

## The Philadelphia Zither Ensemble

Since the zither originated as a folk instrument in the German speaking Alpine regions of Europe, it is to be expected that immigrants to the United States from these regions would have brought this instrument to these shores. In Philadelphia, during the 20's and 30's there was a group known as the "Isarthalers" consisting of two zithers (Tom Mathauser and Peter Haberl) and a contra-guitar (Sepp Gsinn) which played regularly at the Fairmount Liedertafel in Brewerytown during and after Three Act plays performed in the Bavarian dialect.

But it was not until Leonhard Zapf came to Philadelphia in 1924 from Bayreuth that Zither instruction was imparted on a regular basis to young and old. For ten cents a lesson, school children were taught the fundamentals of zither playing according to the classical school of Richard Gruenwald. It was Leonhard Zapf who was instrumental in organizing the Philadelphia Zither Club which sponsored the zither instruction and held zither concerts on a regular basis.

His son, Sofian, continued the traditions of his father, both as zither virtuoso and teacher. He was instrumental in organizing a zither concert at the German Society in 1985.

The catalyst for the renaissance of zither music in Philadelphia was the arrival of the Zither Trio Muenchen (Robert Popp, Hannes Popp, Lothar Laegel) who were sent here by the Federal Republic of Germany in 1983 to provide musical contributions for the Three Hundredth Anniversary of the first German settlement in America, Germantown.

After Sofian's untimely death in 1988, Zither Seminars continued to be held and in 1993 a group of zitherists decided to meet regularly and offer concerts. Musical direction was provided by another member of the Zapf family, Leonard Zapf, Sr., who is a professional instrument repair man, in addition to being a zither virtuoso. He and his son Leonard Jr. have been playing duets for many years.

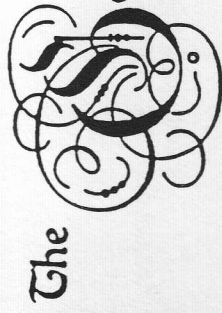
This group, known as the Philadelphia Zither Ensemble, provided the music for the field Mass at which the new flag of the United German Hungarian Club was dedicated. They also played for the Bunter Abend of the Franklinville Quartette Club. Today is the first formal concert of the group.

Members of the Philadelphia Zither Ensemble who are participating in today's concert are.

George Beichl  
Tom Groeber  
Maria Skowronek

John Beyer  
Dave Harton  
Tony Walter  
Leonard Zapf Sr.

Ellen George  
Kurt Maute  
Leonard Zapf Jr.



The German Society of Pennsylvania  
presents a

# ZITHER CONCERT

of  
**The Philadelphia Zither  
Ensemble**



**SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 1995**  
at 3 p.m.

**in the Albert and Hete Barthelmes Auditorium of the  
Society  
611 Spring Garden Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19123**

## Program Notes

Gretl Boarischer Gretl is the affectionate diminutive for "Margaret" and Boarischer, is "Bavarian" in the Bavarian dialect. The Boarischer is an Alpine dance.

Reserl Walzer "Theresa's Waltz" The first name of the composer is the diminutive of Sebastian.

Oberbayerische Tanzweisen "Upper Bavarian Dance Melodies" by Duke Maximilian, who had composed about 60 pieces for the zither. Since the instruments that the Duke and Petzmeyer played were quite primitive (three fingerboard strings and fifteen accompaniment strings) these compositions had to be transcribed for our modern instrument (five fingerboard strings and 36 accompaniment strings). This was done by Simon Schneider (1886-1971) of Munich, a zither and guitar virtuoso as well as a composer and author of zither instructional manuals

Bass Zither Solos This part of the program features classical pieces composed for the Bass Zither.

The Concert Zither, which has the same fingerboard as the viola, is technically classified as a Discant Zither. There are also forms of the zither which correspond to the strings on a violin—the Quint Zither; to the strings on a cello—the Bass Zither; and the Alt Zither whose range is between the Discant Zither and the Bass Zither.

There are only about 15 solos composed for the bass zither. Most of these were the creations of Emil Holz (1898-1967).

Emil Holz was a merchant in Zurich, Switzerland who was the musical director of the Zurich Zither Quartett. His zither instruction was imparted by Anton Smetak, a Swiss zither virtuoso. Holz studied music theory and composition at the Music Academy of Zurich. He composed pieces for the zither and for a variety of combinations of the zither with the organ, cello and clarinet.

Our bass zither soloist, O. John Beyer, originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, received a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Carnegie Institute of Technology and owns a business in Baltimore, Maryland which designs and constructs industrial tools and instruments. He has studied zither since the age of six and received his most advanced zither training under Professor Ernst Kappler. He studied voice with Lotte Lehmann in New York, where he also sang for two years with the City Center Opera Company. He has performed extensively as Zither soloist, most notably with symphony orchestras in Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and Mexico City.

Willi Schaeffler, zither virtuoso and composer, was born 1926 in Marktredwitz, Oberfranken (Bavaria). He studied the old zither masters assiduously and modeled his playing on their compositions. He featured the works of Emil Holz and was

stimulated by them to compose his own pieces. Since the 1960's Willi Schaeffler has been active in the Stuttgart area where he has become the central figure in classical zither music.

Auf der Denggn Alm The Alm is the alpine meadow where the cattle graze during the summer months under the watchful eyes of the herdgirls and herdsmen. Denggn is the name of a specific Alm. The Wegscheider musicians, from the Bad Toelz area of Bavaria, are a quartet of three zithers and a guitar, whose recordings are enormously popular.

Muenchner Walzerklaenge Munich Waltz Tunes. This is a typical waltz which the Bavarians characterize as "schneidig", i.e. snappy. Philip Schwarz composed many such pieces for the zither.

Auf ins Chiemgau Up into the Chiemgau. This is a march which refers to the area around the Chiemsee in Bavaria, where King Ludwig II built one of his beautiful castles.

Zwiegesang Song for Two. This piece by Simon Schneider illustrates the counterpoint that can be effectively rendered by two zithers.

Der Weg zum Herzen The pathway to the heart. This is one of Georg Freundorfer's most popular pieces. Freundorfer (1881-1940), a native of Munich, learned the beer brewing trade at the Loewenbraeu Brewery. He taught himself to play the zither and by the time he became a teenager, he was a zither virtuoso, although he never learned to read a note. He decided to become a professional musician and played at various resorts. On the island of Sylt, North Germany, he met Bernhard Derksen, a concert pianist. They formed a duet and subsequently an orchestra. Since this music was so well received in North Germany and Berlin was a thriving metropolis, Freundorfer and his wife moved to Berlin in 1912, although he would play summer engagements in the Bavarian Alps. At this time he started composing his own pieces, which eventually numbered over 100. Since he could not read music, Derksen would listen to Freundorfer's music and write down the notes and scores for the entire orchestra. The beauty of this music is reflected in the pieces selected by the Ensemble.

Drunter und Drueber Over and Under

G'scheerte This is the Bavarian word for "Geschorene", literally the "shorn ones." In the middle ages, only men of the upper class could wear their hair long and have beards. Men of lower social rank had their hair shorn. In modern usage the Bavarian "G'scheerte" is used in jest with friends, implying that they are country bumpkins.

Die Veilchen vom Kochelsee Violets from Lake Koche!

## Program

### Program

- Gretl Boarischer ..... Traditional  
Zither Arr. Brigitte Amasreiter
- Reserl Walzer ..... Wastl Biswanger
- Oberbayerische Tanzweisen ..... Herzog Max in Bayern
- Zither Ensemble
- Elegie in E Major, Opus 147 ..... Emil Holz
- Romanze in A Minor, Opus 70 ..... Emil Holz
- Praeludium, Opus 46 ..... Willi Schaeffler

Bass Zither Solos  
John Beyer

## INTERMISSION

### Program

- Auf der Denggn Alm ..... Wegscheider Musikanten
- Muenchener Walzerklaenge ..... Philip Schwarz
- Auf ins Chiemgau ..... Georg Lechner
- Zither Ensemble
- Zwiesang ..... Simon Schneider
- Der Weg zum Herzen ..... Georg Freundorfer

George Beichl, Leonard Zapf, Sr., Leonard Zapf, Jr.

- Drunter und Drueber ..... Georg Freundorfer
- G'scheerte ..... Georg Freundorfer
- Die Veilchen vom Kochelsee ..... Georg Freundorfer

Zither Ensemble

## The Concert Zither

The music of a country gives an insight into the character of its people and often can serve as a means of identifying a geographic area. This is especially true when the music is played on an instrument that is rarely heard outside that area. The unique tones of a bagpipe immediately conjure up visions of the highlands of Scotland or the rolling hills of Ireland just as the strings of the balalaika unmistakably identify with the folk music of the Ukraine or Russia. Another instrument that is unique to one geographic area is the zither, which is native to the German-speaking regions of the Alps--Germany proper, Austria, and the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

The zither, or more accurately the concert zither, is a relatively modern instrument having only reached its full development in the latter half of the nineteenth century. There were instruments called zithers that existed in the 18th century, but they bear only a minimal resemblance to the modern zither. Some trace the origin of the zither to the Greek "kithara" which was played 2,000 years ago. But such a relationship is only etymological. The same "kithara" also became "guitarra" in Spanish, that is, our modern guitar.

The concert zither is an instrument which consist of a fingerboard containing five string, a, a, d, g, c--(the same strings found on a viola)--and thirty-six strings beyond the fingerboard which serve primarily as accompaniment. The melody is produced by the fingers of the left hand pressing down on the strings in the spaces between the frets of the fingerboard while the thumb of the right hand, which is fitted with a metal pick, strikes the string. In fact, in German you can say that a person "schlaegt" die Zither" (strikes the zither), which is the same as "spielt die Zither" (plays the zither). The accompaniment is produced by the remaining fingers of the right hand as they pluck the so-called "accompaniment" strings.

The zither is an instrument that was played when the herdsmen and herdgirls drove the cattle to pasture in the Alps. It was also played when the Alpine men and women sang their yodels, which is a type of singing popular in that region. It then found its way into the larger cities where its unique tone made it an ideal instrument for romantic music.

It was from Vienna that the first virtuoso came, Johann Petzmayer (1803-1888), who set the stage for the modern zither. He played in his father's inn and was so proficient that he was invited to play for the emperor. Before long he was invited to neighboring Bavaria where he again became the idol of the court. Here his playing affected one member of the royal family to such an extent that the man, Duke Maximilian, decided to learn the instrument himself. With Petzmayer as teacher he soon became adept enough to play duets with his teacher. This they did, not only in Bavaria, but on a tour that reached Egypt, Turkey, and Asia Minor. Before long

the zither became popular not only among the peasants but also among the nobility--Queen Marie of Naples, Crown Princess Alexandra of England, and Princess Beatrice of Wales. Even Empress Elisabeth of Austria became adept at playing the zither. But then this is readily understandable since she was the daughter of Duke Maximilian. Once, while playing the zither in the Alps, someone mistook her for a peasant and deposited a coin on the table as a tip. She saved this coin and often remarked later that it was the only money she had ever earned.

As the zither gained in popularity, improvements were made in its construction so that by 1870 the concert zither as we know it today had reached its full development. Many of the early zither virtuosi were accomplished musicians on other instruments and had studied music theory. They also became prolific composers for the zither. For example, Josef Hausteiner (1849-1926), who had studied composition under Anton Bruckner in Vienna, composed three hundred pieces for the zither. Ferdinand Kollmaneck (1871-1941) had 700 compositions to his credit.

It seems strange that the zither never retained its popularity. With its 188 tones it is more versatile than the piano with its 88 keys or the guitar with its 138 tones. But it must be admitted that it is a difficult instrument to learn. It requires the synchronization of movements which are of a different nature for each hand. Still, there have been periods in which interest in the zither has been revived. The movie, "The Third Man", which still appears on occasion as the Late Movie on TV, has as its background music the zither played by Anton Karas. Karas not only plays the zither but he also is the composer of all the music. The haunting refrains of this music stimulated a resurgence of interest in the instrument which was reflected in the sale of recordings of zither music.

A new renaissance of the zither is being experienced in Germany where young people in large numbers are finding the zither not only ideal for folk music but also for classical music that was composed for melody instruments--other than the zither. One of the leading zither ensembles is the Zither Trio Muenchen. Their recordings as a trio and in combination with two flutes are outstanding interpretations of classical music that spans four centuries.

The description of an instrument which you have never heard is as unsatisfying as the description of a food you have never tasted. To really appreciate the zither you must hear it. After you have heard this music you will agree with the Bavarian poet Franz von Cobell.

"Die Zither is' a Zauberin.

Sie hat mir g'fangen, Herz und Sinn

"The zither plays a charmer's role.

She holds me captive heart and soul."