An instrument with pluck: the ukulele wins due respect

The Geoffrey Robert Rezek Ukulele Collection is now part of the Museum’s holdings of rare and popular plucked stringed instruments. A selection of ukuleles from Rezek’s collection form the newest exhibit in the National Music Museum, which can be visited in the Graese Gallery.

Geoffrey Rezek always wanted to play a musical instrument. Fifteen years ago, with his two sons nearly out of college, he decided to take up his father’s Gretsch ukulele. Sadly, it was broken and unplayable. Finding a ukulele to serve in its place eventually turned into a collection of vintage and modern ukuleles. Rezek’s first uke was a Fluke®, a durable modern instrument manufactured in the U.S. “I fell in love with the good cheer the ukulele brings,” says Rezek. At a Ukulele Hall of Fame Museum Expo he met a community of players devoted to having fun with the instrument, and saw in person the wide range of forms the ukulele could take. He left the Expo the proud owner of four more ukuleles. A collector was born.

Rezek has amassed over 100 ukuleles and an archive of more than 4,000 documents, including sheet music, method books, videos, articles, and hundreds of autographed photographs and posters — most from the mid-20th century. Rezek’s archive also features pop-culture artifacts like Tiny Tim’s iconic Budweiser jacket. “Each ukulele contains a bit of history,” Rezek said. “That’s one reason why I like to collect them, and why I’ve decided to donate so much of my collection to the National Music Museum.”

The Geoffrey Robert Rezek Collection includes rare ukuleles previously owned by 50’s TV/radio showman and ukulele popularizer Arthur Godfrey and by classical virtuoso John King. Rezek has collected ukuleles signed by Tiny Tim, the original members of Pearl Jam, James Hill, Jim Beloff, Ian Whitcomb, and current ukulele phenom Jake Shimabukuro. There are C. F. Martin & Co. ukuleles, a Gretsch baritone ukulele, three Joel Eckhaus Earnest Music custom ukuleles, Maccarreri ukuleles, a May Bell banjo, Betty Boop ukulele, a custom ‘side-by-side ukulele’ by Black Bear Ukuleles [see photo], the first baritone banjo-ukulele prototype by Eddie Connors, early model Fluke and Flea ukuleles, and even a playful Lego® ‘Tofukelele.’

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Born in Hawaii, the ukulele was developed by Portuguese-immigrant laborers. It rose to popularity with the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition, and again in the 1950’s associated with the likes of Arthur Godfrey and Elvis Presley, then flared up briefly in the late 1960’s with flower-child Tiny Tim, and is now experiencing perhaps its greatest renaissance—fueled by its ultra-simple learning curve, strumming societies, countless YouTube videos, that sweet earworm “Over the Rainbow” by Israel Kamakawiwo’ole (http://goo.gl/E52s9i), and a spate of chart-topping indie-rock hits.
If you’re a listener to National Public Radio’s Morning Edition and were tuned in on Thursday, November 6, 2014, you may have heard the feature segment by music-commentator Miles Hoffman celebrating the 200th birth-anniversary of saxophone-inventor Adolphe Sax.

The NPR story included a great shout-out to the NMM. Said Hoffman to NPR morning-anchor Renee Montagne:

“Renee, if you say ‘Vermillion’ to serious instrument collectors anywhere in the world, they know exactly what you’re talking about – because Vermillion is the home not just of the University of South Dakota but of the National Music Museum, which happens to house one of the two or three greatest musical instrument collections in the world. They have priceless stringed instruments, they have rare keyboard instruments, they have perhaps the greatest trumpet collection in the world. It’s just an astonishing place.”

The highlights of the NPR segment were sound recordings by professional saxophonist and University of South Dakota professor C. J. Kocher playing three saxophones – a soprano, tenor and baritone from the mid-1800’s – from the NMM’s own extensive collection of Adolphe Sax-made instruments. (Thank you, C.J.!) If you missed the show—no worries—head to NPR’s archives! http://goo.gl/WnJJvc

About a decade ago, Rezek wrote “The Song of Best” on a ukulele with his sons and brother-in-law, inspired by a young cousin. The song is published as “Ukuleles are the Best” in Jim Beloff’s best-selling music songbook The Daily Ukulele.

For Rezek, the ukulele is a way of life, so he wants to share: “I hope visitors to the museum – researchers, students, and the general public – enjoy the instruments and the music archive as much as I have.”

Good cheer: Geoff Rezek and Curator of Stringed Instruments Arian Sheets cut up on ukuleles recently at the NMM.

Photo credit: Tony Jones

Listen to the sounds of three Adolphe Sax saxophones from the National Music Museum collection! http://goo.gl/WnJJvc
On Friday, September 5, 2014, Google stepped out of the virtual world and into the real world of the National Music Museum. The occasion was the official public launch and press event for the Museum’s Google Cultural Institute online gallery and the commencement of Google’s ‘Street View capture’ of the Museum. The web reveal was attended by Google spokesman Wolete Moko and representative Melissa Nitti; South Dakota Secretary of Tourism James Hagen; NMM Director Dr. Cleveland Johnson; as well as TV, radio and print reporters; NMM trustees and staff; USD faculty and students; and members of the Vermillion community.

Moko unveiled the NMM’s Google Cultural Institute gallery via video projections, wowing the Larson Concert Hall crowd with the beauty of the high-resolution museum images. “Google aims to highlight a wide breadth of art, history, and culture through the Cultural Institute,” said Moko, Global Business Operations Account Manager for Google. “This NMM collection underscores the omnipresence of music in our culture and tells a fascinating story of how instruments have been used and developed.” (To see the site as it is now, go to https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/collection/national-music-museum-university-of-south-dakota.)

The National Music Museum is the first South Dakota cultural institution to be selected by Google for their elite Cultural Institute platform and the first music museum. Said Secretary of Tourism Hagen, “We are so grateful to the Google Cultural Institute for the opportunity to expose the National Music Museum to millions around the world and inspire them to one day visit the Museum. We are thrilled to have the chance to share this world-class museum and its instruments with a new audience.”

After the Google ceremony and reception were over, a two-man Google tech crew manned a specially-designed Street View trolley, capturing 360-degree images of the interior of NMM galleries to display in the future on Google. The imagery will be stitched together, allowing visitors to virtually walk the Museum and view the exhibits. While in Vermillion for the NMM event, Google also collected Street View imagery of the University of South Dakota’s campus. The virtual tours are expected to be online within the next few months.

Photos by Aaron Packard
Instruments of war

By Michael Suing,
Associate Curator of Musical Instruments

A somber young Daniel “Stright” Bailey (1848-1932) stares out from a tintype photograph. He was only 13 years old when he and his brother set off to rally troops for the Union’s war effort. He was a drummer boy with the Marshall County Indiana Fife and Drum Corps. His older brother, Walter Clark Bailey (1843/5-1929), played fife. Daniel carried an unadorned William Kilbourn snare drum, which would survive the war. It remained in the Bailey family for several generations before entering a private collection of American Civil War memorabilia. Put up for auction, it was acquired in 2014 by the National Music Museum.

Music and musicians have historically played a significant role in the waging of wars: garnering local support for the war effort, rallying individuals to enlist, conveying orders on the battlefield, boosting troop morale, and even demoralizing opponents.

In the Civil War era, craftsmen like George and William Kilbourn (father and son) provided the military with musical instruments. As early as 1815, the city directory of Albany, New York, lists George Kilbourn (1792-1860) as a musical instrument maker. Instrument demand had been falling off with the end of the War of 1812. From 1820 through 1845 Kilbourn is documented variably as a shipbuilder and a carpenter. By the Civil War, however, he was very much back in the music business. Paper labels on his instruments list bass and snare drums, tambourines, and banjos among his specialties.

William Kilbourn (1828 – at least 1910) is listed as a drum maker in Albany, New York, beginning in 1858. Father and son worked at various addresses in Albany over the course of 50 years. William eventually added “successor to George Kilbourn” to his labels, leveraging the legacy of his father’s respected brand. He also touted himself as manufacturer of a “patent guitar banjo.” One military contract, dated April 29, 1864, records the younger Kilbourn being commissioned to produce 100 infantry drums for the Union army.

Two William Kilbourn drums (including Stright Bailey’s, above), bearing maker’s labels, are preserved in the NMM’s collection. The snare, 14” tall by 16” in diameter, sometimes referred to as a side drum, was manufactured about 1861. The drum lacks the painted decoration or tack design characteristic of Civil War era rope-tension military drums.

Dating from several years later, the NMM’s William Kilbourn bass drum has a bent maple shell and brass tack pattern. Its maker’s label is visible through the vent hole. Manufactured between 1864 and 1869, the drum was likely owned and played in Buffalo, New York, well into the early twentieth century. This is evidenced by a secondary label adhered to the interior of the drum shell, marked “Repaired by Haynes Drum Shop, 86 Riley Street, Buffalo, N.Y.” The Haynes brothers, Robert H. and Howard A., operated a store on Riley Street from 1920-1933.


“I don’t believe we can have an army without music.”
– General Robert E. Lee


Recent NMM acquisitions


Violin attributed to Norway, ca. 1850. Previously owned by Ole Bull and presented by him to donor’s grandfather. Gift of Eugene Rudd, Lincoln, Nebraska. NMM 14915.


Violoncello by the Richard Weichold/August Paulus Workshop, Dresden, Saxony, January 1894. Stelzner model. One of only two examples known to survive. Gift of James Christensen, North Liberty, Iowa. NMM 14912.


Valve trombone by Lyon & Healy, Chicago, ca. 1906. Our Own Make. Gift of Greg Greenlee, Parker, Colorado, and Dominic Russo, Yankton, South Dakota. NMM 14935.


Clarinet in B-flat (low pitch) by C. G. Conn Ltd., Elkhart, Indiana, ca. 1927. Armored clarinet model 424N. Gift of Ruben Haugen, Burnsville, Minnesota. NMM 14924.


Photos by Tony Jones
Silence the trumpet and change its tone:
Three historic trumpet mutes in the NMM’s Utley Collection

By Dr. Sabine K. Klaus
Joe R. and Joella F. Utley Curator of Brass Instruments

It’s hard to imagine a big band or a jazz trumpeter without a mute. Modern trumpet mutes are made of many materials (cardboard, metal, wood, and even rubber) and create sounds ranging from soft and mellow to hollow and piercing. Trumpet mutes made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were very different from those used today. They were wooden artifacts—beautifully turned, hollow all the way through, and very light. They are also exceedingly rare and hard to come by. So it was a lucky opportunity that the Utley Foundation was able to purchase a group of three historic mutes in 2009 and 2014 for the National Music Museum (now cataloged as BA-0097, BA-0101, and BA-0102). The mutes had once been used in a church in the Wachau in Lower Austria with trumpets by Anton Kerner (1726–1806) from Vienna. Until recently the mutes were in the possession of Dr. Gerhard Stradner in Vienna. CT scans reveal how these mutes were expertly crafted on a lathe. All three mutes have principally the same external and internal shape. The restrained decoration hints at a date in the later eighteenth century. The density of the wood (fruitwood) varies. BA-0102 has the densest wood and the most precise internal bore. BA-0097 has the least dense wood and consequently is least exact inside. BA-0101 is between the two and exhibits some woodworm damage. BA-0097 survives with a brass wire that may have been hooked onto a music stand or the trumpet. When this mute is inserted into the NMM’s natural trumpet by Johann Leonhard Ehe II, ca. 1710 (NMM 7250), it raises the pitch by 102 Cents or approximately one semitone.

Historic mutes change the pitch, modern mutes do not. That is the most significant difference between them. The interval at which surviving historic mutes transpose has been found to be approximately a semitone, while several historic treatises suggest that there were also mutes that changed the pitch by a whole tone. This conundrum is not fully understood. One explanation may be that earlier mutes and trumpet bells were less flaring and the mute could therefore be inserted further.
That robot-like device rolling up to an exhibit at the National Music Museum is not a sci-fi security guard (though that may be a good application for it too). For the past several months the NMM has been beta-testing a ‘Beam Remote Presence System’ by Suitable Technologies, Inc., of Palo Alto, California. Special NMM guests have been invited to ‘beam in’ from their home computers and drive the device with their mouse and keyboard. The Beam’s camera eye then beams back to them the experience of touring the Museum, while the Beam glides through galleries, stopping at displays and allowing the user to interact in real time with other people via the face monitor.

Henry Evans, a music aficionado who also happens to be a quadriplegic, recently ‘beamed in’ for a tour of the NMM, with NMM Director Dr. Cleveland Johnson ‘at his side.’ Said Evans of the experience, “Travelling to South Dakota in the blink of an eye was a wonderful way for a bedridden person to spend a morning, and Dr. Johnson was a wonderful host.”

With its technologies being refined for optimal exhibit-viewing—the Beam could be on the NMM’s wish list for the future. Meanwhile, our thanks to Suitable Technologies for allowing the NMM to try out the Beam and help ‘bring’ guests like Mr. Evans to the Museum.
There are volunteers, and then there are volunteers — individuals, who though unpaid, are effectively staff in terms of their involvement and impact. A. "Jo" Wohlenberg is such a person to the NMM. Since February 2011, Jo’s ‘volunteer’ roles have been many: accountant, financial advisor, “guardian angel and honorary CFO,” as NMM Director Cleveland Johnson calls her.

On the NMM’s Board of Trustees for about two decades, Jo says she always felt she could do more. After NMM Director André Larson’s retirement, the books needed to be done, so she stepped up, updated the accounting software, helped determine best financial arrangements, consulted on grant-application procedures, and more. A lot for a “semi-retired country CPA.”

But Jo is not one to stay backstage — her eclectic life biography proves that. Jo “grew up” at South Dakota’s Black Hills Playhouse. Her family had a summer cabin in Custer State Park. Jo says she was surrounded by “South Dakota greats” and their families — like Warren M. (Doc) Lee; Dr. “Hap” & Ellie Haberman; Dr. Wayne and Esther Knutson; Neff and Ruth Williams (Robert N. Williams — honorary USD doctorate); Graham Thatcher and Anna Marie Teachout Thatcher; Ron and Marian Reed; Skip and Bonnie Swenson; Don and Gloria Sundquist; and more. As a child, Jo was on stage for Doc Lee’s Monday night performance of The Legend of Devil’s Gulch and The Miracle Worker. She worked in the light booth for South Pacific. She played flute in the pit orchestra for Guys and Dolls. She loved music — also playing piano and guitar, as well singing and dancing — but knew she’d never be a professional because she “hated to practice.”

Jo chose to start college at the University of South Dakota: it was a family tradition (her mom and dad were alumni), and “it had later curfew hours than other schools.” In 1969, as an USD undergrad majoring in theater, Jo performed in The Unsinkable Molly Brown and Hello Dolly. She was also Miss USD of 1969, second runner-up to Miss South Dakota in the same year, and is still reigning as “USD Miss Football Centennial.” She left after her sophomore year to attend the United States International School of Performing Arts in San Diego, CA. After, she returned to South Dakota and attended Black Hills State University, graduating with a BA in 1974 in theater and speech. She completed her MBA at USD in 1982. After working in medical management, she joined the University of Montana Chamber Chorale en route to Vienna for three months — but stayed four years and learned to love opera. She came back to USD and completed her Masters of Professional Accountancy in 1991, passing the CPA exam in 1992. She then moved to Menno, South Dakota, to work in the law firm of Ulmer, Hertz & Bertsch. A few years later Jo branched out on her own.

‘Wohlenberg’ is a prominent name in National Music Museum and USD history. Jo’s father (also a CPA — and sax/clarinet player) was the initial family member on the board in the early 1970’s. “For years I heard him exclaim about the NMM collection and the international importance it could have.” After her father died in 1993, her mother Marifran Wohlenberg took his place on the board. In memory of her husband, Marifran contributed the funds for the Museum’s 19th-century Russian guitar. She also helped acquire the first ergonomic violin, designed by Chanot & Lété (Paris, ca. 1819), which Marifran calls “her violin.” Later when a historic Hawaiian ukulele came up for purchase, she donated toward that too. (Her uncle had taught her to play ukulele). Marifran recruited Jo for the NMM board in 1994. “And we’re both still here!” says Jo.

What drives someone to be altruistic and give so much of her time and personal resources? “I don’t know about the altruistic part — ’ says Jo, “I may actually be selfish. Before my husband died in 2012, he told me not to give up my NMM participation because it makes me happy. The Museum is special to me — we have the most unique collection on the planet, we have the most unique collection of individuals to husband the collection, and I learn something every time I’m here. The activity beneath the surface is amazing. I love this place.”
Making a musical wish come true

On a memorable evening this past October, at the Episcopal Church in Hamilton, New York, cellist Chris Shenkel (the local high school’s popular string teacher) gave an impassioned recital to a packed house. The crowd rose for two standing ovations—profundely moved. Chris, battling cancer, was performing a special, perhaps final, public concert.

At the program’s end, entirely to Chris’s surprise, the community presented him with a custom gift, the means to make one of his lifelong dreams possible—airplane tickets for him and his wife Cathy to visit the National Music Museum in South Dakota to see the world’s oldest surviving cello (the “King” by master-maker Andrea Amati). All expenses would be covered. A package of National Music Museum welcome gifts—sent ahead by Dr. Peggy Banks (a graduate, coincidentally, of Hamilton High School)—completed the invitation.

Chris and Cathy flew out three days later, on Friday, October 17th, and were at the Museum in Vermillion when it opened Saturday. NMM curators Banks, Arian Sheets, and Rodger Kelly came in to show Chris and Cathy through the Museum, take them behind the scenes of the collection, and even to play some historic instruments exclusively for them. The couple also enjoyed taking the Museum’s multi-media tour.

Cathy wrote later in note to the NMM: “Chris and I have a lifetime of memories wrapped up in that weekend. Thank you for the memories! Thank you for the music!”

Dr. Banks, who headed up the NMM’s welcome, says: “It was the Museum’s pleasure to help make Chris’s dream trip possible. This sort of ‘make-a-wish’ situation really causes one to stop and think about why we are here. It makes all our professional efforts seem even more worthwhile.”

Many thanks also to Jill Strand of Hamilton, New York, the prime mover linking the Shenkels up with Dr. Banks and the NMM.

Staff notes


John Koster and NMM Collections Manager Rodger Kelly also oversaw recent recording sessions at the National Music Museum, featuring historic-keyboard virtuoso Byron Schenkman playing nine NMM historical keyboards from the 16th century to the late 18th century. Koster supervised the harpsichords and spinets during the recording; Kelly the NMM’s 18th-century Antunes piano (NMM 5055). These sessions will result in two CDs—one a survey of harpsichords and spinets; one a selection of Domenico Scarlatti sonatas played on harpsichords and the Antunes piano.

Dr. Deborah Reeves, NMM Curator of Education and Woodwinds, writes the “Historically Speaking” column of The Clarinet. Her article in Vol. 41, No. 4 (September 2014), examined the NMM’s Leblanc metal bass clarinet—an instrument that may be one-of-a-kind. Also, in her ongoing NMM community-outreach work, Reeves recently presented a program on musical instruments at a Sioux City senior living center and also spoke about the Museum on the Bob Harris Show, KFGO radio, Fargo, ND.

Michael Suing, NMM Associate Curator of Musical Instruments, was awarded a travel grant to attend the Mountain-Plains Museum Association (MPMA) annual conference in Aspen/Snowmass, Colorado—September 28-October 3. The MPMA connects professionals from ten states, including South Dakota.

Dr. Patricia Bornhofen, NMM Manager of Communications, has taken the helm of South Dakota’s I-29 Cultural Corridor marketing effort (which includes the National Music Museum) and was also recently appointed to the Southeast South Dakota Tourism Board.

Student notes

New NMM graduate student and native of Puebla de Los Ángeles, Mexico, Esteban Mariño Garza, recently completed some conservation and cosmetic work on an NMM German clavicord from the first half of the 18th century (NMM 12450). Mariño worked on reproduction hinges for the lid and removed a fake, modern acrylic painting from the inside of the lid.
I was apprehensive when I loaded up my car and set off for the 15-hour drive from my home in Houston, Texas, to Vermillion, South Dakota. I had grown up in a metro area of six million people, so spending three months in a city of ten and a half thousand seemed like a recipe for culture shock and loneliness. Once I began my summer internship at the NMM, however, things took an exciting turn and ended up being among the most enriching experiences of my college career.

The focus of my work at the Museum would include cataloging and photographing a series of American-made trombones. After a few days of introductions and orientation, I was set loose perusing the records, looking for which set of trombones would make the prime candidates for this process. It was during this investigation that I discovered something truly remarkable here – the Holton Factory Archives and Instrument Collection. Donated by Conn-Selmer Inc. (Elkhart, Indiana) in 2008, this collection spans 100 years of the Frank Holton Company and holds hundreds of instruments, documents, photographs, technical drawings, publications, and materials from the Holton factory in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. Holton trombones have long been considered a treasure of the trombone community, especially older models from their great years in the 50s and 60s, but good information has always been lacking. In this collection I found the great opportunity to document these instruments in photographs and text and compile all the archival materials relating to them for the benefit of interested academics and casual trombonists alike. People will finally have real sources and not just word of mouth when it comes to the history of trombones from this great company.

I hope to return to the NMM in a year’s time to enter the graduate program and continue my studies of historical trombones and their production.

Pillow’s pick: “This Holton trombone was one of the more interesting and historic instruments in the NMM’s collection. It has unique features, such as the patented ‘Touch of the Thumb’ tuning mechanism, the gold plating, and an engraved likeness of Paul Whiteman on the bell. It was marketed during the peak of Whiteman’s tenure as the ‘King of Jazz.’ It is also in very good playing condition.”
Onward to a bigger, better National Music Museum!

This October the University of South Dakota celebrated the public launch of Onward: The Campaign for South Dakota. With a $250 million goal and more than $135 million raised to date, this campaign will strengthen the university in four areas: facilities, educational opportunity, student and faculty enrichment, and endowed chairs and professorships.

The National Music Museum is proud to be in the center of this campaign with a $15 million goal that will transform the Museum-visitor’s experience. With the help of Onward: The Campaign for South Dakota, the National Music Museum will be expanded from 23,000 square feet to 88,000 square feet. The new museum complex, which will connect the NMM’s current historic Carnegie Building with the neighboring South Dakota Union by way of a soaring glass atrium, will be a grand architectural showcase for the Museum’s treasures. Currently, the NMM’s 15,000-instrument holdings extend into multiple storage sites on the university campus and outside Vermillion. The new complex will help bring the vast collection together for better preservation, research access, and display.

The USD Foundation has a dedicated staff person working with the Museum to reach fundraising goals. Contact Mary Duncan, Director of Development for the College of Fine Arts and National Music Museum, via email at Mary.duncan@usdfoundation.org or directly at 605-675-4492.

Signs of the times: new NMM billboards!

Visitors often tell us that they first learned about the National Music Museum from our clever and eye-catching billboards. Those of you who have traveled parts of US interstates I-90 and I-29 (in South Dakota, Iowa and Nebraska) as well as nearby roads in the past two years may have seen some of these popular billboards, designed with the creative help of the Lawrence and Schiller agency. There are now four new designs to grab the attention of travelers.
An open gift for opening minds
Edith B. Siegrist

Modest in her lifestyle, Edith B. Siegrist (1925-2011) awed the Vermillion, South Dakota, community with her extraordinary bequests. Her legacy can be experienced by stepping foot in any one of the public or university libraries in the city. A longtime Vermillion resident, Ms. Siegrist was born in McIntosh, South Dakota. Her passion for learning began in a one-room schoolhouse and culminated in highest honors from colleges and universities, both as a student and an alumna. She taught Library Science at the University of South Dakota for 24 years, where she and her colleagues and students immeasurably affected regional library systems. Ms. Siegrist was a lifelong supporter of the National Music Museum, beginning her membership upon our founding in 1973. The NMM is just one local institution that continues to benefit from her generous and well-planned will. Her bequest to the NMM was particularly special because it was an unrestricted gift, allowing the Museum to adapt it to situational needs. Carrying forward her life’s work, the NMM currently allocates the Edith B. Siegrist endowment in two ways: to support the NMM’s acquisition of books, periodicals, and archival material generally; and operationally, to help underwrite the publication of this newsletter series. You are reading this, thanks in part, to the continuing largesse of Edith Siegrist.

Trumpeting his love for music
Clois Esten Smith

Clois Esten Smith (1933-2012) was passionate about trumpet playing and sharing that joy with others. Born in Vermillion, he was a top trumpet player in the Vermillion High School band. He went on to earn a bachelor of fine arts from the University of South Dakota in 1956 and later performed with the U.S. Navy Band and the Marine Corps President’s Band, a post he held for seven sitting presidents. During his time in the service, Smith played throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and South America. After he retired from the Marines, Smith offered piano and trumpet lessons in and around Washington, D.C. He finally returned to Vermillion in the 1990s, where he played trumpet daily for his own enjoyment. In his estate planning, Mr. Smith graciously included the National Music Museum as beneficiary of a CD (a savings certificate that entitles the bearer to receive interest). Fittingly, he stipulated that his funds be used for high-brass instruments. His gift recently made it possible for the Museum to acquire three exemplary pieces: an 1860s-1870s valve bugle (cornet) by Stratton of New York (NMM 14704); an extremely rare 1837-1848 alto trombacello by Graves & Co., of Winchester, New Hampshire (NMM 14705); and a trumpet by Joseph Riedl of Vienna, made about 1845 (NMM 14911). Mr. Smith’s legacy and love for music play on though his generous bequest to the NMM.

Affect the future
A message from NMM Director Cleveland Johnson

For many of us, deep gratification comes in thinking beyond our lives—to a future we can affect even though we are longer present. Planned giving to the National Music Museum takes many forms and accommodates many financial and philanthropic goals. Donors who have remembered the National Music Museum in their wills are alive in our organization: helping to build and maintain our collection; providing indispensable support for our daily operations, programming, exhibitions, conservation efforts, research, and educational activities. The NMM’s Amati Society honors individuals who contribute to the NMM through a planned gift or make a provision for the Museum in their estate plans.

Invest in the National Music Museum’s future by planning a gift. Although cash contributions are always appreciated, other options are mutually beneficial. You can create a trust while you are living, through which you can strategically preserve the value of assets you pass on to your heirs. By designating your donor-advised funds, retirement plan, IRA, or life-insurance policy to the eventual benefit of the NMM, you perpetuate the Museum for future generations. Request information about bequests you can make to the NMM to become an Amati Society member: 1-(605) 677-5306.

Photo Credit: Tony Jones
NMM lifetime giving societies

Lifetime-giving societies represent gifts and commitments that help the National Music Museum continue to survive and thrive—now and in the future... We are deeply grateful. Thank you, everyone!

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