

BOING

Newsletter of the International Jew's Harp Society

ISSUE 001
1-2023

FESTIVAL IN TAIWAN

The Resonant Path: Hong Hong's Jew's
Harp Journey from Discovery to Festival
Organisation



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EDITORIAL



Áron Szilágyi

Editor in Chief

I am delighted that the completely revamped, magazine-style newsletter of the International Jew's Harp Society is launched. We plan to publish two issues a year.

The jew's harp not only invites players on an inner journey, but also provides many of us with the motivation to explore different parts of the world to learn more about this magical instrument and to meet people with similar interests. The doromb is an instrument of connections. In this issue we adventure from Patagonia to Taiwan and Kyrgyzstan on the wings of the jew's harp. You'll read reports from concerts, festivals, exhibitions and conferences, and find out how the University of Malta has made the previously invisible part of doromb playing visible. You can find out what skill level you are at and even some winter festival recommendation could fit in at the end. Read between your jew's harp jammings with love!



IJHS in times of troubled water

East and West are more and more drifting apart. The pandemic and the conflicts in Ukraine and Israel have undoubtedly reinforced nationalistic tendencies worldwide. When I became president of the International Jew's Harp Society in 1998, the main objectives were about the rapprochement and union of East and West, about equality, balance and mutual understanding. Now, 25 years later and over 30 years after the end of the Cold War, there again are fundamental conflicts splitting the world's societies.

Under these emotionalized conditions, "politicizing" and "positioning oneself politically" can quickly lead to serious conflicts and opposing parties within the jaw harp-world. Yet, culture cannot be non-political or beyond politics. When politics functionalize culture, artists are forced to take a position. As for the IJHS, it is not our job to condemn or praise anybody's behavior and way of dealing with the conflicts. But we may explicitly express our dissent with warmongers and aggressive nationalists on any side, but above all we shall build and strengthen bridges between East and West, North and South, beyond political ideologies and religions. Our objective shall be the peaceful polyphonic harmony of jaw harp-cultures on this vulnerable planet Earth.

Franz Kumpl, Schlierbach/Austria, 7 November 2023



Impressum

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Become a member! See details on the last page!

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9th November, 2023

Impressions from my

VISIT TO KYRGYZSTAN

by Leo Tadagawa



In the end of April, I got an invitation to the 7th World Epics Festival from its organiser, through a cultural staff of the Kyrgyz Embassy to Japan, and I simply decided to accept it. Since I had less than a month to spare, I immediately started to contact my friends in Kyrgyzstan and began preparing for the visit.



With participants to the World Epics Festival

This was my fourth trip to Kyrgyzstan. The first one was back in 1994, to meet Jew's harp friends – musicians and makers whom I got acquainted during the 2nd. International Jew's Harp Congress in Yakutia 1991.

My second trip in 2003 was to conduct field recordings with Svein Westad from Norway, for making a CD album with Kyrgyz musicians (mainly the people whom I met in the first trip). As a result, the CD "Tak-Teke – Dancing Mountain Goat" was issued from Japan Jew's Harp Association.

Then, in 2018, I took part in the 3rd. World Nomad Games (it is like an Olympic games of the nomadic peoples) in Issyk Kul Area, because my project "Jew's Harp Players from Different Places of the World" was adopted as one of the cultural programs of this sports event. Ivan Alexeyev (Sakha), Rajashekar Bhimachar (India), Áron Szilágyi and Béla Drabant (Hungary), Talgat Kozhbanov (Kazakhstan), Emi Toko and Fukiko Goukon (the Ainu, Japan), Takashi Yamazaki and me (Japan) were the member of this project, which was lately called "Musicians from Varganistan". We had



Young temir komuzists (iron Jew's harp players) of the Educational Complex No.69 Photo: Leo Tadagawa

several stages together and separately during the event. During the spectacle at the opening ceremony, there was a scene where 400 ooz komuz (Jew's harp, literary means mouth-lute/instrument) players played one tune together (during the previous Games, komuz (3-stringed

lute, a Kyrgyz national instrument) was played by 1,000 musicians). But very unfortunately we missed to see this part by our own eyes, because we should stay outside of the stadium, preparing for the parade introducing participating countries...

So, this was one of the reasons that I should visit Kyrgyzstan again.

The Epic Festival was held in Osh, the second-largest city in Kyrgyzstan, located in the south part of the country. There, rather unexpectedly but at the same time to my delight, I could meet many friends not only from Kyrgyz Republic, but also from counties of former Soviet Union – Sakha (Yakutia), Khakassia, Tyva, Kalmykia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and others, because some of these places are very difficult to visit now. The event was well-organized, with opening and closing concerts, symposium and



Kutmanaaly Sultanbekov and Leo Tadagawa



excursions to the museums and historical town Uzgen.

After the four day's festival, I stayed more four days in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyz Republic. In this bustling city, I could experience modern Jew's harp situation, with helps of my Kyrgyz friends. I'm very grateful to them. Especially, Kutmanaaly Sultanbekov helped me much. He is a ooz komuz player who did a solo during the 400 players' mass performance, one of the nine "World Virtuosi" chosen in the contest in 2022, a participant to the 9th International Jew's Harp Festival (2022, Berlin). Kutman took me to the places where he works such as National University of Culture and Art, Educational Complex (elementary and junior high school) No.69, and Traditional Music Center "Ustatshakirt". In each place, I could experience the astonishing development of the ooz komuz scene in Kirgiziya. Especially, when I was invited in a hall of the school No. 69, full of young Jew's harp players, I felt my dream came true (at least half of it, as there were about 200 students). Besides that, so many students welcomed me with the komuz mass playing and the manas mass epic telling, and one ensemble consist of elder students played excellent music.

Kutman told me that he wanted to organise the International Festival someday in Kyrgyzstan. I thought it is very reasonable and good thing to look forward. |



3rd grade pupils of the Kölcsey Ferenc Primary School and Gymnasium in Debrecen, Hungary Photo: Krisztián Almási

PLUCKING IN THE CLASSROOM

BY ÁRON SZILÁGYI

In Hungarian primary school music education, Doromb (Jew's harp in Hungarian) is only very marginally included. In the list of Hungarian folk instruments for primary school students, it is mentioned that there is such an instrument, and one or two more enthusiastic teachers bring it to singing lessons and show the instrument to the children. There are also some teachers who screen in class instructional videos on the Doromb found on YouTube. For a long time, I have been thinking about how, in addition to the many demonstration sessions in schools, this ancient instrument could be better integrated into singing and music lessons and introduced to children.

So I was very happy when, in the summer of 2020, after the first COVID quarantine, Viola Kursinszky, the music teacher of the Kölcsey Ferenc Primary School and Gymnasium in Debrecen, contacted me that she wanted to hold lessons with her seven-year-old pupils in the school setting. In August of that year, she visited us in Kecskemét, and in a full-day workshop we discussed how I think it is best to teach certain playing techniques. Together, we put together a curriculum that could be well integrated into the curriculum of the Hungarian folk-based music education in the lower grades. The school purchased 30 rather soft-spring Jew's harps tuned to E for the students.

Unfortunately, due to online teaching and later the constant wearing of masks and the need to make up for a lot of missed lessons, the whole project was delayed for a very long time. However, for May 2023, the teacher and the children put together a very nice show for the end-of-year celebration based on Hungarian folk songs and ancient rhymes. In

September this year I visited the school, met the class and showed them some new playing techniques, we had a good workshop and jam together and agreed with the school management to continue the project.

I hope that more and more schools in Hungary will have enthusiastic teachers who recognise the fantastic potential of the Jew's harp and include it in their regular music lessons.

Although it is still too early to draw conclusions about the results of the programme, it is clear that even after such a short period of time, the children are enjoying playing the Doromb together. In the process of learning the instrument, they quickly experience a sense of achievement, they always sound harmoniously together, their rhythm skills develop and music lessons simply become a cool activity. |

PATAGONIA

HEAVY METAL

BY DEIRDRE MORGAN & OWEN COGGINS



Nicolas Lopez of Death Metal band Lafaln plays trompe on stage, in a song "lŕiche Kutran Weichan."

Since presenting about our project at the 9th International Jew's Harp Festival in Berlin in July 2022, we've been busy continuing research and writing for our book *Jew's Harp and Metal Music: Folk Traditions in Global Modernity*. From this title one might assume that the jew's harp represents the folk tradition, and metal music corresponds to global modernity, but we think the opposite is also true: jew's harp music is also contemporary and internationally relevant, while heavy metal uses (like folk music has always done) relevant and available musical tools to tell people's stories and reflect current social issues.

We're almost at the halfway point in drafting the chapters. Trying to do justice to all the different contexts for jew's harps and metal around the world can be daunting, as there's always more historical background to uncover,

and more YouTube links to click in the hope of hearing another underground metal band playing khomus, maultrommel, munnharpa or drymba amongst the distorted guitar riffs! This book is a very online project compared to our previous research (Deirdre studying jew's harp traditions through fieldwork in Norway, Sicily and Austria, Owen doing ethnographic research about audiences at extreme metal concerts and festivals). The internet-based research has allowed us amazing access to music from across the world, and also made it possible to start this project during coronavirus restrictions. We've been meeting regularly over Zoom to develop this project since late 2019, with the internet also bridging the large gap in our physical locations (Deirdre in Canada and Owen in the UK). >



The first trompes in Wallmapu were brought from Europe, but Mapuche metalsmiths quickly learned how to make them. Some Mapuche versions have a wooden frame and metal tongue.



When we started the project we had only a handful of examples to discuss and had originally thought it would be a single conference presentation and perhaps, later on, an article. By the time that presentation was cancelled due to Covid-19, we had uncovered a huge trove of bands and

tracks, and we now have hundreds of examples from at least 30 countries. We've drafted chapters on the jew's harp's starring role on the foundational heavy metal album by Black Sabbath; on the 'country' and 'Western' associations of the jew's harp in American metal; and on the instrument's prominence in the 1990s explosion of the 'folk metal' sub-genre in Northern Europe. Now, we're moving to the Global South, and have found more than twenty metal bands from Patagonia (Argentina/Chile) who play a jew's harp (trompe) which is associated with Indigenous Mapuche culture and identity. We're in the process of contacting these bands to ask them how they use and think about jew's harps and metal music. We hope to get some responses!

We've also been reading about how the Mapuche came to adopt the instrument: introduced, it seems, as a colonial trading item by the Spanish, the durable trompe came to replace the similar-sounding Indigenous mouth-bow the pawpawen, made from a vine. Many Chilean ethnomusicologists indicate that trompe and pawpawen are among the few Mapuche instruments that aren't used in formal rituals, and are more associated with personal enjoyment, social time, and courtship. However,

according to a source we've recently discovered, trompe can be used in the most important Mapuche ceremony, the nguillatun. The Mapuche people have long been in a struggle with colonial powers; after a protracted war with Spanish conquistadors (in which they remained undefeated), their struggle with the Chilean and Argentinian states over land and rights continues today. So we're trying think through how jew's harps and heavy metal come together to musically represent an important part of that story of resistance and identity.

Next we'll turn to Indonesia, Central Asia, Finland, Ukraine, Quebec and Transylvania on our internet world tour of jew's harps and heavy metal. The book will hopefully be completed next year. We still have a lot of reading, writing and listening to do! Though we already have a huge number of examples, we're always happy to hear from IJHS members with any leads, questions, or comments about the project as we progress. |

Links

Deirdre Morgan: demorgan@vcc.ca

Owen Coggins Owen: Coggins@brunel.ac.uk

Lafaln: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO1epS7y8O4>

Wangelen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tuxSBsdofl>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063914771185>

Neyen Mapu: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueD-Vf_SYKl



THE JAW HARP GOES JAZZ

by Franz Kumpl

On May 22, 2023, the world premiere of composer Christoph Cech's jazz concerto for orchestra and two jaw harps took place at the Porgy & Bess jazz club in Vienna, Austria.



Christoph Schulz on the left, Wolf Janscha, Bodo Hell in the middle, Christoph Cech on the right

The focus of the compositions is on the jaw harp, with jaw harp-related texts by the author Bodo Hell and the two jaw harp soloists Wolf Janscha and Christoph Schulz.

In many pieces, the jaw harps produced the rhythmically complex sound carpet on which the sound bodies and solos of the 17-piece jazz orchestra were built. The jaw harp-parts of the compositions were characterized by a deliberate use of polyrhythm within the rhythm section with drums, bass and guitar. Through the skilful use of harmony over the fundamental tone of the respective jaw harps - which acted like an anchor for the chord changes - a balance between tension and serenity was created within the pieces. In some pieces, the division of voices between both jaw harp players created an effect of echo or a question-and-answer phrasing, which emphasised the communicative element of the instrument and implemented it musically. In some pieces, the technique of changing the jaw harps (= Wechselspiel) was responsible

for the melodic groove, which also proved that this technique makes it completely suitable for use in a jazz ensemble - also in the sense of harmony. Thus, the jaw harp functioned as a hybrid, rhythmically as well as harmonically, like a link between the rhythm section and the chord progressions, which broke up the character of the usual emphasis on the fundamental tone and unfolded a more fluid movement of the compositions. Wolf Janscha additionally played two solo pieces and Christoph Schulz presented his electronically distorted jaw harp technique with the microphone in his mouth. The solos provided the biggest applause of the concert.

This concert is one of the very few through-composed pieces of music for orchestra and jaw harp. The first compositions for jaw harp were written in the 1970s by Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (b. 1736 in Klosterneuburg, d. 1809 in Vienna) for orchestra, jaw harp and mandora. In 1965, Ennio Morricone used the jaw harp for the music of the film "A Fistful of Dollars", more or less through-composed. In 1972, the

Russian composer Nikolai Savelevich Berestov, who lived in Yakutia, wrote a "concert improvisation" for khomus and symphony orchestra with plenty of room for free improvisation (played by Ivan Alexeev and later by Spiridon Shishigin).

The Viennese composer and pianist Christoph Cech was born in Vienna in 1960 and met the jaw harp-player Wolf Janscha during an artistic action by Claudia Cimek (Christoph Schulz's congenial partner at the "Cimi Schulz Show") as part of the "eisenerZ*ART"-festival. This gave rise to the idea for the concert "Christoph Cech Jazz Orchestra Project 'Overtoned'".

It is hoped that this concert will be repeated in other places. In any case, it will be available for viewing and listening. The link to it will be communicated.

Recordings, to be published on our Youtube-Channel, by Franz Kumpl, courtesy of composer Christoph Cech. |

Any use of the word 'level' has a danger of being misinterpreted as it can be used to justify a particular view or exploited for PR purposes not intended by the writer. There can be no denying, however, that musicians, while being totally happy with their skill level, nevertheless can use the instrument in more or less skilful ways. While I totally reject any suggestion that there is a hierarchy of the kind of music any musician plays, there are levels of expertise and musicianship. These levels apply to all types of music that are based upon any of the melodic, rhythmic or atmospheric possibilities that a musical instrument is capable of.

The following is a personal view of the skill-levels that I associate with the players of the jews-harp applied to four levels.

Skill-level One: Novice

This applies once a player understands the basic idea that the musical instrument is the combination of the jews-harp itself, the mouth 'sound box' and the necessity to activate the lamella or tongue. By doing so there is the possibility of making novel sounds that may or may not have any musical intent. This exploration can be public or private and is part of the joy of finding out how the instrument works. We all start at this level.

Skill-level Two: Players

This applies when the player recognises the potential of the jews-harp and begins to develop a control of the techniques possible. There is musicality in their playing, but the main focus is on the enjoyment of the instrument's unusual sounds, and a tendency to concentrate on those techniques that are easier to master, such as plucking, breathing and, given it is a single reed that we are working with, an exploration of the fundamental sound each jews-harp has. The vast majority of players fall into this category.

A NON-HIERARCHICAL VIEW OF SKILL-LEVELS

.....



by Michael Wright

Skill-level Three: Musician

There may come a point when players begin to realise that they are not in fact jews-harp players, but musicians for whom the jews-harp is their musical instrument, or a means by which they can express an idea. This is an important revelation to anyone who experiences it, particularly as it allows the player to almost forget that they are playing the jews-harp and to concentrate upon what they are trying to say, musically. It is a level that some players achieve without in fact knowing that is what they are doing, and, therefore, is more intangible, but it does allow for a quality of music that is recognisably above anything than just an understanding of the instrument. This level is rarer.

Skill-level Four: Artist

Even rarer, and it is debatable as to whether it is in fact a skill-level, is when a musician is able to take their musicality to a point where it is more than the musicianship, more than the sounds produced, more than the instrument itself.

As with any Art form, there are very few artists in any era who can produce something that goes beyond technique and musicianship, and it becomes more something very special. It is the musical Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling or Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai's The Great Wave Off Kanagawa. It is Yehudi Menuhin, Jacqueline du Pré, John Lennon. It is also extremely rare. It has nothing to do with titles, nothing to do with qualifications, nothing to do with slick stage performance. A player in some obscure village somewhere may be one. Unlike all the other levels where the player has some say in how they approach the instrument, in this case it is only others who can do so. In fact no player has the right to give themselves such an accolade. The player does what they feel achieves what they want, but there is no guarantee that what they produce will be truly special. >

They may produce it on one occasion yet even when repeating the piece, not on another. It is a fragile beauty.

Skill-levels in Action

At the recent International Jews Harp Society gathering in Berlin all the performances I heard showed at least a 'Players' Skill-level, and perhaps 30% were either consciously or unconsciously 'Musicians', some of whom were exceptional in their particular field of music. There were, however, only two performances that in my opinion deserved the accolade of 'Artist'.

At the first meeting of the IJHS Board Spiridon Shishigin played a short tribute to those who have died these past years. It was poignant, delicate and a stunning homage that lasted perhaps one minute, but left those who heard it stunned with its beauty.

In her concert Catlin Magi not only showed a mastery of technique and musicianship, but somehow achieved a musicality that was much more than the sum of the parts. It transfixed, it inspired. It had nothing to do with the Techno style, nothing to do with the clever use of technology, nothing to do with the use of melodic phrasing, in fact, nothing to do with the jews-harp. It was musicality, pure and simple.

If anyone thinks that copying those musicians' techniques will automatically achieve that height, forget it. You won't. Some people may only achieve it once in their lifetime, and that is success enough, while for others it is more likely. While there is strong evidence that Spiridon and Catlin can recreate their performances again, it is not a given. Music is of the moment. We try to capture it on record, yet sometimes the live performance is that moment. Anyone aspiring to reach it, and I count myself in this, has to find their own 'voice', present it and cross their fingers it gets somewhere near. Self-publicity might get the opportunities, but do not kid yourself that because you get bookings that you are an artist. In my lifetime I have heard perhaps four or five live performances by acknowledged musicians and possibly the same number of players of the jews-harp who I would regard as 'Artists', along with a few others who have had their moments. At least it is something we can strive for.

But to repeat, none of these skill levels has anything to do with the style of music anyone plays. That there is a growing interest in people wanting to play the jews-harp is great, and long may it continue. If you are happy with the skill-level you have attained, enjoy it. Playing music is an adventure whether you are content with where you have arrived or seek new horizons. There is no right or wrong way to make music, only what sounds good to your ear and, with luck, someone else's. |

THE JEW'S HARP EXPOSED IN NORTHERN ITALY

by Alessandro Zolt

In the year 2023 I had the pleasure, along my colleague jew's harp collector and musician Guido Antoniotti, to organize two exhibitions of jew's harps from all over the world (from our own private collections) in two music festivals in Northern Italy. The two festivals were "Ététrad" in Fénis (16th-19th of August) and "Archivi Corali" in Verbania (7th-15th October). In both cases the exhibition was hosted by a beautiful and important institution: the MAV (Museum of Aosta Valley Traditional Handicraft) in Fénis and the Villa Giulia in Verbania. Both exhibitions were also the occasion to use the "alpine" history of our instrument as a starting point of the visit, following

the idea "from local to global": already the names were explicit about this idea, the first being "Son di Tsamporgne" (the sound of the jew's harp in the Aosta Valley local language) and the second "Dalla Valsesia al Mondo" (from Valsesia to the world).

The first part was dedicated to the ancient Valsesia production (of which Guido has some beautiful and rare specimens), the modern reproductions made by smith Luca Boggio and then the Austrian Molln production. After that the view shifted to Southern Italy with the traditional jew's harps made by the Roma people from Campania and Calabria, to Sardinia, then to >

to Sicily with its abundance of models and makers. From Italy the focus expanded to a European perspective with instruments from all over the continent with both strictly traditional models (e.g. Ukraine drymba, Norway munnharpa, English jew's harp) and new creative and modern ones (e.g. Schlütter maultrommeln, Bernard Lalanne-Cassou's guimbardes, Szilagyi dorombs). Then the visitor could get a view of the farthest lands and traditions: specimens from India, Afghanistan (which, sadly will be even more rare after the Taliban takeover), Nepal, Tuva and even Africa (Niger) and finally the bamboo and brass ones from areas such as Papua New Guinea, Hokkaido, the Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam. The name and the place of the maker, whenever it was known, was explicitly written on the accompanying tags.

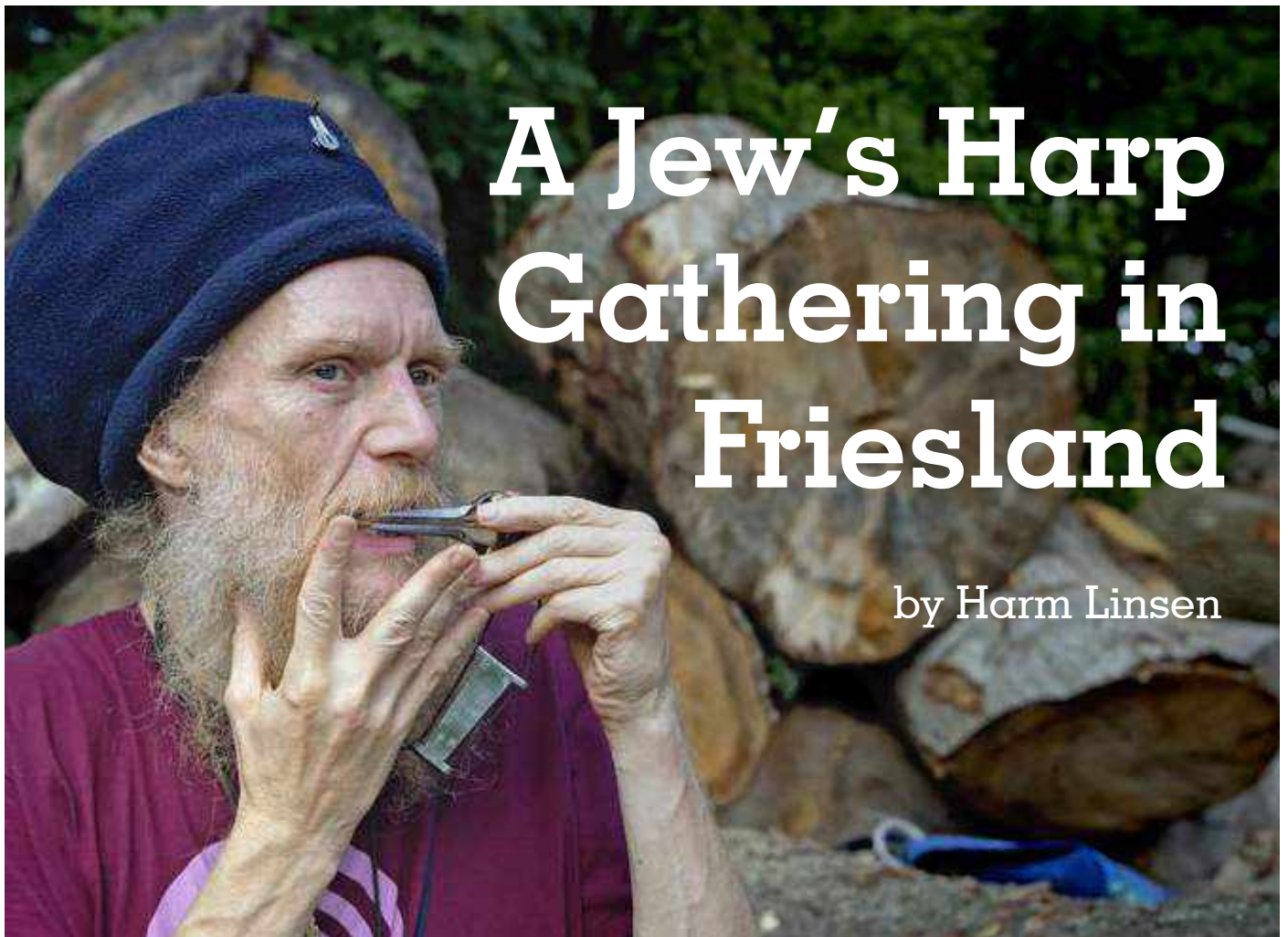
All the display cases were accompanied by some lengthy texts about the jew's harp's general history and the explanation of some of the various contexts showed. Some more illustrated panels created by Guido Antoniotti were displayed with images of players, jew's harp containers, names from all over the world and other interesting information. Curiously enough, these panels were "recycled" from a jew's harp exhibition Guido already made back in 2007 in Valsesia!

We lack precise statistics but we can assure lots of people came to the exhibitions and we were very pleased to see that the interest was definitely high. As it's common in Italy, many were totally unaware of the local and global tradition of the jew's harp as they thought the instrument as exclusively Sicilian. In the end, Guido and me were proud to divulge our knowledge and at the same time fight the common prejudices around the instrument. Both exhibitions were opened with a concert of the Tribeba musical project, and again many people were stunned to see that the jew's harp it's not only a mere noisemaker.

The year 2024 will mark exactly 500 years from the first document attesting the Valsesia production, so we really hope to host an exhibition right there. |



Guido Antoniotti and Alessandro Zolt



A Jew's Harp Gathering in Friesland

by Harm Linsen

Jeroen Kluter, who grew up in Oentsjerk, plays the jew's harp in Readtsjerk. Photo: Marcel van Kammen

Daniel Hentschel organises from time to time overtone events under the name of 'Klangkörper', which means as much as soundbody (literal) or soundvessel. However among the jews harp players in the Netherlands the question was raised if there can be get togethers so that jew's harp players could meet other jew's harp players. This resulted in a first modest gathering under Covid-19 times in a park in Utrecht. At the time the idea was to ask someone to organise the next gathering. All low profile and without any demands. The idea was that these gatherings should not all be in Utrecht itself which is central in the country but still far away for many but would be in another part of the country every time. In that way people had the chance to come to a gathering when it is close by. So the gauntlet was taken up by Marco Hofstede and Rens Tolsma, who had a piece of private property where we all could get together.

Finally Saturday the 30th of September, it all would take place. A few kilometres north of Leeuwarden, in a village called Readtsjerk, we were welcomed in a big garden with apple trees a log cabin, and a pond. On the terrain the guys built up a big tent where we had diner and there was a stage on another part of the terrain. In the week before the event Rene Paes put a program together.

Rene would also give a workshop jew's harp playing for beginners. Furthermore Marko and Rens also managed to get Andreas Schlütter and his wife over, who sold their own Schlütter Maultrommeln.

The program was diverse and interesting as many styles and players were presented, even one I did not hear of before, Yarre Stooker from Amsterdam but also established names like Daniel 'Danibal' Hentschel and Janus Filius.

The day ended with a joint meal in the tent and a sitting around a fire telling stories and playing jew's harp together.

All in all a very successful gathering with the feel of a small festival. It will be hard to top this edition, whoever is going to organise it next.

Next Monday the event even made it to the Leeuwarder Courant, a local newspaper no less than a complete page was dedicated to this event as you can see on the picture by Rene Paes of the page. The title "The Jew's Harp Connects me to a Bigger Picture".

And that is a truth. |



FESTIVAL IN TAIWAN

The Resonant Path: My Jaw Harp Journey
from Discovery to Festival Organisation

~~~~~  
by Hung-Ying Lin (Hong Hong)



In 2017, I received my first jaw harp as a birthday gift, marking the beginning of my musical journey. I will never forget the sensation of my entire head vibrating with the jaw harp, and the otherworldly sound that shattered my preconceived notions of musical instruments. The first note I played sounded funny, but within seconds, I was captivated by the sound, and my life would never be the same.

Little did I know at the time that the jaw harp would become a key that would unlock a series of adventures for me. It was even more unimaginable that five years later, I would be organising a world jaw harp music festival in Taiwan.



The festival was a celebration of cultural exchange, music, and the jaw harp's ability to transcend boundaries.



In early 2019, fuelled by my passion for the jaw harp, I made the decision to quit my job at the school and embark on a journey of travel. It was during the fall of that same year, in Austria, that I serendipitously met Franz Kuml. Listening to him talk about bringing jaw harp musicians from all around the world to Molln for a grand event planted a seed of a music festival dream in my heart. I fervently hoped that one day Taiwan could witness a similar scene.

Taipei 101, bubble tea, and politics might be what Taiwan is known for to many, but it also has a rich and long-standing tradition of jaw harp music, with unique designs for multiple reed jaw harps. Sadly, it wasn't until I approached the age of 30 that I discovered what a jaw harp was, and upon delving deeper, >







I realised the beautiful and precious treasures I had missed.

However, like myself, many Taiwanese are unfamiliar with this significant cultural asset. Additionally, very few know that various parts of the world have their own special types of jaw harps. There are elderly masters and musicians scattered across different locations, carrying with them the knowledge and culture of jaw harp playing. As I visited each of them, I became determined to organise a festival that would bring everyone together, allowing more people to hear their beautiful jaw harp stories and melodies, and introducing the jaw harp world to a wider audience.

As a former school teacher, I had rarely been involved in music festivals before. Therefore, the sudden task of organising a dream music festival was truly daunting. We had no prior experience in organising such events, no governmental or corporate support, and promoting an unfamiliar instrument to the public was an immense challenge.

Fortunately, we had a united group of partners, friends who shared the same love for the jaw harp as I did, and support from international musicians, especially Leo Tadagawa, who overcame all obstacles to be present at the event. Despite all the challenges, we successfully brought the music festival to life!



And so, in September 2022, the dream became a reality - the first world jaw harp music festival in Taiwan. Musicians from all corners gathered to share their love for the jaw harp and showcase their extraordinary talents. The festival was a celebration of cultural exchange, music, and the jaw harp's ability to transcend boundaries.

Over the course of two days and nights, 800 people gathered in the beautiful forest at the heart of Taiwan. We named the festival's inaugural edition "Jawharpists' Paradise," inspired by the ancient Chinese legend of the Peach Blossom Spring. The visual identity, venue arrangement, and attire of the entire event were designed based on the backdrop of this story.

Within the deep mountains, there was a hidden utopian village unknown to the outside world. This village is composed of four tribes named after local forest animals - Wild Boar, Bamboo Chicken, Macaque Monkey, and Mountain Dog. Each tribe had their own chief, camp, and emblem. This village remained hidden amidst the mist and fog of the mountains, cut off from the rest of the world, and still preserved the tradition of playing the jaw harp for communication.

Every traveler fortunate enough to arrive at this hidden paradise in the deep mountains would be assigned to one of the tribes and receive their own dedicated jaw harp. The



members of the tribe, including the chief, would welcome the travellers and teach them how to play. Tasks were assigned, and completion would lead to rewards. Finally, everyone gathered in front of the stage to enjoy performances, playing music and dancing in resonance and celebration.

Following the event, I received enthusiastic feedback. Many people got to know the jaw harp through this activity, and even more fell in love with it. It broadened their understanding of the jaw harp and enabled them to make connections with like-minded friends. The exchange and communication continued even a year later.

Looking back, this was truly an unprecedented event in Taiwan, where everyone had an instrument, and every participant became a musician. It broke down the barriers between music and the audience, creating a sense of genuine communication within a village-like atmosphere. People could spontaneously play music together anywhere, harmonising with the sounds of nature and opening themselves up to inspiration.

Excited for the second music festival in November next year, we anticipate enhanced elements for an even more enriching experience. As we reach the end of the pandemic, our heartfelt desire is to welcome participants from around the world to join us in a vibrant celebration filled with cultural exchange and shared joy. Until then, keep being and see you soon. |

Click here to see more stunning photos of the festival:  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kfR8HvgzloHlmLJfIsGz1jWCoSphI40F?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kfR8HvgzloHlmLJfIsGz1jWCoSphI40F?usp=drive_link)

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# An Evaluation of the 9th International Jew's Harp Festival and Congress from the Conference Point of View

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by Harm Linsen



As soon as it was known that the IJHF would be held in Berlin, Alessandro Zolt and myself were asked if we wanted to organise the Conference. As it was about eight to nine months before the happening Alessandro and I felt we should not go out and ask if there was anyone who might want to do a talk for us as that might be a too short time to get a full program. Instead, we asked pro-actively anyone of whom we knew were involved in an interesting study/project regarding the jew's harp, if he/she would like to have a talk about it at the festival. The backdrop of this was that if there was someone under our radar, he/she was invisible for us and was not invited, this caused a tricky situation on the first day of the Conference. On the other hand our approach resulted in a full program rather quickly and because we had more positive answers than expected, we decided to extend our schedule and weave it into the overall program of the whole event. Luckily with the help and insight of the planners of the program (Áron and Franz) everything was possible.

So in the end we had a program with 11 speakers on a plethora of subjects. To name a few just to show the diversity of subjects: History of the jew's harp in Sweden; a presentation of a book about the late master Kolodeshnikov; jew's harp in Metal Music; the traditional use of Marranzano in Sicily or an overview of archeological jew's harp finds in Western France. And there was much more.

In all of this we had a double agenda as we asked every speaker to write us an article on the subject they were talking about for our future Journal issues.

We thought it was appropriate to end the Conference with a commemoration of Tran Quang Hai who tragically passed away in December of that same year.

If you think now that we could sit back and relax: well, not quite! Just a few weeks before our event the flight of Ada Salvato was cancelled without warning. Around the same period Russia had the ill advised idea to invade Ukraine, which made travelling a lot more difficult and expensive for some of the participants. Luckily the technicians of the UFA-Fabrik could provide us with video connections to these people so they could participate from home.

Then, only a week or so before the event, Ilham Nurwansah, who was going to talk about the jew's harp revival in Indonesia, messaged us that his house had been flooded and he was not able to come as he had to help his family clearing the mess. Sadly this was too late for us to anticipate.

The first day of the Conference we managed to add the Mongol delegate Ayush Munkhchimeg to our program who wanted to speak about the establishing of a jew's harp centre in Mongolia similar to the Khomus centre in Yakutsk. With the kind help of Spiridon Shishigin, replacement for Ilham Nurwansah, who accepted to shorten his own book presentation, this was possible without too many variations of time. Since some

participants spoke longer than the given time plus some technical difficulties, the first day lasted longer than anticipated and other activities of the festival already started which meant that we unfortunately lost part of our audience.

The second day started with a link to Yakutsk for the talks of the Director of the Khomus Museum and Centre of the Peoples of the World and Ivan Alekseyev. A third contribution from Yakutia from Varvara Dyakonova could not take place as there was temporarily no internet at the

source location, when it was established again it would be too late for the conference as it had already ended by then. Otherwise, the second day came together much better.



Harm Linsen and Alessandro Zolt.  
Photo: Áron Szilágyi

This was a first for Alessandro and myself, so I

can say there are a few things that went well and other things that we can learn from. Proactively approaching possible speakers worked very well: only one person declined because he had other obligations to attend to. On the other hand, apart from the little time at our disposal, we realised we could use a better medium through which communicate a call for applications. In the future the newsletter, the blog on our official website and our Facebook page could be used for this purpose. We had asked the festival organisation to record all the talks, I am still not sure whether they actually did and I suppose, since a good camera at a central point was not present, that these recordings aren't in good quality. Although I must say the technician assigned to us worked miracles in the establishing of connections. So next time we should perhaps bring our own cameraman/woman to do this (and for now we hope Leo Tadagawa has some footage for us to share).

Plenty of video recordings were made during the festival by a team of professionals, but the "Festival aftermovie" that was released on YouTube was, at least for Alessandro and me, a huge disappointment (if not an outrage): not all artists were duly represented, all the thorough interviews of jew's harp musicians and makers were completely absent and in general it didn't communicate at all the complexity of our congress and festival, which had not only mere concerts but also conferences and workshops. If the unused footage is still available perhaps something better can be released in the future.

All in all it was a big honour to be asked to organise this Conference and looking back I think it was a success despite a few small issues from which we can learn to do it better next time!





# SHOW THE INVISIBLE

by Áron Szilágyi

The University of Malta has carried out what is believed to be the world's first project to examine a jaw harp player's mouth cavity in an MRI scanner. The project will make visible what could previously only be described.



The question of exactly which areas of the brain are activated during jaw harp playing is less relevant. Knowing this does not mean that you will be able to play nicer notes or produce clearer overtones.

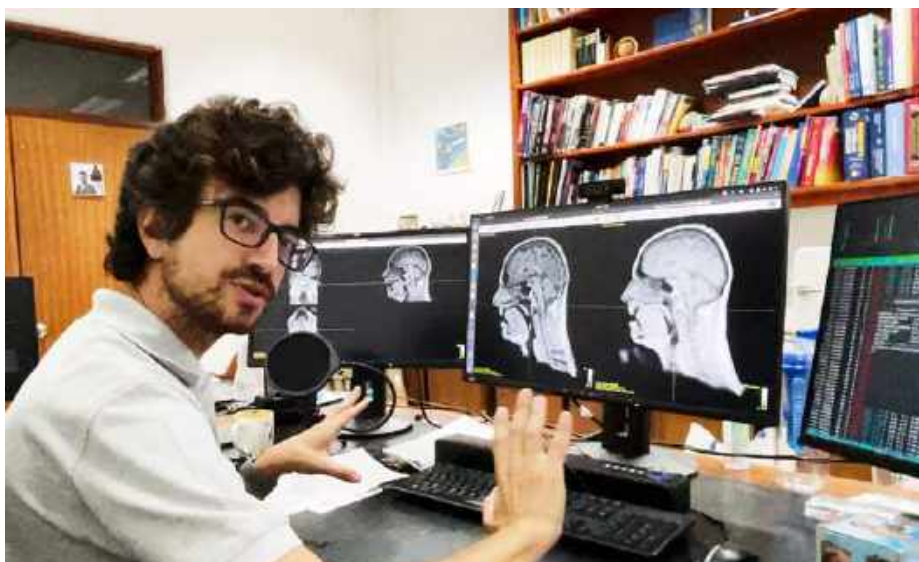


The jaw harp is a very special instrument in that the human body is an essential part of the instrument. The resonating body of the instrument is the oral cavity. This invisible world harbours thousands of acoustic wonders, and even minimal changes to it can radically alter the sound of the jaw harp. However, it is this invisibility that creates the difficulty in teaching the reed. Unlike the piano or flute, where the teacher can help with the exact positioning and movement of the fingers, the movement of the mouth is invisible in the case of the jaw harp. Sure, certain tongue and throat positions can be well described and explained, and articulation of different consonants and vowels can help, but learning to play the jaw harp is still very much an intuitive process. So far, the workshops have been supported by sketched drawings by myself or other instructors. It has been a long-standing dream of mine to be able to use an imaging process to show a realistic picture of what goes on in the oral cavity during jaw harp playing. To make the invisible visible.

To realise my plans, I found a partner at the University of Malta. In October 2022, Dr Claude J. Bajada, head of the Boundaries of Brain LAB, and I

started to figure out how and which imaging technique would be the best way to implement the project. Despite its limitations, which will be discussed later, we decided on MRI. This was mainly because other imaging modalities (e.g. X-ray or CT), lengthy radiological examinations, would expose the volunteer player to significant, even harmful levels of radiation.

The objectives of the project were multifaceted: it was primarily educational, but we also expected artistic and scientific results. Our primary goal was to provide a side-view cross-section of the player's head so that the position of the tongue and pharynx could be clearly observed when playing different overtones. Our aim is that these still images can be used for teaching purposes by anyone. The resulting material will be used to make an instructional video, essentially a side view of the player in "transparency". In addition to the educational objective, the university's art department is also imaginative about the project, so they will create a visualisation from the extracted data. This visualisation, the MRI scans and the real-life jaw harp playing will be combined in a video clip with music using the sounds we scanned. >



Dr. Claude J. Bajada, Boundaries of the Brain (BOB) Lab, Photo: Áron Szilágyi

This production will be presented at Science Week in Valletta in September 2024. In addition, the data extracted from the scans will - with my consent - be kept by the university and can be used for any future scientific research.

The question arises why the project does not show how different brain areas are activated during a play of jaw harp. This is mainly due to technical obstacles: it is not possible to play a jaw harp in MRI, which I will explain later. And no one would want to do a CT scan with radioactive isotopes, especially as it would involve taking a lot of pictures. Secondly, from an educational point of view, the question of exactly which areas of the brain are activated during jaw harp playing is less relevant. Knowing this does not mean that you will be able to play nicer notes or produce clearer overtones. However, this is an exciting possible future continuation of the project.

For this project, the university has booked the MRI machine at the Valetta clinic for 30 September 2023. After a lengthy paperwork and hospital changeover, a trial scan was performed for the first time. I knew that a metal jaw harp could not be taken into the MRI because of the extremely strong magnetic field. After several possible versions (wood, ceramic, glass, bone) we finally decided on 3d printing. Thus, engineer Gergő Szöllösi created a

G2 tuned Black Fire type jaw harp, fully dimensionally accurate, using 3D printing. The printed jaw harp could not play a sound, but it wasn't necessary, because there is no jaw harp playing in MRI for the following reasons: it takes 1-30 minutes to make a scanning. You have to be motionless for that time, otherwise you would just have a blurry blob on the image. Moreover, because of the immobility, the person's head is fixed in a small "cage" in which you can hardly squeeze the jaw harp and your hands in a fixed position. On the other hand, the MRI is very noisy. It rattles, clicks, buzzes, so that the sound of the jaw harp could not be heard. However, the dummy jaw harp was very important, so that the exact position of the instrument could be seen on the scans.

Unfortunately, immediately after the first test scan, it was clear that all the sound producing organs, tongue, pharynx could be seen in the MRI, except the jaw harp and teeth (which could only be shown by CT or X-ray), which had too little water (free hydrogen, proton) to be visible. We have tried different oils and gels on the instrument, but the results were not much better. Since the MRI scan shows the exact location of the jaw harp, we decided to place it in the image with digital post-processing.

We first scanned the positions of five tones: highest, middle, low and two throat tones. These tones, tongue

and throat positions were pre-recorded, memorised and then left in position until the end of the scan. Full 3D scans were taken of these six positions. In addition, a complete intonation cycle (from highest to lowest voice, open and closed epiglottis with throat sounds) was scanned with 32 different positions. These images are not 3D scans but cross sections. The whole scanning procedure took about 6 hours. For the tongue positions shown in the images, I have recorded the exact sounds that correspond to them, so that students on the jaw harp will be able to see exactly which sound to form.

I hope that with this tutorial we can make visible what has been happening in the dark room of the oral cavity and that it will be used not only by students of the jaw harp but also by other jaw harp teachers. The first phase of the project will end in October 2024 with the art project.



I would like to thank the University of Malta's MRI Platform (UMRI) for access to scanning equipment and services, use of its infrastructure, and resources such as documentation and preprocessing scripts.

I would like to thank Dr. Claude J. Bajada and the Boundaries of the Brain (BOB) Lab. for the collaboration and for preparing and managing the project.

I will report on the results in the future via the links below. If you are interested, click on the icons and follow me, subscribe.

**IG:** [https://www.instagram.com/doromb\\_com/](https://www.instagram.com/doromb_com/)

**FB:** <https://www.facebook.com/dorombcom>

**YT:** <https://www.youtube.com/@AronSzilagyi-doromb>





# NEWS FROM THE KHOMUS MUSEUM

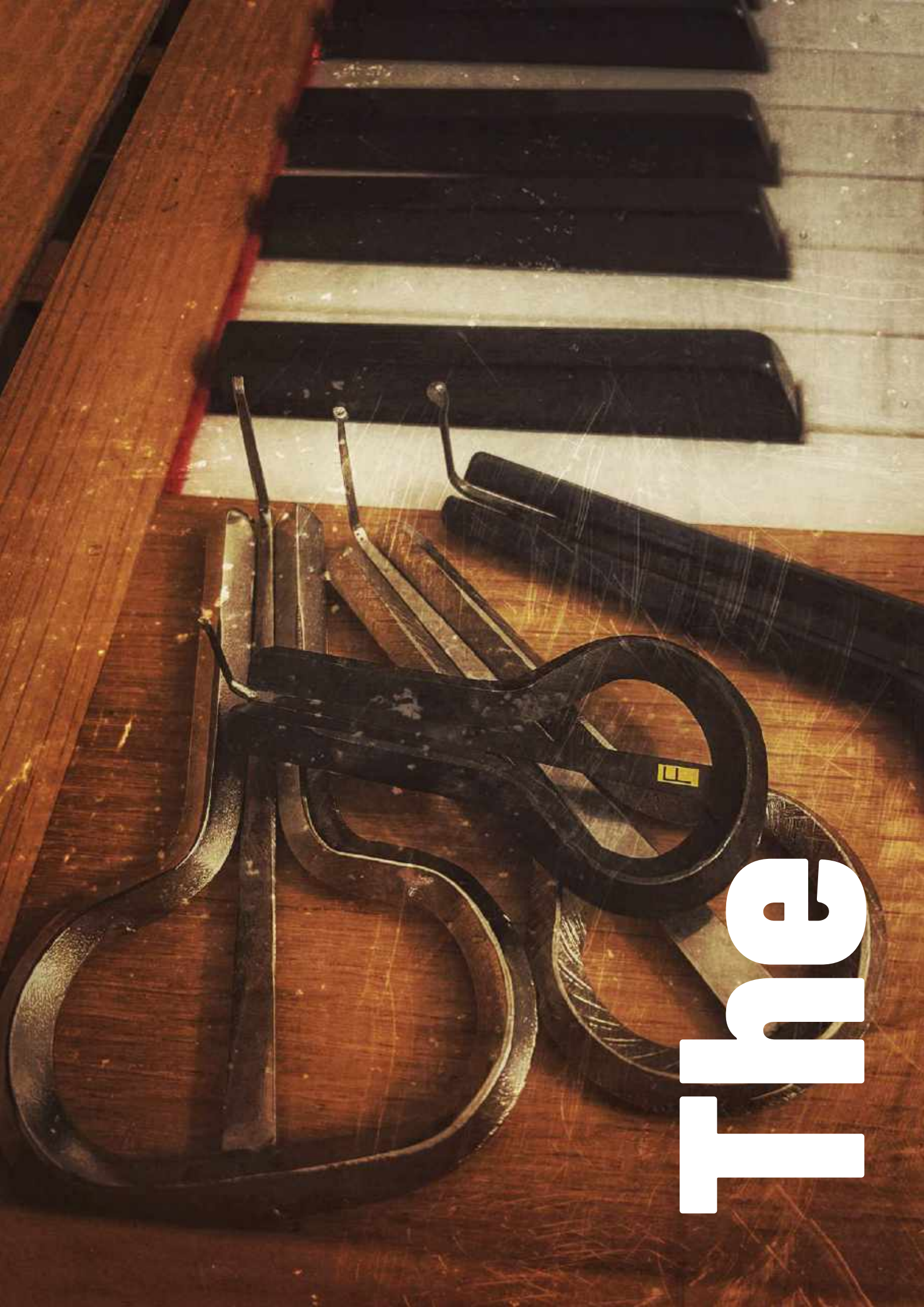
## Results of activity of the State budgetary institution "People of the World Khomus Museum and Center" for 2023 and perspective plans.

BY DMITRIY BYASTINOV

In the history of the People of the World Khomus Museum and Center for these 33 years there were many interesting, memorable, key moments and events. 2023 is also unique, interesting, and successful in its own way. In the work of the People of the World Khomus Museum and Center the scientific field from year to year has a systematic character and shows continuity. 4 years ago, based on the II All-Russian scientific-practical conference "Khomus: historical and cultural traditions and musical therapeutic practices" the resolution was adopted in which points regulated the realisation of scientific events of the All-Russian and republican levels. Based on this resolution the III All-Russian scientific-practical conference "Cultural code of khomus (vargan) in historical and socio-cultural space" will be organised in Yakutsk on November 9-10 this year. Under the guidance of the senior researcher V.E. Dyakonova and methodologist for cultural and educational activities E.P. Sleptsova the compilation of the II volume of the catalog of museum items from the main collection of the People of the World Khomus Museum and Center continues.

The People of the World Khomus Museum and Center since the day of its foundation strives to preserve the diverse, rich, ancient, unique, original culture of the peoples of the world. This year the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) gave the world a stable event called "Khomus - Virtuoso of the World". Why only this year? This competition has its own rich history with a timeline, much like the Museum and Center itself, but it was only this year that it was able to secure its future, permanent fate of existence. Thanks to Franz Kumpl, President of the International Jew's Harp Society (IJHS), Aaron Szilagyi, Secretary General of the IJHS, Ivan Alexeev - Khomus Uybaan, Honorary President of the IJHS, Khomus - Virtuosos of the World Spiridon Shishigin, Leo Tadagawa, Albina Degtyareva and Doctor of Cultural Studies Valentina Suzukei, this year we were able to permanently and definitively fix this event for the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) at the level of the Government, with a term of once in 9 years.

33 years of existence under the sun is not a small period. And during this period, have the ideas of the founders and directors of this institution been achieved during this period? We will find out after detailed analyses of scientific events that are planned this year. Relying on scientific researches earlier laid conceptual ideas of Alekseev Ivan Egorovich - Khomus Uybaan, the first director Utkin Xenofont Dmitrievich, the subsequent directors Teliye - Ivanov Semen Viktorovich, Shishigin Nikolay Spiridonovich will be only enriched and will find new methods of their realisation. |



The



# Musical Tool

By Michael Wright

Our instrument – and I do not care what you call it – is like the violin, piano or, indeed, any other musical instrument, a musical tool. Their function is to enable the player to express an idea, an emotion or any musical concept that is in the musicians head. Those concepts can be mechanical, spiritual, intangible, tell a story, or any other notion of the player. In the hands of true musicians all these inanimate objects are capable of expressing something special. In the case of the piano the player uses their fingers, for the violin player their fingers and the manipulation of the bow. For others it is a combination of breath control and fingers or, for the singer, their voice – and I am sure you can add other parts of the body used by someone, somewhere that aids their music. My point is that all these instruments need human intervention or they sit silent in a corner or in a drawer.

Our musical instrument is in fact the instrument itself and the player's mouth, where the teeth or lips are the bridge that connect it to the sound-box (mouth). We also need to activate the lamella with the hand or finger, and it is the combination of these parts – instrument, mouth and hand – that provides all the possibilities that the complete musical instrument has. This is pretty basic stuff. Learning how to make a sound with any musical instrument is one thing. Exploiting its musicality is quite another and much more complex.

All musical instruments such as the piano or violin have been used by artists to express many ideas, from classical to pop, jazz to folk

traditions, blues to art music, techno to sacred – the list is huge and varied. Our instrument is no different. Comments about its use as 'inauthentic' or 'museum' music are completely inappropriate when considering what this instrument is capable of and undervalue, not to say limit what it is possible rather than expand potential. Any sound a musical instrument can make is 'authentic', because the instrument can make it. Those comments that dismiss any approach to music that does not fit a particular viewpoint makes no sense, and are in fact nonsense.

The truth is that there is no 'the' way of playing only many 'a' ways, and each way has its maestros. Each way is valid. The only criteria by which any musician should be judged is, 'does it work musically'. This does not mean that everyone should copy a style that does not suite their interest, but neither does it mean that any particular way of playing is somehow superior to the ways of others. Any suggestion of any form of hierarchy of music is abhorrent.

Technique with any musical instrument is important, but little more than clever at best and soulless at worst if there is no content. With ours we can play rhythmically, melodically at atmospherically, which is a pretty good starting point for any musician. Our focus, therefore, should be on emphasising content and not just technique or style, which should be seen for what it is – a means of expressing an idea, not an end in itself.

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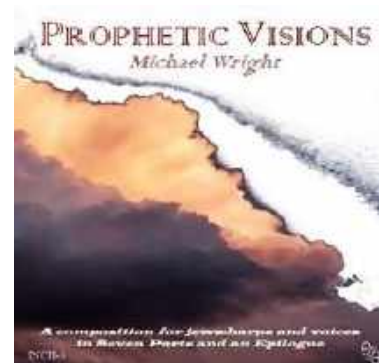
## PROPHETIC VISIONS

A composition for jews-harps and voices

Michael Wright's new album is out

"To create a new piece inspired by the Tapestries was a massive challenge, and using a jews-harp more so because of the requirement for the audience to listen to a lengthy piece that consists mainly of the harmonics that allow a jews-harp musician to play melodies."

To read more about the album and contact for order, click this link: <https://jewsharper.wordpress.com/videos-recordings/>





# **JEW'S HARP FESTIVALS**

**FOR THE COLD WINTER NIGHTS**



# DEN BRUMLE MUSIC FESTIVAL

This year the celebration of Den brumle will be held on 25 November 2023 at Kampus Hybernská which is a well-known venue for culture, meetings and entertainment in the very centre of Prague. A portion of quality live music, workshops, marketplace and presentation is prepared. The headliner of the festival is Zoord a popular jews harp band from Hungary. The Sakha-Yakutia modern khomus music will be presented by Saydyy Kuo Fedorova Udagan, a band featuring Saydyy, who is a former member of iconic Sakha band Ayarkhaan. The three other band come from the Czech republic. DuoBröd duo will bring an energetic and amusing performance combining jews harp with beatbox set in post-apocalyptic mood and costumes. Sirael is a trio of multi-instrumentalists who will promote a calm and soothing effect of various ethno music instruments. Jan Kahoun presents a slam poetry improvisation featuring jews harp.

## MAIN PROGRAMME

25 November 2023 (17:00 – 22:00 CET)

Concert of Zoord, Saydyy Kuo Fedorova UDAGAN, Sireal, DuoBröd, Jan Kahoun

**Venue:** Kampus Hybernská – music hall

**Address:** Hybernská st. 4, Prague 1, Czech republic

**Entry:** 200 CZK/8 EUR

**Website:** <https://www.denbrumle.org/en>

**FB event:** <https://fb.me/e/3R9QHsLpU>

**Tickets pre-sale:** <https://goout.net/en/den-brumle-2023/szpvjjw/>

## DEN BRUMLE, 25 NOVEMBER 2023, PRAGUE (CZ)

## GLOBAL VIBES, 30 DECEMBER 2023, KECSKÉMET (HU)

# GLOBAL VIBES FESTIVAL

Global Vibes is one of the biggest jew's harp events in Eastern Europe. It has been the celebration of doromb between Christmas and New Years eve since 2010 organised by Áron Szilágyi. Artists playing traditional music from Norway and Siberia, crazy jew's harp playing in industrial music, legendary trance-bands, shaman rituals, workshops, French world music and Hungarian folk dances. All this goodness compressed into one day in the building of the Leskowsky Musical Instrument Museum. See you there!

**Website:** <https://globalvibes.doromb.com/>

**FB event:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/831430074704669>

**Tickets pre-sale:** <https://tixa.hu/globalvibes2023>





7-9 juin 2024

www.o-kvo.ch  
Rue de la Cure 2  
2035 Corcelles/NE  
Suisse



Concerts &  
workshops



Market  
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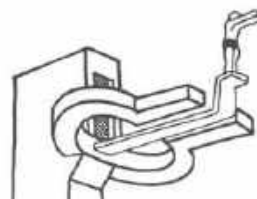
# The International Jew's Harp Society (IJHS)

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](#) !



## Get involved and join the IJHS

### IJHS Membership

Only \$30 or 30€ to join (Annual fee)

Register and join us now through this QR-Code !



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