to ensure it aligns with standards of fairness and integrity. Enjoy the resources and remember always to credit the sources.’



Call for Participants: Musicians & Instrument Makers

Are you a musician or instrument maker working with historical instruments (originals or copies)? We are running an online research study exploring how performers and makers engage with these instruments in different yet complementary ways. To participate please use the following link:

https://york.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1TjgECSPWiUEmSG

Please feel free to share this invitation with others who may be interested!

The research team:

Andrea Schiavio (York)

Emily Worthington (York)

Noah Henry (York)

Joel Speerstra (Gothenburg)

Massimiliano Guido (Pavia)

Remake Permanent Seminar Series

We are thrilled to announce the launch of our Permanent Seminar Series, a new monthly forum dedicated to exploring key themes and breakthroughs within the REM@KE ecosystem.

We invite researchers, partners, and enthusiasts to join us on the fourth Friday of every month for an hour of deep-dive discussion and collaborative Q&A.

The Format:

30–45 Minute Talk: Featuring project leaders and guest experts.

Q&A Session: An open floor for your questions and insights.

The list of forthcoming seminars can be found on our website:

<https://remake.unipv.it/notizia/launching-the-remake-permanent-seminar-series/>

We are delighted to inaugurate the series with our first guest speaker, Dr. John Watson, on Friday, February 27, starting at 17:00 CET. ‘Between Original and Copy: Observation and Interpretation as Encounter with the Past’

In this online seminar, Dr. John Watson shared his extensive experience in the study and reconstruction of antique keyboard instruments. The presentation explored the nuanced and complex role of interpretation in the conservation and reproduction of instruments, and in the value of replication for testing hypotheses about the past.

These theoretical frameworks were illustrated through two recent case studies:

- *The Mount Vernon Harpsichord*: A detailed look at the meticulous reconstruction of George Washington’s unrestored 1793 Longman & Broderip harpsichord, focusing on identifying and interpreting physical evidence toward recovery of the instrument’s original sound and its meaning to makers and first owners
- *The Upright Piano attributed to John Clemm*: An analysis of a unique instrument from an American Moravian community with circumstantial but compelling evidence that it bridges the gap to the seminal Hebenstreit-inspired school of piano making in 1720s Dresden.

Recommended reading

- John Watson. ‘A 1793 Longman & Broderip Harpsichord and its Replication: New Light on the Harpsichord-Piano Transition’. *The Galpin Society Journal* (2020) pp. 153–172
- John Watson. ‘A Small Upright Piano from Pennsylvania: Relic from the Origins of the Piano and Made by John Clemm?’ *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* (2022) pp. 5–29
- John Watson. ‘An Eighteenth-Century Harpsichord Workshop Contributes Two Important Technologies’ in *Eighteenth-Century Woodworking Tools: Papers Presented at a Tool Symposium*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (1997)

Following consultation with the copyright holder and publishers, these articles were made available on registration.

John Watson, Emeritus Conservator at Colonial Williamsburg, is a specialist in the history and conservation of keyboard instruments. He authored *Artifacts in Use: The Paradox of Restoration and built 34 reproduction instruments*. In retirement, his focus is the online Musical Instrument Research Catalog (MIRCat.org), designing and hosting its open-access library and databases including EarlyPianos.org and Boalch.org for harpsichords and clavichords. For his significant contributions to the field, Watson was honoured with the Curt Sachs Award in 2020 and the Anthony Baines Memorial Prize in 2024. John Watson is a member of the Board of Experts within the project REM@KE. Read more at: <https://remake.unipv.it/persona/john-watson/>

Sign up here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc9B_aTSddBDL_Vybx-63y1KFHBwsTihYOKUbNUuu-nE3nvaQ/viewform

The next seminar, on ‘Musical Instruments and Situated Cognition’ takes place on Friday 27th March, as 17.00 Central European Time (GMT+1), and will be led by Jonathan de Souza.

— o — 0 — o —

Terence Pamplin Award for Organology

This Award is made by the Musicians’ Company annually for research into the science and history of the development and construction of all acoustic musical instruments. It consists of a cash prize of up to £2,500 and a certificate. The closing date is 31 July 2026. For further details and application form go to – <https://www.wcom.org.uk/awards/terence-pamplin-award/>

— o — 0 — o —

Vacancy: Musical Instrument Conservator at Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, Germany

Dear colleagues,

I am happy to share the job offer for a musical instrument conservator at Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, Germany:

<https://bewerbermanagement.net/jobposting/fa37ade09148cdc56e986ecbad0b-2f929e8848381> (English)

<https://bewerbermanagement.net/jobposting/14776bf4962be8db267d-f0e0526adebb357d82290?ref=homepage> (German)

You can apply online in German or English.

Best wishes,

Frank P. Bär
Curator musical instrument collection
Germanisches Nationalmuseum

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Career Motivation, Job Satisfaction, and Emotional Fulfilment of Performance Librarians

Our own archivist Diana Wells commends this new study on libraries and librarians: *Career Motivation, Job Satisfaction, and Emotional Fulfilment of Performance Librarians: An International Quantitative Study*. You can access the full article at the following link:

<https://caml.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/caml/article/view/40519>. It is aimed at those who have an interest in music librarianship or orchestra librarianship.

Unsound Supplies: Noisy Matter and the Making of Modern Soundscapes

Fanny Gribenski, David Pantalony and Viktoria Tkaczyk (eds), *Unsound Supplies: Noisy Matter and the Making of Modern Soundscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2025).

The publication comprises ten chapters, each focusing on a specific material used in musical instrument making and the audio-communications industry from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Some of the many materials discussed in the book are steel, rubber, wax, paper, ivory, shellac, mahogany, and aluminium. Together, the chapters trace the geographically diverse and frequently colonial origins and extraction processes of these materials while also revealing their shifting values and meanings along supply chains.

With case studies ranging from violins and pianos to phonographs and telephones, the book will be interesting and useful especially for those working with musical instruments and sound in the context of material culture. For more details see:

<https://academic.oup.com/book/61568>

FEATURE ARTICLES

The OHMI Trust – Enabling Music-Making for People with Physical Disabilities, by Rachel Wolffsohn

Have you ever considered how you would play your instrument if you did not have full control of your hands/arms? For thousands of people with conditions affecting their upper limbs, music-making is virtually impossible given that most musical instruments, not just recorders, require the use of two highly dextrous hands/arms. Since 2011 the OHMI Trust has been trying to shine a spotlight on this issue—and finding solutions! OHMI was founded by Dr Stephen Hetherington after his own hemiplegic daughter, Amy, alerted him to the lack of instruments available to disabled musicians. The charity's objective is to remove the barriers to music-making faced by physically disabled people; an objective to be achieved through the development and production of suitable musical instruments.



Esther Mannouch (one-handed recorder), Sharon Gould (Harpsichord),
Jean Paterson (Violin) and Cressida Nash (Cello)

OHMI's instruments are sourced primarily through the OHMI Competition. The challenge of the competition is to create or adapt instruments so they can be played without the use of one hand and arm and without limiting their potential for virtuosity. The winning solutions can then be reworked for a variety of physical disabilities. Since 2013, entries have been received from around the world in all the three competition categories: Playable (for instruments playable without further development); Enabling (for equipment that makes a standard instrument playable, such as a harness or stand); and Concepts (for ideas that need development). The instruments

and equipment OHMI has acquired can be seen on the website, www.ohmi.org.uk. Options include solutions that would be applicable to many historical instruments, including recorders, bowed strings and guitars!

Recorders

In 2014 the AAFAB Gold Series wooden one-handed recorder, with keywork by Peter Worrell from the UK won the OHMI Competition. In 2018 we started exploring 3D printing techniques to produce a more affordable version of the instrument and now there are three levels—a 3D printed version with a Yamaha head joint, a plastic bodied version and the original AAFAB instrument for more advanced players. Having reworked the keywork during the development of the 3D printed recorder project, Peter is now able to retrofit the keywork system onto any standard recorder, which means players can choose their own instrument, or adapt a favourite instrument when circumstances require.

All Peter's one-handed recorders use the same fingering structure: the operating hand covers the usual four holes on the bottom half of the instrument (two of which are chromatic as usual) and then what would normally be the top (left) hand is replaced by keys operated by the bottom hand to allow the higher notes to be played. Its open note is a G rather than the sharp D# of a standard instrument. Mirror-image left- and right-handed versions are available.



One-Handed Descant recorder



The AAFAB/Peter Worrell Gold Series

Bowed String Supports

Bowed strings are more challenging than many instruments when an impairment affects a hand/arm. As neither hand is undertaking a solely mechanical action, it is tricky to replace. However, OHMI has created a silicone and foam support strap that fits over the bow stick and frog and can be cut to fit the hand/digits that are available and need to be supported. This makes bowing possible for people with missing digits or issues with the necessary bow hold as the bow is supported by the strap rather than the finger grip. The bow holders can be purchased directly from OHMI's website, <https://www.ohmi.org.uk/shop.html>



The OHMI Bow Holder

Guitar strumming mechanism

A device called the Strumbuddy was created with the ukulele in mind by Tavit Smith from the USA. However, the design could be adjusted to play chords on a renaissance guitar or any other chord-based guitar. The Strumbuddy is a sprung mechanism to hold a plectrum in a wooden frame, that fits around the body of the instrument. Control of the device is by a long cord which is slipped over the foot and this moves the plectrum up and down over the strings. The other hand is used on the fretboard to make the chords allowing the instrument of choice to be played.



Strumbuddy Mechanism

So what's this got to do with members of the Galpin Society?

1. You may have skills to make instruments, or parts of instruments, which would be invaluable to expand the range of instruments that are accessible to individuals with upper limb impairments. There is plenty of scope for new instrument makers to get involved in the creation of adapted instruments—historical or modern. We always have a waiting list of instruments that have been requested but we are not able to fulfil straight away, and the more people that find out about the work of OHMI, the more that list grows. We would love to hear from you (our email address is below!).

2. Perhaps you have acquired an injury or illness which has made it more difficult, or even impossible, for you to play your own instrument. The solutions listed here are a few of the more relevant ones for historical instruments, but OHMI is always happy to have a reason to explore new solutions for instruments where no option exists currently.

3. Maybe you teach others and have been asked to teach a student who has a disability and do not know how to facilitate their learning. Being aware of some possible alternatives means that you could open up new opportunities with that individual. <https://ohmiconnect.org.uk> offers much more information on the current solutions that might be relevant.

4. Or you might simply be looking for a music-related 'good cause' to support, either in your will or as a collection at a performance. As a small charity, we greatly welcome donations. Every penny goes towards helping to make music more inclusive. If there is anything we can do to support your performance, through information stands or presentations, we would be happy to help.

For more information, please see www.ohmi.org.uk or contact admin@ohmi.org.uk. Some instruments are available through the OHMI hire scheme, providing an easy entry into the world of adapted playing, whether as first instrument or later in life.



Author—Rachel Wolffsohn has been the General Manager of the OHMI Trust since 2014. Previously she was a secondary school music teacher. Her parents met through recorder playing and so this instrument has always been important to her. Her interest in the work of OHMI came about as she has a son who had a stroke aged two which has given him a permanent weakness on his right side.

**In search of a changeable harpsichord, or two, or three,
by David Shuker**



William Herschel



Dr Robert Smith

An advertisement¹ for a concert given by William Herschel (1738–1822) in Bath on 20th March 1772 includes a ‘Sonata on the Changeable Harpsichord’. This would appear to be the only reference to the use of a ‘changeable harpsichord’ in a concert during the eighteenth century.

The ‘changeable harpsichord’ was the name given to an instrument devised by Dr Robert Smith (1689–1768) of Trinity College Cambridge to address the problem of tuning a keyboard instrument that facilitated playing in the widest range of keys without the compromises required by choosing a particular temperament. The ‘changeable harpsichord’ was mentioned in the second edition of Smith’s *Harmonics, or, The Philosophy of Musical Sounds* published in 1757, to which was added in 1762 a Postscript describing in some detail how such an instrument was to be constructed, and mentioned that one had been made by Kirkman (presumably, Jacob Kirkman [1710–1792]). In his 1976 DPhil thesis, the late Charles Mould described in detail how Smith’s ‘changeable harpsichord’ was constructed and noted that he was unaware of any surviving harpsichord that corresponded to this instrument.²

So, where did William Herschel obtain a ‘changeable harpsichord’ and what happened to it afterwards? A careful search of newspaper databases has uncovered several references to ‘changeable harpsichords’ after the 1772 Bath concert that shed some light on these questions.

In an advertisement of 1772 the York-based harpsichord maker Thomas Haxby (1729–1794) is selling ‘very reasonably ... one of Dr Smith’s perfect harpsichords, as good as new’.³ The clear implication being that this is a second-hand instrument, possibly recently made. What appears to be the same instrument was still in Haxby’s possession in 1791 when a number of different harpsichords were being

advertised as being available from his warehouse including ‘A perfect Harpsichord of Dr Smith’s, Price Twenty Guineas’.⁴

A possible clue to the provenance of Haxby’s ‘perfect’ Smith harpsichord comes from information in an advertisement of an auction of music and musical instruments in Cambridge in 1809 including ‘...three [harpsichords] by Kirkman, one which is a changeable harpsichord, in a walnut tree case, with a swell of the date 1757, invented by and made for the late Dr Smith, Master of Trinity College, two only of this description having been made, the other belonging to the late Joah Bates.’⁵

The music and instruments in this auction were the property of ‘the late Jonathan Sharp, Organist of St John’s College’ who had actually died in 1794.⁶ Sharp’s widow, Sarah, had advertised the sale, by private treaty, of several instruments in November 1794. These were presumably part of a larger collection. Sarah Sharp’s death in October 1808 occasioned the sale of the remainder of the instruments.

The ‘changeable harpsichord’ mentioned in the 1809 advertisement clearly refers to the first instrument made by Kirkman in 1757 for Robert Smith.⁷ This perhaps suggests that this harpsichord was acquired by Jonathan Sharp after Robert Smith died in 1768 and thus remained in Cambridge until the 1809 sale.

The mention of a second ‘changeable harpsichord’ being made for Joah Bates is particularly interesting as it might suggest the source of the instrument mentioned in Haxby’s advertisement and the Bath concert. Joah Bates (1741–1799) studied music in Cambridge between 1760 and 1767 and in all likelihood would have encountered Robert Smith during that period. Bates and William Herschel were also well-acquainted as Herschel had been first violin in the famous performance of *Messiah* that Bates conducted in his home town of Halifax in 1766. Herschel moved to Bath in the same year and it is likely that Bates and Herschel would have stayed in touch. It is therefore possible that the ‘changeable harpsichord’ used by William Herschel in the 1772 Bath concert was the instrument made for Joah Bates.

The question then arises, did William Herschel have a particular interest in the possibilities offered by Smith’s ‘changeable harpsichord’, that is, the availability of remote keys with good tuning? A clue comes from one of William Herschel’s organ compositions dating from the time in Leeds when he was preparing for the competition in 1766 for the post of organist at Halifax Parish Church where a large new organ by Snetzler had been installed. Prelude No 11 in C major is entitled ‘Arbitrary Modulations’ and lives up to its title by moving through all the keys. On a mean-toned tuned organ, or harpsichord, chords in remote keys would be quite jarring on the ear.

In the late 1970s, the late harpsichord maker Christopher Stevens modified one of his own instruments to make a ‘changeable harpsichord’ based on Robert Smith’s description and it would be interesting to know if this instrument is still around—perhaps in a private collection.⁸ The 1998 article also mentions several occasions when the ‘changeable harpsichord’ was used in concerts—one at the Cleveland Lodge Summer School on 13th August 1981 and a second at the Holburne Museum in Bath on 12th November 1982. Do any recordings exist of these concerts?

The ‘changeable harpsichord’ is in many ways a minor footnote in musical history, but it also corresponds to a point in the life of William Herschel when he was on the threshold of his later career as an astronomer. It would therefore be very interesting to hear how this ‘experimental’ approach to the problem of tuning keyboard instruments sounded with his own compositions.

Charles Mould's 1976 conclusions aside that the original 'changeable harpsichord[s]' made by Kirkman could not be identified among surviving instruments, Have any other instruments been found since that might fit the bill—either untouched or at least bearing signs of the original modifications?

If you have any information that might help to, either, locate any of the 'changeable harpsichords' described above, or, shed further light on their history, please contact David Shuker (info@signofthepipe.com).

Notes

- 1 *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 12 March 1772 .
- 2 Charles Mould 'The Development of the English Harpsichord with particular reference to the work of Kirkman' DPhil thesis, University of Oxford.
- 3 *Manchester Mercury*, 18 February 1772.
- 4 *Leeds Intelligencer*, 8 March 1791.
- 5 *London Courier & Evening Gazette*, 16 November 1809.
- 6 *Cambridge Chronicle and Gazette*, 1 November 1794.
- 7 In the text of the 1762 postscript to the second edition of his *Harmonics* Smith says 'About five years ago Mr Kirkman made me a changeable harpsichord . . . '.
- 8 Christopher Stevens, 'The Changeable Harpsichord', *FoMRHI Quarterly* No 93 (October 1998) pp. 30–35.



The rediscovery of an early English bass recorder in Dublin: A preliminary report, Simon Waters & Colin Hamilton

Introduction

During a recent working visit to the National Museum of Ireland (NMI)¹ in which we were involved in supplementing or correcting information on the museum's collection of woodwind instruments, we discovered an apparently unrecorded early English bass recorder exhibiting some similarities with the work of, for instance, Thomas Stanesby senior (c.1668–1734). Subsequent research suggests that the instrument was not, in fact, unknown, as it had been mentioned in Thalheimer (2010: 45) as 'missing'. As the NMI instrument (NMI DF 1881.2971) had at some point been miscatalogued as a bassoon² it is perhaps unsurprising that it does not appear to have attracted further attention from researchers.

Given the potential importance of the discovery it is necessary to distinguish the instrument from another early English bass recorder previously recorded in Dublin (Boydell, 1979) which was clearly stamped Bressan. This instrument was sold at Sotheby's on 12 November 1986 (lot 206) to Japanese department store Seibu for £29,000, and is illustrated in the catalogue for that sale.³ It had apparently come to Ireland from St John's, Newfoundland early in the 20th century, and featured in the Galpin Society's 40th Anniversary Exhibition in August 1986 (*Made for Music* item 49, 1986).

A further distinction to be made is from the 'Stanesby senior' bass recorder which formed part of Canon Galpin's collection, and was later in the possession of Eric Halfpenny. This is the instrument now in Warwick (M16: 10397) along with two

alto recorders, one a Stanesby, another a composite Bressan/Stanesby, both also from Halfpenny. This bass is clearly stamped 'S W' under a linear mark, and the attribution to Stanesby is therefore spurious. The Galpin/Halfpenny provenance possibly enhanced the sense that this must be an important instrument, encouraging an 'optimistic' attribution, and indeed it is clearly of early English manufacture, exhibiting many similarities with NMI 1881.2971.

It is perhaps also useful to note that the NMI has in its collection a contrabassoon by Thomas Stanesby Junior (NMI DF 1907.2) dated 1739, which has been the object of confusing speculation (in e.g. Langwill 1942). As there is supporting evidence from a Stanesby Junior bassoon (Waterhouse collection, illustrated in Rachor, n.d.) that he consistently stamped larger instruments with the date of manufacture, the contrabassoon in question cannot possibly have been that apparently reported by Burney (1785: 7) as being ordered at Handel's request for the coronation of George II in 1727, though it might feasibly have been used in the first performance of his *Messiah* in the New Musick Hall on Fishamble Street, Dublin on 13 April 1742.

The NMI bass recorder.

The NMI bass recorder is of ivory-mounted fruitwood, stained with a dark-brown varnish which has been thickly over-varnished at a later stage. It survives with two headcaps: the original in which the bocal enters top/centre, and an early 20th century copy with a side-blown entry for the bocal.⁴ The instrument was transferred to the NMI from the collection of the Royal Dublin Society, being accessioned in 1881, but it has possibly been played since then, as the tenons bear 'Dolmetsch-style' cork lapping, and there are other signs of 'restoration' to enable playing.⁵ The roof of the windway has been crudely reshaped, and a graft into the body of the wood at the base of the labium suggests more skilful intervention, possibly to counteract woodworm activity in the windway area. The key touch is either an inept modification or a crude replacement. Despite these interventions the instrument is in fundamentally good condition. Blowing it *extremely* briefly (without the headcap) suggests a pitch of $c.A=412.5$, which seems high, but it is possible that the fundamental revoicing during 'restoration' has altered the pitch. It has an original ivory button at the back of the middle section for attachment to a supporting strap.

The NMI did not have documentation of the repairs and restoration, but Nik Tarasov drew our attention to Peter Thalheimer's citation (Thalheimer, 2010: 45) from Mabel Dolmetsch (Dolmetsch, 1957: 149) in which she writes:

Another instrument which called for special attention at this time was the bass recorder. The other sizes of recorders were now well established; but the bass still presented certain problems as to range and facility of fingering, in view of its lengthy proportions. A visit to Ireland, whither we had journeyed 'en famille' in January 1929 (to give two concerts in Dublin), furnished us with an opportunity to visit the Dublin Museum. Here, we were most kindly received by the curator, who conducted us round the department of musical instruments, opening all the cases, so that we might get a closer view of these treasures. There we beheld a fine example of a bass recorder! When, therefore, Arnold was ready to make a second attempt to produce a bass, in all ways satisfactory, he wrote to the curator asking whether he would lend this instrument, which Arnold undertook to put into good playing order. He suggested that meantime he should lend his ancient treble recorder to the

Dublin Museum by way of exchange. This request was most graciously acceded to; and thus was Arnold Dolmetsch enabled, after a close study of this particular instrument (while putting it into perfect condition) to solve his own intricate problem satisfactorily.

Clearly our instincts about the restoration were correct, and we later discovered both a newspaper advertisement for the concert⁶ and, thanks to Andrew Pinnock, a letter from Dolmetsch to the NMI confirming his return of the instrument.⁷

ROYAL DUBLIN SOCIETY



CHAMBER MUSIC RECITALS.

ON MONDAYS AT 3 O'CLOCK AND 8.15 p.m.
IN THE MEMBERS' HALL,
BALLSBRIDGE.

1928.	
Nov.	5—JELLY D'ARANYI Violin
"	12—THE LONDON STRING QUARTET Strings
"	19—ORLOFF Piano
"	26—THE LENER STRING QUARTET Strings
Dec.	3—MYRA HESS Piano
"	10—THE HARP ENSEMBLE Harp, Flute and String Quartet
1929.	
Jan.	14—DOHNANYI Piano
"	21—THE PIRANI TRIO Strings
"	28—ARNOLD DOLMETSCH AND FAMILY Ancient Musical Instruments
Feb.	4—SCHNABEL Piano
"	11—BUDAPEST TRIO Strings
"	18—CASSADO AND MADAME VON MENDELSSOHN GORDIGIANI Piano and 'Cell.
"	28—THE HORN TRIO ... Horn and Strings
Mar.	4—THE LONDON WIND QUINTET . Wind

ADMISSION:

Members are privileged to attend either Afternoon or Evening Recitals free. Members may introduce friends on payment of the sum specified below.

One admission for single Recital, 5/-.
Season Ticket for either Afternoon or Evening Course, £2 2/- each.

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE COURSE

SPECIAL RECITALS

BY THE FAMOUS

HALLE SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA

THE PREMIER ORCHESTRA OF ENGLAND,
CONDUCTED BY

SIR HAMILTON HARTY

On MONDAY, 22nd OCTOBER, 1928.

At 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.

ALL SEATS RESERVED for these two extra Recitals, and Members may, from the 15th inst., book seats for themselves and their friends at the Society's Offices, Ballsbridge. Office hours, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Seats in Centre of Hall	5/-
If purchased before the 19th	3/-
Seats in other parts of Hall	3/-
If purchased before the 19th	2/-
Members' Friends—Afternoon or Evening Recital,	7/6 each.

AD writes to the Keeper of Musical Instruments at NMI on 28 March 1930:

Dear Sir, I am returning today the Bass Recorder that you so kindly lent me for study. I have restored it very carefully without altering it in any way [sic]. I have had to make a new head for it; the old one being too much worm eaten to get the full tone of the instrument. It is possible, however, to use the original head; I am sending it with the new one.

The Museum's response, returned on the original letter is:

Replied March 30 1930 thanking for letter & for repairing the Recorder.⁸ Having your Recorder sent today by Registered post for £10 again thanking.

The instrument's significance is thus vastly elevated by its having formed the model for the first viable historically-informed reproductions of a bass recorder in the instrument's revival in the twentieth century. Crucial context for this is provided in Pinnock (2023) who notes (in email correspondence 18/01/26, paraphrased here) that Arnold Dolmetsch's discovery of the Dublin bass was timely. He had played his less than wholly successful pre-Dublin model bass at concerts in Haslemere from 1926 on, but the opportunity to copy a historical bass at first hand coincided with the publication of Dolmetsch and His Instruments in December 1929 (Dolmetsch, 1929) which functioned effectively as a sales catalogue just as orders for basses were beginning to come in.

Previous documentation of the instrument records that it is unstamped. The instrument is, however, stamped on all three main parts, but both stamp and the wood surface are heavily abraded and filled with later varnish, so it is only legible with considerable patience, and only in part. The stamp on the body, between the two fingerhole groups, is perhaps the most complete. Interpretation of the stamps is difficult, partly because there are dissimilarities between the three stamps, and because there are elements below and possibly above the stamp (and in one possible reading before and after it) which seem to be devices rather than letters. The device below may be a trefoil or fleur-de-lys. It is possibly a separate stamp, as it does not align consistently with the maker's name in each iteration. Speculation about the exact nature of the stamp will probably only be resolved using analysis based on laser scanning technology to selectively (and virtually) remove layers of varnish and detect branding or other physical impressions on wood fibres. The authors are currently investigating the possibility of organising this in Ireland. A provisional reading of the central line of the stamp might be [trefoil] HALL [trefoil], which would make this the first known instrument attributable to John Hall. Hall (b. c1655, fl. 1729) is documented by Lasocki (2010:74) as appearing in the records of the Turners' Company, being apprenticed to Christopher Keene on 22 June 1669 and freed on 4 July 1677. He is documented as a 'flutemaker' (= recorder maker) in Holborn consistently between 1689 and 1728, taking at least five apprentices during this period (Lasocki, *ibid*).

A comparison of the turning profile of the sockets of each joint shows similarities of both form and detail with instruments by Bressan and Stanesby. The instrument is clearly a London-style recorder dating from between c.1680 and 1720. There are, of course, considerable similarities in style between Stanesby instruments and those stamped Bressan, but all surviving Bressan bass recorders possess a bulbous footjoint with a 'side exit', and are designed to fit onto a cylindrically bored 'stand' which operates as a Helmholtz resonator, enhancing the lowest notes. They are also all unambiguously stamped.

The authors thank Sarah Nolan of NMI and Liam O'Connor and Niamh McNeela for their hospitality in Dublin, and Nik Tarasov and Andrew Pinnock for vital information.

Notes

- 1 Facilitated by Sarah Nolan (Collections Assistant, NMI), whose support throughout the visit was invaluable.
- 2 Though the database entry covers all eventualities, recording the instrument also as 'An old Irish Clarionet—three pieces of wood and one piece of metal. Bass flute, or recorder. Played in quartet. Irish or English, early 18th century.' The label attached to the instrument reads 'basson'—which was apparently an early synonym for bass recorder.
- 3 Seibu had at the time a special relationship with Sotheby's (and possibly other auction houses) in which they acted as agents for Japanese private buyers who were nervous of using the European auction system. I am grateful to Graham Wells (25/06/2025) for this information, and for confirmation that the Galpin/Halfpenny instrument is that in Warwick.
- 4 It seems likely that the ivory mouthpiece, now attached to the later bocal, is the original and has been transferred at some point.
- 5 The author's familiarity with early Dolmetsch instruments comes from having studied throughout the 1970s with Layton & Christine Ring—early collaborators with Dolmetsch, who lived with the family on their immigration from New Zealand, and owned and played a large number of early Dolmetsch and Goble instruments.
- 6 In *The Sunday Independent* (Dublin) for 14 October 1928.
- 7 <https://collections.ram.ac.uk/IMU/#/details/ecatalogue/6907>
- 8 This refers Arnold Dolmetsch's 'ancient treble recorder', left with the museum as collateral. It is unclear whether this was his Bressan or the Stanesby which was left with him for repair and never repossessed by its owner.

Bibliography

- Barra Boydell, 'Another Bass Recorder by Bressan' *Galpin Society Journal* 32 (May, 1979) pp. 131–133
- Charles Burney, *An account of the musical performances in Westminster-abbey, and the Pantheon, May 26th, 27th, 29th; and June the 3d, and 5th, 1784. In commemoration of Handel.* (London: T. Payne and son, 1785)
- Arnold Dolmetsch, *Dolmetsch and His Instruments* (Haslemere: Arnold Dolmetsch, 1929)
- Mabel Dolmetsch, *Personal Recollections of Arnold Dolmetsch* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957)
- Lyndesay G. Langwill, 'The Double Bassoon: Its Origins and Development' *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 68th Session, (1942) pp. 1–33.
- David Lasocki, 'New Light on Eighteenth-Century English Woodwind Makers from Newspaper Advertisements', *Galpin Society Journal* 63 (2010) pp. 73–142
- Andrew Pinnock, 'Boring for Britain: The Design, Development and Mass Deployment of Dolmetsch Recorders, 1920–1980', *Galpin Society Journal* 76 (2023) pp. 32–66
- David Rachor,
<https://davidrachor.com/historical-bassoons-in-the-hichwa-rachor-database/>
- Peter Thalheimer, *Die Blockflöte in Deutschland 1920-1945. Instrumentenbau und Aspekte zur Spielpraxis* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2010)

Early Music's supporting act: Continuo Connect, by Ashutosh Khandekar

Behind the vivid performances and scholarly ambition of the UK's Early Music scene lies a finely balanced freelance economy. In this piece for The Galpin Society, Ashutosh Khandekar explores how the Continuo Foundation has been a game-changer for Early Music, responding to the sector's needs with targeted, timely support that helps period-instrument ensembles turn creative thinking into viable projects.

Early Music occupies a distinctive place within the classical music world. It is shaped by scholarship and historical awareness, but also by a high degree of practical ingenuity. Much of the field's activity is driven by small specialist ensembles that build projects from the ground up, bringing together performers, venues and audiences for repertoire that often lies outside the mainstream. When these projects succeed, the results can be vivid and compelling. The conditions that make them possible, however, are often precarious.

In the UK, where historically-informed performance (HIP) has played a significant role in musical life for several decades, this tension is particularly evident. The sector is rich in expertise and imagination, but relies heavily on freelance labour and short-term, project-based funding. Ensembles typically assemble work piecemeal, combining performers, rehearsal time, travel, venues and promotion. If one element fails, the entire structure can be compromised.

It was in response to these realities that Continuo Foundation emerged as an organisation—not to redefine the field, but to support it in practical, targeted ways. The Foundation was established in 2020 by Tina Vadaneaux, who continues to serve as its Chief Executive. With a background spanning finance, music and philanthropy, Vadaneaux recognised both the vulnerability and resilience of the Early Music sector at a moment of acute disruption. As she explained when announcing Continuo's very first round of grants, the support offered 'inspired ensembles to start planning, and gave musicians hope of playing together again following a year of isolation, uncertainty and cancelled performances.' While the immediate impetus was the sudden halt to live performance during the pandemic, Vadaneaux's aim was also longer-term: to help sustain a diverse and highly skilled community by addressing practical pressures that pre-dated the crisis and continue to shape the field.

Continuo supports professional period-instrument ensembles through grants that help projects go ahead. Rather than funding organisations as institutions, it backs specific pieces of work, recognising that in the Early Music world, relatively modest sums can have a decisive impact if they support outstanding work and arrive at the right moment.

Since its founding, Continuo has awarded more than £1 million to UK-based ensembles. This support has enabled 256 projects, provided paid work for over 1,300 freelance musicians, and contributed to more than 700 performances and recordings. Audiences reached are estimated at around 350,000 across the UK and online. Continuo distributes at least £200,000 each year across two competitive funding rounds, with individual grants typically ranging from £2,000 to £6,000. Within the economics of Early Music, these amounts often determine whether a project remains on the shelf or comes to life.

Continuo's reach is intentionally broad. Supported projects take place across the UK, frequently outside major urban centres, and span repertoire from the medieval period to the early 19th century, alongside work that places historical instruments in dialogue with contemporary ideas. In its tenth funding round, announced in September 2025, Continuo supported 28 ensembles at different stages of development, offering a snapshot of a sector that is confident in its traditions while open to innovation.

Among the ensembles supported by Continuo is the Bellot Ensemble, a London-based group specialising in 17th-century repertoire.



Continuo funding has contributed to national touring and to the ensemble's debut recording, *Cupid's Ground Bass*, centred on Italian instrumental and vocal music. In 2025, Bellot Ensemble was selected as the BBC New Generation Baroque Ensemble, a scheme supporting emerging UK-based period-instrument ensembles.

Other funded projects have explored varied approaches to performance and presentation. Ensemble Augelletti's latest project, *A Tune Among Friends*, brings 17th- and 18th-century music into informal spaces such as pubs and cafés, encouraging a relaxed mode of listening and interaction. Opera has also featured prominently. Cambridge Handel Opera Company's production of *Imeneo* combines historically informed performance with workshops and mentoring for young participants, extending the project's impact beyond the stage.

Recording continues to be a significant area of activity. For many ensembles—particularly those at an early stage—a first recording functions both as an artistic statement and as a professional calling card. Continuo has supported debut albums and exploratory recording projects across a wide range of repertoire, helping ensembles to develop profiles that extend beyond live performance.



Grant applications are assessed by a panel that pools expertise from leading practitioners within the Early Music world, and this has been vital to establishing Continuo's credibility as a funder. Its Patrons are luminaries in their field, all known for their distinguished work as performers and scholars: Dame Emma Kirkby, Ashley Solomon, Rachel Podger and Mary Bevan. Mention must also be made of its founding patron, the late Sir Roger Norrington, whose endorsement and support during Continuo's first five years were invaluable.

Alongside its grants programme, Continuo has developed a parallel strand of work focused on raising the profile of Early Music and increasing the sector's visibility, as well as growing audiences. Launched in 2023, the [ContinuoConnect.com](https://www.continuoconnect.com) website brings together curated concert listings, ensemble and artist profiles, interviews, news, articles, playlists and audiovisual content on a single digital platform. This strand of activity grew out of conversations with musicians—for whom promotion and audience development were persistent challenges, often competing with the time required for artistic work—and audiences, who struggled to find information about concerts.

For audiences, the platform functions as a navigational tool. Early Music activity in the UK is geographically dispersed and institutionally fragmented; concerts often take place outside major venues and are promoted through disparate channels. By aggregating listings and editorial content in one place, the platform opens access to discovery and supports increased audience attendance. Continuo Connect complements the Foundation's grant-making by addressing demand as well as supply: helping projects to not only happen, but also to attract larger audiences.

Continuo Connect also reflects the increasingly international nature of Early Music practice. While its primary focus is on UK activity, the platform has supported dialogue and exchange beyond national borders, helping visiting ensembles and collaborative projects to reach British audiences and situate their work within the UK's established Early Music ecology.

Continuo's longer-term perspective is also reflected in its partnerships. Recent collaborations include a dedicated project grant with The Purcell Society, marking its 150th anniversary, and partnerships with the Oxford Festival of the Arts and the Buxton International Festival. These initiatives extend Continuo's reach while providing performance opportunities and greater recognition for early musicians.

Continuo's work also acknowledges that HIP has never been insular. A project by the pioneering ensemble Liturina offers a striking example. Supported by Continuo, the group collaborated with composer and performer Jonny Mansfield, whose work draws on jazz idioms inspired by Baroque material. The project brought together music by Bach with virtuosic rhythmic language and collective improvisation, performed on historical instruments by a group of young Early Music specialists, demonstrating how historically informed practice can remain open, curious and innovative.

In a sector shaped by historical awareness, Continuo's methods are firmly grounded in present-day realities. By paying close attention to timing, scale and context—and by avoiding grand solutions—the Foundation has established a role that is quietly effective, supporting the conditions under which Early Music is made, heard and valued, now and for future generations.

The recipients of Continuo Foundation's latest round of grant awards will be announced on 19 March. For information on how you can help support the future of Early Music, please visit the Support Us page.

<https://www.continuoofoundation.co.uk/support-us>

The rich content on [ContinuoConnect.com](https://www.continuoconnect.com) is also shared through fortnightly e-newsletters and social media channels. Please click here to subscribe.

<https://www.continuoconnect.com/newsletter>