

# BOING

ISSUE 002  
1-2024

Newsletter of the International Jew's Harp Society



## ANGKUOCH OF CAMBODIA

Revival Workshop Project of the  
Ancient and Rare Musical Instrument of  
Cambodia

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# EDITORIAL



**Áron Szilágyi**

Editor in Chief

Our global Jew's harp family gathers every 3-5 years at the International Jew's Harp Festivals. Now that the possibilities for the next big international gathering are beginning to emerge (and thoughtful readers will find some information about that in this issue), it's worth preparing our souls with a little flashback to the last festival in Berlin. Berlin, the city that is now enriched with a small museum of Jew's harps founded by Nico Trompe. You can read about some very interesting activities from Basque country to the land of the Ainu, Hokkaido, Japan. At some places the Jew's harp has almost been forgotten and devoted people started programs to bring it above the surface again. Our front cover topic introduces a very nice example in Cambodia. So, don't hesitate to freshen yourself in the middle of the summer with some news of the global Jew's harp community.



# My Opinion from Franz

1st board of IJHS in 1998: from left to right: Franz Kuml (A), Fred Crane (USA, 1927-2011), Tran Quang-Hai (F, 1944-2021), Manfred Russmann (A), Leo Tadagawa (J), Robert Zagredtinov (Bashkortostan, 1932-2016), Rimma Madvarova (Kyrgyzstan), Ivan Alexeev (Sakha-Yakutia), Anon Egeland (Norway), Phons Bakx (NL)

**M**usicians are special people, creative and sensitive, often difficult to deal with, but highly recognized socially because of their mastery on their instrument.

In the decades of working with Jew's harp players from all over the world, I noticed again and again that Jew's harp players are even more special than let's say piano players, violinists or accordionists.

Jew's harp players are quite originals. I have come to know Jew's harp players as strong individualists and creative loners, often as underdogs, anarchists and non-conformists. This is not only true for Western cultures, although the Jew's harp enjoys great social acceptance, e.g. in Yakutia or Kyrgyzstan.

In the first Editorial of the „Vierundzwanzigsteljahrsschrift der Internationalen Maultrommelvirtuosengenossenschaft“ from 1982, Fred Crane stated: „There is something about the Jew's Harp that attracts more than usual affection for the instrument and everything about it. Other instruments have fans, enthusiasts, aficionados; the Jew's harp attracts zealots and fanatics.“

This peculiarity can only be due to the instrument and the status that this instrument enjoys in the respective culture and society. The Jew's harp is either the important instrument of ethnic minorities or the ridiculed instrument of cultures with a dominance of classical instruments.

This special position of the instrument and its player coincides with skepticism and rejection of the mainstream and the powerful; it causes hypersensitivity and vulnerability; it offers an exclusive niche in mass society and an exotic status; it causes mistrust of any hierarchical structure, and of course the IJHS is not exempt from this.

This exceptional position also causes a certain isolation. This is certainly one reason why Jew's harp players spare no expense in meeting and exchanging ideas with their peers at festivals. And this is also the reason why we as IJHS always attach great importance to enough time and space for free improvisation together and for musical communication in jam sessions when organizing an International Jew's Harp Festival-Congress.

In a figurative sense, Jew's harp players are the overtones of society's "good tone", naturally related to it, but with their lives and their music they express unexpected and surprising sides.

Dear reader, your opinion on this provocative idea is welcome!

Franz Kuml

President of the IJHS

# Impressum

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Become a member! See details on the last page!

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7th July, 2024



# LOOKING BACK AT THE 9TH IJHF IN BERLIN

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The biggest gathering of  
the global family of jew's  
harp enthusiasts.

Evaluation and memories  
of the 9th International  
Jew's Harp Festival and  
Congress held in Berlin  
between 27-31 July, 2022  
from organisers' and  
participants' point of view.





Performers and participants of the 9th International Jew's Harp Festival in Berlin on 31st July, 2022  
Photo: Hamatoyoshi / UFA Fabrik





# ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL JEW'S HARP CONGRESS- FESTIVALS

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By Franz Kumpl,  
President of the IJHS



The 9th IJHC/F was planned for August 2017 in Moscow, on request by the Russian organizers postponed to February 2018 and finally in November 2017 we had to cancel the Moscow-Festival for reasons of lack of funding as well as for organisational reasons.

The same problems with funding and organization haunted me when reviewing other venues for the 9th IJHC/F. This is what happened with the considerations to organize the 9th IJHF in Austria in 2018 or 2019, same with China in 2019 or 2020. In the case of Austria, there was also the sudden death of Secretary General Nikolai Shishigin, and in the case of China, there was also the lack of political support and, ultimately, the outbreak of COVID 19.

I realized that the context for organising an IJHC/F had become increasingly difficult. Firstly, we -fortunately- have numerous annual national jew's harp festivals, e.g. in Sakha-Yakutia, Norway, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland, Sicily, India, USA. Secondly, there is a steady growth of music festivals, which immensely increases the competition for audience and money. Thus, it became quite difficult to obtain funding for an event, which brings together amateurs and professionals, musicians, and researchers of the jew's harp.

At this point, Soeren Birke stepped in and suggested to host the 9th IJHC/F in Berlin. For being on the safe side in regard of the pandemic, we decided to skip the year 2021 and focused on July 2022.

Despite the estrangement between Russia and Europe/USA over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we decided to not postpone the Festival-Congress until "better times". So far times had become only worse and not better.

Soeren Birke proved to be a very professional manager

of the IJHC/F at the UFA-Fabrik in Berlin; the program-committee, consisting of Leo Tadagawa, Aron Szilagyi and myself, we managed to bring outstanding musicians and researchers to Berlin; Harm Linsen and Alessandro Zolt organized and hosted the Congress-lectures.

For me, it is a downer that it has gone from being an exception to the rule that participants have to pay for international travel themselves and that they do not receive a fee. This requires genuine enthusiasm and idealism on the part of musicians and researchers. I still hope that in the future I will be able to use organizers who have the financial and institutional power to financially treat the artists and scholars as they deserve.

At present, the most realistic host for the 10th IJHC/F, planned for October 2025 is the Ainu community, which is located at Lake Akan District, Kushiro City, Hokkaido, Japan. This IJHC/F shall focus on indigenous jew's harp cultures. There are still lots of issues to be solved, but the main stakeholders like the various Ainu Associations and the respective administrative entities, are willing to solve them with the help of the two main advocates -Fukiko Goukon and Leo Tadagawa.

Another candidate is Mongolia, possibly the site of the 11th IJHC/F. I am glad that after two IJHC/F in Europe, we have two candidates from Asia for the next Congress-Festivals.

Regarding Europe, a very interesting host for one of the next IJHC/F is the Centre for Natural Sounds in Toggenburg, Switzerland.

These are the plans, but as we learned during the COVID-pandemia and in connection with military confrontations and increasing climatic crisis: the present times demand for lots of flexibility, optimism, and tolerance. The jaw harp shall guide and help us in this endeavor!

# THE JEW'S HARP JOURNEY

## THE CONCEPT BEHIND THE PROGRAM

By Áron Szilágyi

The 9th International Jew's Harp Festival, held from July 28 to 31, 2022, celebrated the diversity and vibrancy of the jew's harp. As the program curator for the music and workshop lineup, my concept was to create an experience that not only resonated with existing enthusiasts but also drew in the curious minds of Berlin's eclectic populace. Our venue, the historic UFA Fabrik, provided a versatile backdrop that beautifully complemented our festival's ambitions.

The core concept of the festival was to make the jew's harp appealing to a broader audience. We aimed to demonstrate that this ancient instrument holds a versatile and dynamic presence in contemporary music, capable of captivating not just seasoned players but also newcomers.

The UFA Fabrik, an old film factory, offered an ideal setting with its multifaceted spaces:

The festival tent served as the main stage for evening concerts between 7 and 10 pm.

The theatre hall was an intimate venue for afternoon performances and some night concerts, where the audience could experience the jew's harp in a closer, more personal setting.

The foyer was a lively space for the jew's harp market during the day and spontaneous jam sessions and

traditional dance lessons in the evenings.

To capture the essence of the jew's harp's versatility, we designed a varied program that included thematic days and diverse performances:

Each day began with masterclasses for both beginner and advanced players, led by virtuosos. Although the workshops were running parallel



in two dedicated rooms, I had to be careful that similar themes wouldn't overlap.

The Theatre Hall hosted "Jew's Harp Journeys," where solo and duo artists performed in a more intimate setting. These sessions allowed for a deeper connection between the musicians and the audience, offering unique

insights into the artistry of the jew's harp.

Each night featured a grand concert designed to attract larger audiences. These main events showcased well-known groups and artists, often preceded by solo performances.

There were some really interesting acts who played for the first time at an IJHF. Just to name some: The Lithuanian family band, Sheiva, played a fantastic, uplifting concert, while the Hungarian band, Terebes, made people dance to their traditional music. Varkocs from Slovakia delivered a very energetic concert on the opening night, setting a vibrant tone for the festival.

While our programming wasn't rigid, we loosely themed each day around different regions, such as Asia and Europe, to highlight the instrument's international presence. This thematic approach helped in organizing the performances while providing the audience with a diverse musical journey. On Thursday afternoon we had a very strong European traditional jew's harp music line-up in the theatre hall. On Friday the focus was on Asia and on Saturday we experienced the modern approach from young and very talented players.

Post-concert jam sessions and traditional dance teaching sessions took place in the foyer. These





informal gatherings started after the official music program ended, creating a lively and interactive environment where musicians and attendees could connect and collaborate.

One of the significant challenges we faced was inviting well-known players who had a reputation beyond the "Jew's harp world," especially since the festival did not offer a fee for the performances. The musicians' participation demonstrated their great devotion to this ancient instrument and the community. Their passion and commitment were evident in the performances and interactions throughout the festival.

Each IJHF is different and the program somehow reflects the local culture too. The 9th International Jew's Harp Festival was a vibrant celebration of an ancient instrument in a modern setting, a fantastic gathering for our global family.





# Together in Berlin

A Participant's Impressions of the 9th International Jew's Harp Festival

By Jason Siffert





9th International Jew's Harp Festival & Congress.

Can you miss this event if you play the jaw harp? At the same time, you know that you're going to find so much more, so much better. So, you will try to go beyond the kilometers, free yourself from your limits, you will set out to vibrate together, from the inside but also from the outside.

All around our musical instrument. This instrument from yesterday which continues to make our present soar. From music to rites, to values, to our cultures, to our pleasures, to our celebrations, to our meditations, to our reunions.

You count down the days. You curb your excitement. Berlin. Vibrate and play in Berlin, listen, discover and get to know each other, learn. Just think for a few seconds: play the jaw harp in Berlin and listen to the best! See those people you inspire yourself to learn from every day? They will be there, they will play, they will transmit even more passion and sounds!!!

And then, you know that you will find your companions, your Community and your friend Harm there.

And you know, that there will also be your favorite player, Neptune and that he will lead a workshop. It's still a little stressful but it will be rich and caring.

But all of this, in the end, will not really be what will happen.

The reality will be so much more extraordinary.

Because, yes, they will all be there. But, these moments of concerts by artists from all over the world, could you really expect that? Could you really hope to even one day learn to play the jaw harp from Tuyara? Rediscovering the roots with Alessandro, with Valentine, retracing the path with Leo? Learn to breathe a second time with Neptune? Feeling moved by the cross-generations between the children of Der Klang Des Glücks? Take off on the energy

of Aron, of Catlin, of Nikolai, of Joachim, of Eri...? Share a moment with all those wonderful, generous and passionate artists ?

Could we ever imagine sharing Osuokhai?

Could we ever hope to feel the spirit of John and Trân carried on every note?

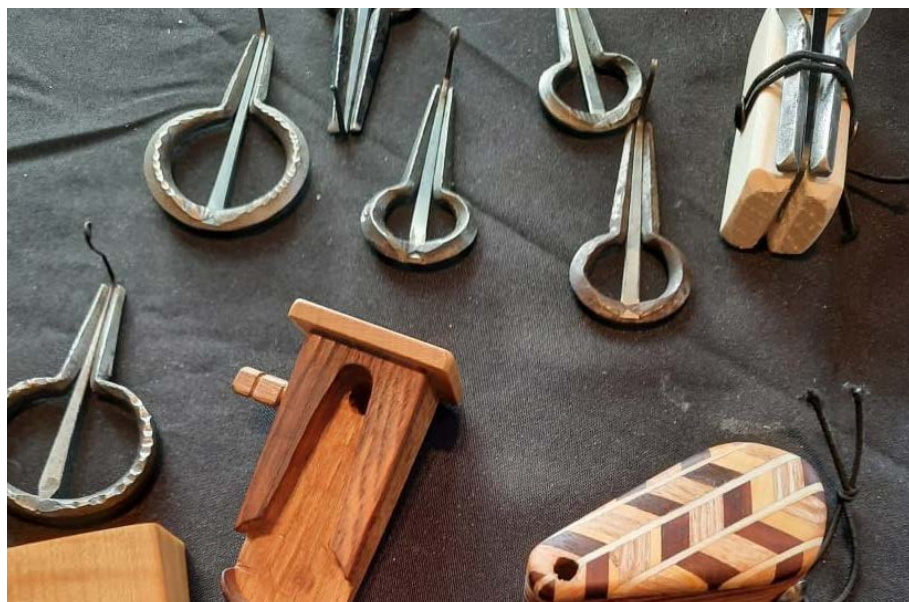
Could we ever be present when Spiridon and Bernard meet again?

Could we ever wish to make our jaw harps vibrate in unison no matter the octave, tone, note or our nationality?

Together, artists, researchers, builders. Visitors. The old, the new, the children...

Together in Berlin, for the 9th.

Together for 10th?





# TRIP TO EUSKADI

Herri Musikarren Jardunaldiak:  
a Jew's Harp Seminar in Oiartzun

By Harm Linsen and Alessandro Zolt

After taking contact with Juan Mari Beltran and Julio Bascal from Soinuenea, a cultural association focused on preserving, sharing and revitalizing the Basque traditional music heritage, for an article about the Basque jew's harp traditions (that you will read in the issue n. 8 of our Society's Journal), we had the honour to be invited to a seminar focused on the jew's harp that our Basque friends had in mind to organize. Harm and I were supposed to give a small talk and also make a musical performance.

We want to share a small "travel diary" from Harm's perspective:

I arrived a few days early of the event to have some holiday as I did not have a break since a long time. After a bus ride from Bilbao airport, I was picked up by Julio Abascal who brought me to my hotel in Oiartzun. Later that evening I was invited for Dinner by Julio Abascal and Juan Mari Beltran at a local restaurant and we talked about all things "jewsharpesque" and folk music in general. The following day I had a day off and went to San Sebastián to see the city and to visit the San Telmo Museum, a historical museum that deals with the history of the city and the Basque countries from stone age until today. In the museum the part dealing with folk music also displayed a jew's harp and in the sound sample that was played at regular intervals some jew's harp solo was heard, my first encounter with the Basque jew's harp music. Which was a positive start, my knowledge was, apart from the article I've edited for the next Journal, very limited and I was eager to learn more.

On Friday Alessandro arrived and we were invited to a lunch and a guided visit to the collections of Soinuenea. Since we were early, we were taken on a stroll along the river where the remnants of old smithies were still visible and we were told that the ruins of the biggest iron factory in the valley were not far off. Our guide in the museum was Itziar Navarro, talented musician and graduate student in Ethnomusicology. The museum's collection consists of many folk instruments typical from the Basque countries but, to put it all in perspective, also from the rest of the world; during the tour some instruments were demonstrated to us (Itziar played us a wonderful "martxa" on the Alboka) and Alessandro was invited to play one of the hurdy gurdies displayed, given that he knew how to play.

All the instruments were divided by the classification (aerophones, cordophones, idiophones etcetera) according to Hornbostel/Sachs, so we found the jew's harps among the idiophones, although I found debatable their presence among such instruments, but this is a discussion for another time.

After the tour Juan Mari showed us his extensive archive of recorded folk music starting as early as 1967 on tape, up to the digital recordings of present





Alex and Harm in front of the jew's harps of the Soinuenea collection

day. Juan Mari told us that the whole archive is now digitised and safe for the future. Later the subject changed to the valley and the local historical iron production (mines and smithies) and Juan Mari brought us the ruins of the Olaberria iron factory I mentioned before, an impressive ruin with a romantic touch to it as it is now invaded by nature.

That evening we were invited to dinner at the community social club where we finally met the Galicians (players Francis Olivier Almeida, Ramon Dopico and jew's harp maker Che Vazquez) and soon after some beers we were having an animated but very interesting discussion about the possible origins of the jew's harp in Galicia.

Next day after breakfast Alessandro and I had to do a rehearsal because we hadn't played most of the songs together before, so after a quick rehearsal we went to the town hall of Oiartzun where the seminar was. Four talks were presented Alessandro Zolt (The jew's harp in Europe: richness and complexity of an ancient tradition), Harm Linsen (Lamellate Jew's Harps from Asia, with an emphasis on, but not limited to, the Indonesian Archipelago), Francis Olivier Almeida and Che

Vazquez (Un acercamiento a la Trompa Galega) and Juan Mari Beltran (Tronpa-musugitarra Euskal Herrian). The program of the seminar is available on the Soinuenea website.

After a quick lunch we did a soundcheck, sat down on a bench in the town square to get the last details straight for our performance before we returned at the townhall to see in the afternoon Che Vasquez give a detailed demonstration of the production of a Trompa Gallega.



Juan Mari Beltran beginning his talk



Che Vazquez demonstrating the making of a Trompa Gallega

In the evening the concert started with Juan Mari Beltran and Ander Barrenetxea (who replaced last minute another player who unfortunately was sick that day) who played traditional Basque music, which Juan Mari personally collected during his long career as an ethnomusicologist.

Then it was our turn and given the fact that we only had practiced together once, I believe we managed to make a lasting impression. I think for many in the room it was a real discovery that there is more traditional jew's harp music from outside Spain, as I saw some faces clear up while we were playing. The somewhat intimate and slower performing of the traditional Piedmontese chant La Bèrgera, that Alessandro chose to close with, was the perfect end for this performance.

The last performance was by Francis Olivier Almeida, Ramón Dopico and Che Vasquez, who played in a precise and impressive manner traditional Galician Muñieras, Xotas, Waltzes and Polkas, introduced with a lot of humour by Ramón and Francis. It was beautiful to hear that many of the "sources" of the music performed



The Galicians (Che, Ramon, Francis Olivier) performing

was people that Francis, Ramon and Che knew in person.

After the performances we were interviewed by the local television ETB and we performed a small tune for them. It was very funny, later that evening, at the local communal diner seeing ourselves appearing in the news. When we walked back to our hotel we paused again at the same bar of the evening before and confirmed our new friendships over some drinks and spoke again about jew's harps and interesting developments in the Galician/Asturian region of which I may elaborate in a later stadium.

In the hotel we said goodbye and early next morning Alessandro was brought by taxi to the airport in Donostia. I spent my last day walking along the river and through the valley; returning to the village I saw the posters of our seminar hanging everywhere so I took one with me as a treasure.

It was a wonderful and enriching experience for us, not only did we discover that the jew's harp tradition in Galicia is very much alive, but we hope to have planted a seed for the revival of the instrument also in the Basque countries. We are always proud of connecting our Society with such rich and active contexts.

Eskerrik asko! Laster arte!



📅 Apirilak 13

📍 Udaletxeko areto nagusia (Oiartzun)



Laguntzailea:





# FAKE AND SCAM JEW'S HARPS ON THE INTERNET

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BY SIDNEI BASTOS

Scammers and manufacturers of low-quality instruments are taking advantage of the growing interest in jaw harps to profit.

Since mid-2023, beginners have been recurrently disappointed with their new harps even more than classic models like the "snoopy harp" ever made them.

The activity of scammers is well known on sales platforms but can still deceive those who know little about the global jaw harp market. Ads with tempting prices, below the average, even for used instruments, can be a sign that it is probably a scam.

There are cases of real advertisements on Chinese sales platforms such as Aliexpress or Shopee. They can now be found also on Ebay, Amazon, etc.

These jaw harp parodies are advertised as real instruments of "professional quality and sound", besides that, the low price and large number of ads make it look like a good option for beginners. But the bad quality is

stamped on its very existence for those who can see it.

The style of these jaw harps is always the same: instruments that look like they were not properly finished, made with inappropriate proportions and materials, apparently by someone who has never seen a jaw harp in person. Giant gaps, metal of dubious quality that even when cleaned leaves a strange taste in the mouth, non-existent sound and the design is not comfortable at all for playing.

It's not hard to find models that shamelessly imitate the shape of good harps known on the world market and even worse: some ads use photos of the originals!

Unfortunately, many buyers who do not understand how the instrument should be or how it works will give good reviews based solely on the speed of delivery, in contrast to sellers always recreating ads when they accumulate many bad reviews.

In this scenario, it is always recommended to buy jaw harps on safe platforms from makers and sellers who really understand the instrument and most important, actually appreciate it.





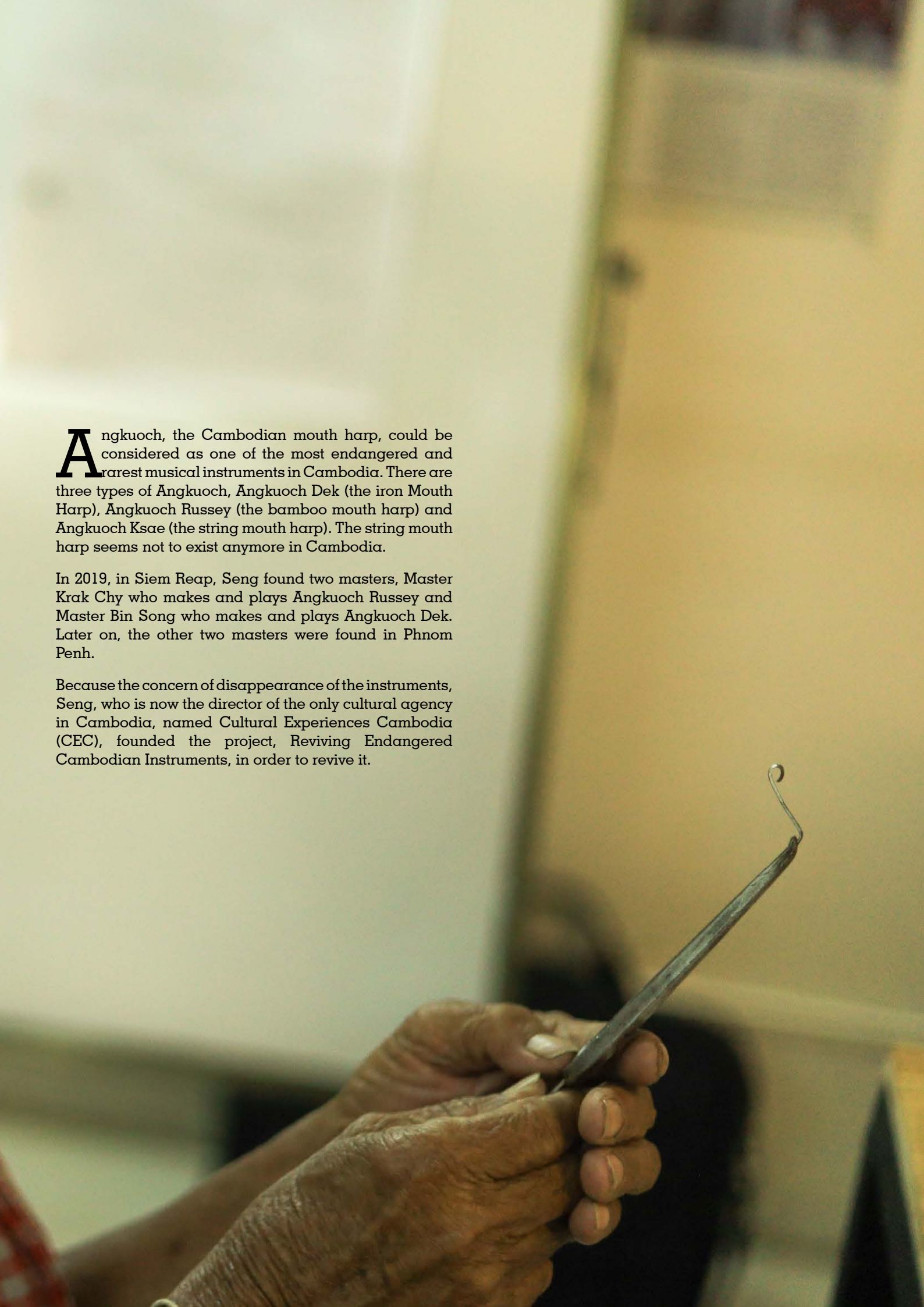


# ANGKUOCH OF CAMBODIA

Revival Workshop Project of the  
Ancient and Rare Musical Instrument of  
Cambodia

BY SONG SENG





**A**ngkuoch, the Cambodian mouth harp, could be considered as one of the most endangered and rarest musical instruments in Cambodia. There are three types of Angkuoch, Angkuoch Dek (the iron Mouth Harp), Angkuoch Russey (the bamboo mouth harp) and Angkuoch Ksae (the string mouth harp). The string mouth harp seems not to exist anymore in Cambodia.

In 2019, in Siem Reap, Seng found two masters, Master Krak Chy who makes and plays Angkuoch Russey and Master Bin Song who makes and plays Angkuoch Dek. Later on, the other two masters were found in Phnom Penh.

Because the concern of disappearance of the instruments, Seng, who is now the director of the only cultural agency in Cambodia, named Cultural Experiences Cambodia (CEC), founded the project, Reviving Endangered Cambodian Instruments, in order to revive it.



## Introductory Workshop

Since then, CEC worked to establish the Introductory Workshop on March 9, 2024, in Siem Reap. The workshop aimed at introducing Angkuoch to Cambodian people in Siem Reap community, with additional hopes that people who are living in Siem Reap and who are from different backgrounds and sectors could use the workshop as a platform to get to know each other and to get to know better their traditional arts such as Angkuoch. CEC believes that the more the people know about their own traditional arts and the values, the more support they can provide to them.

On the day, the workshop ran from 8:30 am to 11:30 am with 27 participants from the tourism sector, the arts and culture sectors and local administration.

The participants were introduced to the overview of the endangered instrument reviving project, the objectives of the workshop, and what has been done so far regarding the Angkuoch.

Seng explained, "this is the first time ever in Siem Reap to have participants from different background to have more conversation around Cambodian arts and culture, especially Angkuoch."

After Seng spoke about the aims of the workshop and how important it is for the community to be part of reviving Angkuoch, another speaker was invited to share the work of documenting the making process of Angkuoch under the collaboration in 2020 between Cambodian Living Arts in Cambodia and Griffith University in Australia with funding from the British Museum.

After that, the masters were invited to share their stories about Angkuoch, what Angkuoch is, and how to play it, while a bamboo Angkuoch was distributed to each participant. Each participant practiced it with fun and big surprise.

Some participant said "Seeing this instrument at first, I thought it was a fishing tool. With my 50 years old, this is my first time to see this instrument" and another said, "I thought I knew many Cambodian musical instruments, but this one I just got to know it here".







## Intensive Workshop on Teaching How To Make and Play Angkuoch Dek and Russey

After the introductory workshop, CEC released an open-call to recruit 6 trainees who have a background as musicians and/or instrument makers. The open call was released from March 15 to April 15, 2024.

Out of the six selected trainees (4 males and 2 females), 4 musicians are from Siem Reap and the other 2 are Kouy minority are from Stung Treng province, which takes about 6 and a half hours from Siem Reap by car.

The workshop ran for two days at Wat Bo Heritage Hub on the 27th and 28th of April 2024. On the first day before starting the workshop, all participants went to pay their respect to the head monk of Wat Bo monastery. After that, the workshop started with its introduction session so that the masters and trainees got to know each other better.

After the introduction session, the trainees were divided into three groups of two people. One group went with Master Krak Chy to learn how to make a bamboo Angkuoch, one went with Master Bin Song to learn how to make Angkuoch Dek with traditional ways of making, and another went with Master Keo Malis and Mao Samnang to learn how to make Angkuoch Dek with



another style by using a power hand tool.

On the 2nd day, the trainees switched to learn with other masters. All trainees worked so hard with full concentration on how to make it from the masters. Some trainees mentioned that this is their first time even carrying a such sharp knife or power hand tools like that. One female trainee who is from Stung Treng said, "I used to make baskets, but never carry such tools, hammers, files, etc. However, I already committed myself to come and learn about it".

Finally, all trainees went back home with the instruments they made during the two day workshop.

Because the making process required so much time, the trainees had very little time to learn how to play Angkuoch.

Seng said that he will keep in touch with the students to encourage them to continue to practice the Angkuoch making. Seng wants to conduct such amazing workshop with the same trainees, but this time the workshop should spend more time on learning how to play, and less time on learning how to make.





# Cantar al Ferro, Italian Renaissance music featuring the Scacciapensieri L'Aquilegia

by Harm J. Linsen



Last August Federico Rossignoli and Teodora Tommasi recorded a CD with 8 tracks of music from the Renaissance. Tracks 7 and 8 are alternative takes of track 5 and track 1 respectively. Although there is a jew's harp in every track played by Federico, the harp and voice of Teodora makes this more than just a jew's harp record, it is a record with Renaissance music! Most of the pieces are from northern Italian sources. The Moresca and the Ruggiero are, as Federico puts it, "international" dances in the sense that there are more sources where one could find these, also sources outside Italy. All the music on the CD is from the XVI century.

The cover of the CD depicts the jester Gyggerilis who worked at the court of emperor Maximilian, it is a detail from the sheet "The Fools", from the woodcut series, The Triumph of the Emperor Maximilian by Hans Burkmaier, circa 1515.

Listening to the CD it is clear that the jew's harp is well suited for Renaissance music. Federico plays in a melodic style and the voice and double harp of Teodora completes the picture. I don't recommend this CD to be played as a background drone but to sit down and listen to it and

enjoy. My favorite track? I guess I have to decide on 'Fuggi, fuggi, fuggi da questo Cielo', although the choice is not easy to make.

If you are interested in a copy you can contact Federico directly via his Facebook account but apparently there are many online platforms where it can be found online. <http://www.facebook.com/federico.rossignoli.182>



# NEWS OF THE JAW HARP STAGE IN RUSSIA 2024

by Irina Bogatyreva

**T**he situation on the jaw harp stage in Russia has completely changed since 2022. Many big jaw harp players and makers have moved away, and nowadays we don't have as many concerts and events as we used to.

The main event during the last 3 years is the Russian Jaw harp Festival named after Vladimir Markov, which is organized by me and my friend from St. Petersburg, Varvara Letyagina, who works at the Sheremetev's Palace – The State Museum of Music. Earlier, we ran this festival together with Vladimir. It was his idea to create a jaw harp festival to teach people how to play Russian folk music on the jaw harp and to provide a place for collaboration with folk musicians. After his passing away, Varvara and I continued his legacy. The festival has taken place in St. Petersburg for the last 3 years. It lasts for 2 days, during which we arrange several workshops for players of different levels, a workshop for makers by Dmitry Babaev (he even offered a big, whole-day excursion to his workplace last year!), lectures about the history and culture of jaw harp and two concerts featuring jaw harp players and folk ensembles. Over the years, special guests at our festival have included Kutman Sultanbekov (Kyrgyzstan) and Erkin Alexeev (Yakutia). All the main jaw harp players have participated in this festival: Vitaly Obukhov, Igor Dmitriev, Dmitry Solomin, Maxim Tamonov, Axenty Beskrovny, and myself, among others. Last year, a competition for jaw harp makers was held at the festival, where makers submitted their instruments for judging in three categories high, medium, and low sound. The absolute winner was Oleg Schipanov, whose instruments won in all categories!

Here's a video about the festival in 2022 <https://youtu.be/b2TZRoQcuMY>

The second important event is the folk festival "Slovisha" in Novgorod the Great. It is a festival of ancient musical instruments, and the jaw harp also plays a significant role there because Novgorod is one of the medieval cities in Russia where 12 ancient jaw harp s were found. In previous years, there was a special jaw harp stage for specific events such as performances by jaw harp players, workshops, and lectures. All the main jaw harp players of Russia have taken part in this festival: Vladimir Markov, Nikolay Sobolev, Axenty Beskrovny, Igor Dmitriev, Vitaly Obukhov, Dmitry Solomin, and myself.

Here's a video of my ensemble "In the deep water" playing on the festival "Slovicha" <https://youtu.be/7EjhrDtwMXc>

This year, Varvara Letyagina and I are going to organize a large exhibition of jaw harp s titled "The Way of the Jaw harp," and it is important to us that it will take place in Novgorod the Great too, at the State Historical Museum which is located at the territory of the Kremlin. It was Vladimir Markov's idea to hold a major exhibition of ancient and ethnographical instruments in the European part of Russia because there we don't have a good representation in any museums despite some having good collections.

We aim to present the jaw harp as a musical instrument from various cultures around the world, as an ancient instrument and an interesting and contemporary musical instrument too. The exhibition will open at the end of July and will last for 2 months. The Festival of Russian Jaw harp named after Vladimir Markov will open the exhibition on its first day. I hope it will be the main jaw harp event of this summer, and the exhibition will become an important event in the study of the jaw harp in Russia too.



# SPEND THE DAY ENJOYING MUKKURI AT LAKE AKAN

BY LEO TADAGAWA





On 23rd March, an event called "Kyou wa Ichinichi Mukkuri Zanmai (Today we spend the day enjoying mukkuri)" – a whole day dedicated to the Ainu traditional jew's harp was held at Upopoy - National Ainu Museum and Park in Shiraoi, Hokkaido. It was planned by and under initiative of Nomoto Masahiro (the Deputy Director of Upopoy National Park Management Headquarters, the former Director of the Ainu Museum in Shiraoi).

On 7th March, he invited me to Lake Akan, to have a meeting with the planned participating mukkuri players from the district - Yamamoto Eiko (who took part in the 3rd International Jew's Harp Congress/Festival in Austria 1998, 4th IJHC/F Norway 2002 and 5th one in the Netherlands 2006), Toko Midori (3rd and 5th), Goukon Fukiko (7th Yakutia 2011 and 9th Berlin 2022), and the staffs of Upopoy including Kawakami Sayaka (9th), a good mukkuri player of the next generation, and her cousin Yamamich Yomaru, who was in charge of exhibition part of the event.

After the meeting, Eiko and Midori took me to meet Teshi Shigiko at her place, who was the regular participant of the International Jew's Harp Congress/Festival for several times (2nd Yakutia 1991, 3rd and 4th). It is always a great pleasure for me to meet her - an excellent mukkuri player, and one of the members of Japan Jew's Harp Association since its establishment in 1990.

Next day we visited Suzuki Kimiyo's workshop at Kushiro, also to have a meeting about the event, and to select the things for the exhibition. She took part in the 4th, 5th, 7th,

8th Taucha 2014 and 9th IJHC/Fs, was the prize winner of the non-metal section of the maker's contest at 7th IJHC/F in Yakutia 2011. I don't get to see them very often, so it was a great reunion for me.

After two weeks' concentrated preparation, the first mukkuri-centered event at Upopoy was held. The event was consisted from several parts:

1) lecture-concert by Eiko, Midori, Fukiko, Kimiyo, Sayaka and myself, introducing mukkuri and jew's harp cultures of the world, and also talking about past IJHC/Fs. The author showed the slides, and each

participants had speeches on their impressions of the congresses and festivals they took part, and played their instruments separately, and together at the end.

2) exhibition of the Jew's harps from the world, and posters of the past IJHC/Fs, from the author's collection.

3) playing workshops by the staffs of Upopoy and the

participants.

4) making demonstrations by Suzuki Kimiyo and Masaaki at the venue where their working place is reproduced, and also the materials and making processes were exhibited.

5) making workshops by Upopoy staffs.

6) video screening of "Sound of Mukkuri" (Japan Jew's Harp Association / Tokyo Cinema 1998/2018) where Shigiko is playing one of the important roles.





It became a good event not only for the people who are just interested in the Ainu cultural elements, but also for the Ainu from other communities, and even for the staffs of Upopoy to make them notice the importance of this tiny instrument among the world people's culture, and to give them information on the IJHC/F which should be planned in Hokkaido in near future.

The next day of the event, I spent whole day at Upopoy, to experience the mukkuri related phenomenon of the venue's "everyday-life." Among many of them, there were metal jew's harps of the Sakhalin Ainu, bamboo ones of the Hokkaido Ainu, and illustrations in the thematical exhibitions of "Marl the Ghost and Some Beautiful Words" – a picture book by Rei Nakai and Kehtaro, in the exhibitions at National Ainu Museum, traditional performing stages including dances and a tune on mukkuri at Cultural Exchange Hall, and dolls of TureppoN, the Upopoy's mascot - the giant lily bulb girl playing on the mukkuri at some places, etc. Of course, I didn't forget to buy a pack of custard cakes with the package of mukkuri-playing TureppoN illustration, as a souvenir.

After one week of calming down, on the 1st of April, I got news which tell that Teshi Shigiko has passed away. I couldn't believe it at first, because she was so fine when I met her less than one month before, and also because of the date (yes, she was really fond of joking). Anyway, a great supporter of the Japan Jew's Harp Association (we have been using her image for the banner of our internet sites with her consent for long time, because the mukkuri of the Ainu is one of the most important jew's harp cultures of Japan, along with the iron jew's harp in Honshu and south, which once existed and is currently being revitalized), a good friend of the jew's harp players of the world, who really wanted to have the IJHC/F in her hometown Lake Akan has passed away at age 93.





**Photo captions:**

9

1. Lake Akan
2. Banner of the Mukkuri Event
3. Yamamoto Eiko
4. Visiting Teshi Shigiko at Akan, with Yamamoto Eiko and Toko Midori
5. Traditional houses exhibition at Upopoy garden
6. Suzuki Kimiyo at the exhibition
7. Nomoto Masahiro and the author at Lake Akan
8. Upopoy mascot TureppoN the giant lily bulb girl playing mukkuri
9. Goukon Fukiko
10. Kawakami Sayaka





# ECHOES OF THE PAST

## The Museo del Trompe and the Cycle of Collections

By Nico Trompe

**L**otte Horowitz, after managing to escape from Germany during World War II, had been living in Chile for over half a century. After doing her morning yoga on the frosty grass at her home in Santiago, and having breakfast, I arrived, her grandson, no older than 5 years old, to visit her. This meeting had a very clear and anticipated agenda for both of us: we were going to review the objects collected from the communities of Chiloé, an island in the south of Chile where she had been writing her anthropological book "Cucao, Land of Solitudes" for several decades. Under the shelf of objects from India, between an Amazonian monkey head and remains of pottery from a highland archaeological excavation, there were a couple of Mapuche Trompes, world known as Mouth Harps, Jew's Harps and another 1000 names.

Being a natural collector, the private museum she maintained in a small house in her backyard was just one of her many passions. She started "The Pitines," a vast array of miniatures, at the age of 5, which now, over a hundred years later, remains a treasured assembly. Separately, she developed her own jewelry creations and an array of polished gems. For me, having the honor to sit down, observe, and inquire about every curiosity I had, and to handle and return these treasures, was a tremendous privilege. Recognizing my keen interest in collecting and valuing often underappreciated objects, she encouraged me to start my own collections. First, she gifted me her stamp collection, begun in Europe, for me to continue. Later, she assisted me in cataloging items we gathered together during a trip to Rapa Nui when I was ten years old.

At that time, my interests were more aligned with Michael Jackson, MC Hammer, and The Ninja Turtles, so I did not pursue the collecting path she had hoped to inspire in me. We continued to work on her collections until her death, by which time she was over a hundred and I was nearing forty. After turning 30, I took a break from my architectural career and moved to Stockholm, where I began an audiovisual series about cultural and art projects across Europe. It was named "La Ruta del Trompe," which translates to "The Road of the Jew's Harp." Although the instrument was more of an icon than the focus of the project, it symbolized the journey and exploration that defined the series.

A series of rapid, transformative events unfolded: a TV channel expressed interest in continuing to feature my content, transforming my project into a broadcasted TV show. During this frenetic period, while recording the second season, I found myself live performing with a Mouth Harp alongside a DJ at a party in Venice. Many attendees persistently claimed that the instrument originated from Sicily. This intrigue led me to travel to Catania and meet Luca Recupero, a prominent Marranzano player and promoter. He introduced me to the diverse world of the Jew's Harp, illustrating its significance in various cultures globally. He also encouraged me to attend the upcoming "Ancient Trance Festival" in Germany, where, in 2013, the International Jew's Harp Society congress was being held.

From that point, I dedicated myself to filming a third and fourth season of La Ruta del Trompe, traveling to meet the principal makers in India, Nepal, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, and beyond. Following this extensive journey, my collection expanded to include around 180 pieces from 17 countries, each piece sourced directly from the hands of its creator.

Until then, the collection was displayed in a private museum within a few showcases in my apartment. Merging my architectural skills, I transformed an old house into the cultural center known as Los Piñones with the help of close friends and collaborators. This led to the opening of the second version of the Museo del Trompe in a more public



setting. The inauguration featured Diego Pascal Panarello while he promoted his movie, *\*The Strange Sound of Happiness\**. The event's Mouth Harp jam session was so crowded and vibrant that it inspired us to host monthly gatherings at the same venue.

Inspired by Lotte's passing, I felt a heightened responsibility to preserve and share the collection. We meticulously cataloged each piece, elevating the research and labeling to new heights. Our primary goal was to secure the museum's official recognition as an accredited institution.

As the saying goes, what goes up must come down, and this project was no exception. Just as the Cultural Center and the Museum were flourishing, a major social uprising struck Chile in 2019, delivering a severe hit. This chaos was soon compounded by the pandemic a few months later, serving as a knockout punch to the entire initiative. We were forced to shut down the space, and the collections were relegated to a dark storage corner. It seemed like the definitive end of the museum.

The winds of change carried me to Germany, where I found a new beginning. There, I married, had a beautiful child, and settled into a life that allowed me to take a pause from my artistic pursuits. This paradigm shift redirected my usual hyperactivity towards raising my family and maintaining our balance. For a couple of years, this was my world.

Step by step, in a new city, grappling with a new language, and surrounded by talented colleagues, the time had come for the collection to see the light again. The promise of a new collective studio space in Kreuzberg, Berlin was the catalyst needed to transport the instruments and establish a new home for them—the third iteration of the museum.

Now, applying what I had learned, this new showcase wasn't meant to be fixed in one place. During the building renovation, we created niches in the hallway wall connecting the artists' studios. These spaces were intended as "parking spots" for 16 backlit showcases, each housed within standard-sized wooden "utility boxes." The idea was to detach them from the wall for flexibility, allowing us to relocate them as needed for talks and festivals. This initiative sparked numerous music and performance collaborations, breathing new life into my artistic career.

In a sudden moment, I find myself after my morning yoga and breakfast, standing before this third version of the museum now in Germany. Here, I am showcasing the collection to someone, unraveling the stories behind each piece. It feels both fitting and intriguing to be at this point of my life, sharing what I perceive as my grandmother's legacy in a country she once had to leave.





Young csángó girl learning the doromb at an afterschool lesson in Cleja, Romania.



Pável Istók, playing doromb in the "clean room" of his parents' old house, Cleja, Romania

# DOROMB RENAISSANCE IN TRANSYLVANIA

BY ÁRON SZILÁGYI

A glimpse on the jew's harp traditions and present activities of the Hungarian speaking *Moldvai Csángó* people in Romania.



When we Hungarians talk about traditional Hungarian music, we don't mean the present borders of Hungary, but rather ethnical Hungary which covers mostly historical Hungary -as we call it- that existed until World War I. The five big Hungarian folk music dialects are spread all over the Carpathian basin and a bit beyond. The only music dialect, where jew's harp is played authentically is the most eastern and most archaic one, the Moldva region.

Moldva is a region in Romania, over the Carpathian Mountains, but it is connected to the vast historical region of Transylvania. It should not be mistaken with Moldavia, which is a neighbouring republic. In Moldva there is a Hungarian minority, the Moldvai Csángó people. They have been living there in an isolation from the rest of the Hungarian speaking regions for centuries. Their language, ornaments, folk costumes, dances, music and musical instruments are quite different from the rest of the Hungarian speaking regions. In some cases it is closer to Romanian traditions.

Jew's harp has never played a main role in the Csángó music and in fact the tradition almost died out. There are some short and poor quality recordings from the 80's. Luca Hodorog's jew's harp playing from Cleja (see picture) was recorded. There are some families where the knowledge of Doromb (jew's harp in Hungarian) playing have been passed on from generation to generation. Today Pavel Istok plays an important role in populating the csángó doromb music. In the recent years he played solo on big Hungarian folk events in Hungary, too, so doromb has become more acknowledged as a csángó Hungarian folk instrument besides the ones that everybody knows: koboz (lute), flutes, drum and fiddle, of course.

As the jew's harp has almost been forgotten, it was needed to re-teach it to kids. It was more than 10 years ago when I first went to Moldva. The organisers of the Szeret-menti Folk Singing Competition invited me to give a workshop to the folk singer school-kids. Most of these kids didn't even know what a jew's harp was, so first I had to make a little introduction and make it kind of a cool thing. I thought them the basic technical things, but it was the local folk musicians, singers and



flute players who taught the actual songs to play. In the moldvai csángó music the jew's harp traditionally plays what the flute player plays but in a simplified way. Some years later I went back and met the kids in Cleja (Klészse in Hungarian) who went to the after-school Hungarian school. In Moldva there are no Hungarian speaking school, so kids can "be Hungarians", speak their mother tongue and learn about their cultural heritage in the afternoons, when the regular school hours are over. Pál Benke is a key figure of this cultural heritage education. Pál is a good doromb player too, so he could work on with the kids I gave workshop to at the after-school lesson. They even performed at the Global Vibes jew's harp festival in Kecskemét, Hungary (see image above).



This April a great folk flutist and teacher, Ferenc Ségercz organised a folk camp for young Hungarian and Romanian jazz and folk musicians. We were working together for three days. These very talented young artists got "infected" with the doromb and started to use their new instrument in their improvisation workshops too. (See image below.)

At this folk camp I met two members of the Romanian folk band Noi Si Vechi. They play traditional Romanian ethno music and the jew's harp play a very important role in their music. (See picture in the middle.) There are more and more people Transylvania, Hungarians and Romanians as well who re-discover this forgotten instrument. Some popular alternative ethno bands, like the Romanian Subcarpati, or the Hungarian Zuboly or Zoord, help this process as they involve less-known traditional instruments in their music.







# *Spiridon Shishigin*

## *Last Year's Events in Pictures*

*Text by Franz Kumpl*  
*Photos from Spiridon Shishigin*

At the beginning of the 1960s, Ivan Yegorovich Alexeyev, called "Khomus Uybaan" (3rd from right), founded the Jew's harp ensemble "Algys". This marked the beginning of the rebirth of popular as well as artistic Jew's harp playing in Sakha-Yakutia. (Above)

Famous members of this ensemble include Albina Degtyareva (3rd from left), Nikolay Zhirkov (1st from right) and Spiridon Shishigin (2nd from right). Albina founded her own women's ensemble "Ayarkhaan". Spiridon Shishigin became one of the worldwide renown jew's harp-soloists. (Below)







The dynasty of teachers, with Nikolay Shishigin (1st from left), former director of the Khomus Museum and General Secretary of the IJHS.

On the 100th anniversary of the birth of Shishigin's father Spiridon Vasilevich, the Shishigin family, a dynasty of teachers, held a competition for young khomus players in the village of Tabaga, where the Shishigins were born.

Golden marriage of Gera Afanasevna Shishigina and Spiridon Spiridonovich Shishigin in May 2023.



The young winners of the competition







Spiridon Shishigin donates to the Khomus museum an ancient Yakut khomus. To the right Dmitry Byastinov, director of the museum



Presentation of a book about the outstanding khomus-maker Ivan Kononovich Kolodeznikov, who died in 2021. To honor the 50th anniversary of the birthday of Kolodeznikov, also a competition of khomus players of the Vilyuisk district was held.

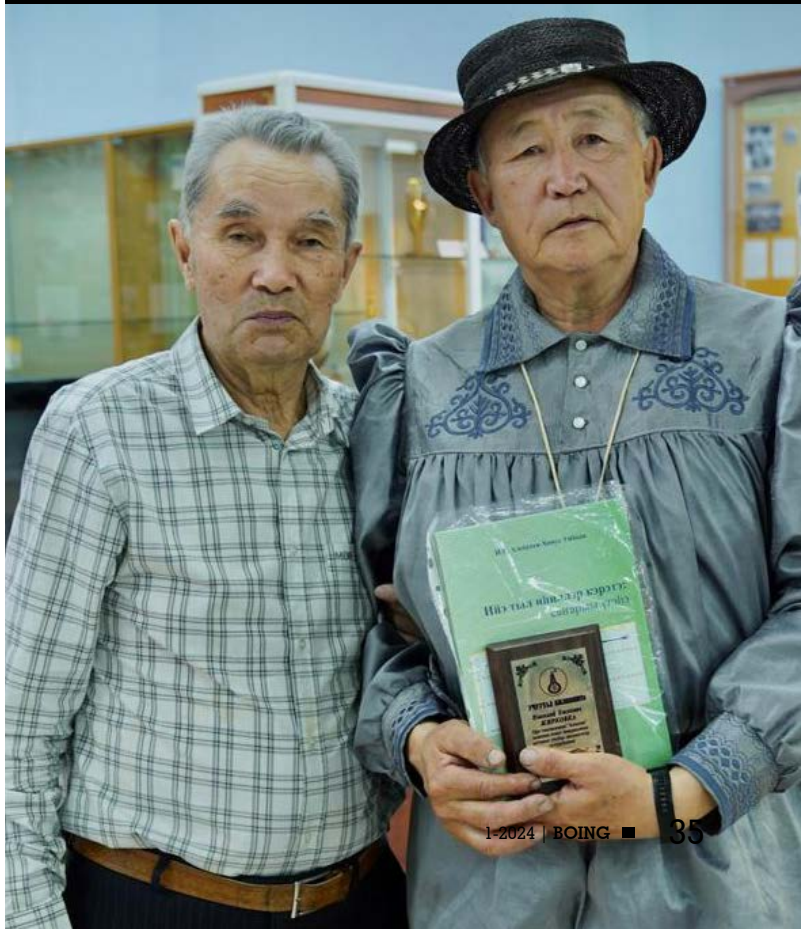


Poster of Spiridon Shishigin's personal concert in March 2024, with special guest Soeren Birke, organizer of the 9th IJHF in Berlin in 2022.



Spiridon regularly visits Mongolia to support the renaissance of the Mongolian jew's harp. Here with Khukhenduu, bearer of traditional style of playing the Mongolian jew's harp Khel Khuur.

65 years of jew's harp-player Nikolay Zhirkov. With Khomus Uybaan.





# ELEVEN HOURS

by Irina Bogatyreva and Mark Growden

**E**leven Hours is an international musical collaboration founded by us, jawharpists Irina Bogatyreva from Russia and Mark Growden from the USA, championing the rich cultural heritage of the jaw harp. We chose the name "Eleven Hours" because we usually are 11 hours apart, but it doesn't matter if you want to play together. Over the past four years, we have been rehearsing weekly online, except for brief pauses at the start of the war, during Irina's pregnancy, and when the Dixie Fire threatened Mark's hometown for three consecutive weeks.



We've composed 12 tunes. Originally, we planned to record half of our pieces in the USA and half in Russia. However, when the war began, we chose Kyrgyzstan instead. This decision proved ideal as Kyrgyzstan has a strong jawharp tradition and provided a welcoming environment for collaboration with musicians Kutman Sultanbekov from Kyrgyzstan and Erkin Alexeev from Sakha (Yakutia). Although we initially planned to focus only on our duo material, we quickly embraced flexibility and included Kutman and Erkin's unique talents, resulting in several pieces for their upcoming album.

During rehearsals and recordings, Kutman maintained his dedication to the project despite fasting for Ramadan.



In the evenings, all of us were honored guests at a few semi-formal dinners, where Kutman could finally break his fast and enjoy the incredible local cuisine with everyone.

It was a fascinating experience to work with Kutman and Erkin, who are both outstanding players from different traditions. During our time together, we both, Irina and Mark, were struck by the distinctive hand motions used by Kyrgyz jawharpists, as if they were drawing the melody in the air for listeners. Finally meeting each other in person was also a joy, solidifying the partnership we've built over the years.

All together, we held a concert (some tunes can be found online) and recorded four tunes that we had rehearsed during the days we spent together. We were especially delighted to discover a strong love for jaw harp music in Kyrgyzstan! The audience at the concert was fantastic; they even started singing along to some tunes they recognized. Kutman Sultanbekov even invited us to his jaw harp classes to meet his students. It's always heartwarming to see young people learning to play the jaw harp; it shows that the tradition is alive.

We are dedicated to bridging cultures through the universal language of music and eagerly look forward to continuing our journey with "Eleven Hours."

Where're some links for videos from the concert:  
<https://youtu.be/Ybo7Laoq8Bc?si=3veVdbLRXs41DMky>  
<https://youtu.be/QW36M5FK9hA?si=JIUwnkDFsevdJBUS>  
<https://youtu.be/DZ7tDBTOLSw?si=FPiN-37P6gMbjwtL>



# *An Entire World to Discover, Study and Share*

*by Alessandro Zolt and Harm Linsen*

To shed light on every aspect of our beloved instrument, this is the simple yet complicated mission of the Journal of the International Jew's Harp Society. And to do so we try to connect to any expert, scholar or jew's harp aficionado from every corner of the world in order to give the possibility to share and divulge knowledge and passion.

Subjects may vary a lot: historical, anthropological, literary but also musical and of course artistic. Everything about the jew's harp discussed and exposed in a deep and thorough manner is what you will find in our Journal and most importantly what we want you to experience in the future issues.

This is a little preview of some of the contents we are working with lately for our latest issue (n. 8):

- an essay about the presence of the jew's harp in metal music (by Deirdre Morgan and Owen Coggins)
- the description of jew's harp traditions in: Sweden (by Klas Edholm af Wikström), Basque Country (by Juan Mari Beltran and Julio Abascal), Slovakia (by Erik Turtev)
- the transcription of the melody of historical recording made in Southern Italy (by Lorenzo D'Erasmo and Alessandro Zolt)
- the presentation of a jew's harp cultural centre in Mongolia (by Munkhimeg Ayush)
- the analysis of a particular African musical instrument sometimes confused for the jew's harp: the Ruwenge (by Harm Linsen)

But of course we are always in search of new subjects, so if you want to propose one, send us a draft or something else related to our activity, please contact us through our dedicated mail: [editorial@jewsharpsociety.org](mailto:editorial@jewsharpsociety.org)

So be sure to subscribe to our society on the official website (<https://jewsharpsociety.org>) and become a member to be able to read the new issue of our Journal as soon as it will be published and also to have access to all our publications: all the numbers of VIM, the predecessor of our Journal (1982-2003) and of course all previous issues of the Journal (2004-present).

# *Our Journal*





*The second annual World Jaw Harp Music Festival will be held in Taiwan from November 20 to 24, 2024, creating a utopian village filled with ancient vibrations and fantastical elements.*

*This festival will bring together global jaw harp artists and Taiwanese indigenous music traditions, offering role-playing adventures and immersive musical experiences. Participants can enjoy diverse markets and workshops, featuring masterclasses, traditional music, and a fusion of sound, body, and nature.*

Information:

Taiwan World Jaw Harp Music Festival 2.0  
The Manifestation of Ancient Vibration

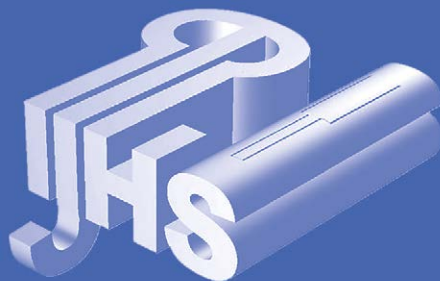
Sanyi Township, Miaoli County, Taiwan

November 20(Wed.)-24(Sun.), 2024

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jawharpistsparadise/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/jawharpistsparadise/>

Ticketing Platform: <https://jawharpfestivaltw.oen.tw/>



# The International Jew's Harp Society (IJHS)

The International Jew's Harp Society (IJHS) is a non-profit organisation established at the 3rd International Jew's Harp Festival and Congress in 1998 in Molln/Austria, with the aim of bringing together as many of the enthusiasts for the instrument as possible.

The International Jew's Harp Society is a globally acknowledged authority that reflects and represents the ancient and diverse traditions, the colourfulness and the future of the jew's harp. Our Society is a global organisation that functions as an umbrella for players, researchers, makers, enthusiasts, and dedicated festivals.

Not only does the IJHS organise international congresses that involve players from around the globe, but also publish an increasingly acknowledged Journal, a blog and an online newsletter.

Visit our website [jewsharpsociety.org](https://jewsharpsociety.org) and follow us on our [Facebook page](#) !



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Register and join us now through this QR-Code !



<https://jewsharpsociety.org/membership-form>