
THE ZITHERPLAYER

A Journal devoted to the interest of Zither playing.

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David Kyger, Editor

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Introduction

At work in Washington, DC, I have a black and white print of a zither on display, with hands emerging from above to strike a chord. It's a personal touch in my office space at the Supreme Court of the United States. Although the zither appears as a curiosity to those who walk past my desk during the day, this was not always the case.

In 1863, Franz Waldecker founded a music store in the city and endeavored to fulfill the requisites of zither players, local and distant. He composed zither music and authored a multivolume zither method. In 1881, he was awarded a patent for a unique zither table that served a dual purpose as a carrying case. As a businessman and artist, his contributions to the zither community were far reaching and innovative. It was also here in DC that he published the first zither newsletter in the United States, *The Zitherplayer*, in 1879.

With his connection to the area, I aimed to discover biographical information regarding him, including his final resting place. I had success after contacting Prospect Hill Cemetery. Founded in 1858, by the German Evangelical Society, the cemetery was just one of many institutions providing support for the city's German-American population. With this news, a field trip was in order. I brought up the idea with Jane Curtis at one of our Saturday lessons and she agreed to join me for the



outing.

On the day of our visit, May 24, 2010, we began with lunch at one of Jane's early zither venues, Cafe Mozart. Fortified, we made our way to Prospect Hill with an understanding that the objective of our trip was no longer left to the imagination. As it happened, the day prior to our visit, I was made aware of one salient fact: there was no grave marker. Anticipating our visit, the cemetery's superintendent, Joe Crockett, located Waldecker's plot in advance. Hearing this news, I could not help but draw a contrast with what I understood of the man and a pauper's grave.

Upon our arrival, we were received by Joe and directed to the nondescript patch of grass at section D-27-2. Jane and I walked the grounds, commemorated the event with a photograph, and left the grounds to round out the day with a visit to the US Botanic Garden.

I still recall our visit where we discovered Waldecker in his anonymity, and perhaps I make too much of this fact. A marker provides a connection between those who remember and those

remembered. Although Waldecker's loved ones have long since joined him, our visit reconnects with his work. With wishes for the the zither's continued enjoyment for years to come, it is for him that this new venture is dedicated.



*Jane Curtis (r) and David Kyger (l),
at Prospect Hill Cemetery, May 24, 2010*

From the Forum

Ivan Zupanc, a zitherist from Ljubljana, Slovenia, shared photos of a very unique figurine. It is carved from light pine wood, hollowed, and supported by thick fibers. Placed on the zither's surface, it twirls while the zitherist plays, as if dancing, in accordance with the vibrations produced by the instrument. Ivan notes that figurines such as this were sold in catalogs in various forms — a horse with rider, two dancers, a woman playing a guitar — in the late 1800s but are

extremely rare today. See a YouTube video of Ivan Zupanc demonstrating the dancing figurine at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIvO9W1ylxA



Dancing Figurine

The circa 1880 cabinet card shown here, taken in New York, shows a young lady and a zither on a nearby table. These early images with a supposed zither player typically provide three perspectives: the zither player has hands on the instrument as if playing, the person is holding the instrument in hand, or the instrument is placed on or leaning against a surface. Here, the zither is on a table and a chair is at hand, as if the musician has stood up for this photo opportunity. With luck, a name

identifying the person will be written somewhere on the image, which holds the promise of more revelations. Not the case, however, in this example.



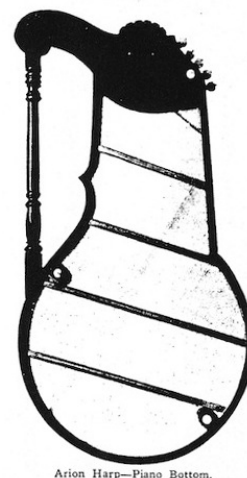
Early Cabinet Card Photo, circa 1880

After seeing this photo, Don Offinger recognized a connection to the address of the studio on the image and provided the following background information:

"Although I do not know who the young lady is, I'd bet that if my great-grandfather were alive, he would know. I note the address of the photographer studio, J. Klein, at 61 Avenue A. My great-great grandparents lived with their 10 children at 21 Avenue A, not very far from the photographer. That whole area of Ave. A through Ave. D (today known as Alphabet City) up to First Ave and bounded by 6th Street to the north and the warren of streets south of Houston St was all known as Klein Deutschland."

A forum member from Germany posed a question, asking whether Franz Schwarzer manufactured piano bottom zithers. An early Franz Schwarzer instrument catalog provides the answer.

The piano sounding board has been used on Schwarzer's Table Zithers for the past 15 years. The principle used on them, of the string bridge resting directly on the bottom, with the sounding bars glued on the outside ... has been successfully applied to the "Arion" and "Arion Harp" Zithers. After years of experimenting the most gratifying results have been obtained. The bottom vibrates with every touch of the strings, being in direct connection with them. A full loud, round yet sweet tone is produced, not possible on any other Zither.



The forum pages for Zither US are available to all interested zither players. Simply navigate your web browser to <http://forum.zither.us> for more information on how to join.

Researching Jakob Wutzer

by Dr. James Vorosmarti

My wife, Carol Schoch, grew up in an extended family which included her maternal aunt Mathilde and her husband Jakob. Jakob was a zither player as attested to by a large charcoal drawing of him in full Bavarian costume playing a zither which hung on a bedroom wall. However, Carol does not remember ever hearing him play. When he died in 1957 he left behind two zithers. One is a Max Amberger concert zither and the other is a Schwarzer Arion #2 harp zither, # 3098, which was first sold 2 February 1898. After Carol's parents

died the zithers went to us. I had them restored and began taking lessons from Jane Curtis in about 2000.



Zitherist Jakob Wutze, ca. 1900

Little is known about Jakob (James as he was known after he came to America). We know he was born on 17 May 1876 in Bavaria, but not which town he came from. He became a member of the Gebirgstrachten-Verein "Almrausch" in Munich on 19 November 1896. From a commemorative pipe we know he was in the 10th Bavarian Infantry in 1897-1899. We do know he was a professional waiter for years. He saved some menus, presumably from restaurants he served in including two from the Café de Paris (1911) in the Bois de Boulogne, from the Palais d'Orsay in the Grand Hotel de la Gare du Palais d'Orsay (1912), and the Kursaal d'Ostende (no date). He arrived in New York on 11 April, 1913 on the FRANCE out of LeHavre. When he married Mathilde is unknown but we

know that it was before June 1920 because his petition for naturalization lists them as living at 325 E 56th St. in Manhattan.

Family history has it that he was a gambler and that a delicatessen he and Mathilde owned was lost through gambling and that is when they moved to Carol's parent's home. He was an accomplished wood carver and Carol remembers a miniature village he made which disappeared over the years.

The only other relics of his are some zither music, one piece of which may have been composed by him. This is "Die Heimkehr", a march. Moog was apparently a favorite composer of Jakob's, as there were several songs by this composer in his collection. The only other thing we know is that he went to Germany in 1938 and took his Schwarzer zither with him, as the baggage sticker shows that he was on the steamer COLUMBUS to Bremen from New York. Extensive research both in Germany and the U.S. has turned up no other information about him.

Events

Sterling Zither Seminar - Zither players from Maryland, Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey came together to attend Jane Curtis's Sterling Zither Seminar, No. 44. True to form, Jane selected a program of music, that provided a varied and challenging experience for all participants. For this seminar, Jane selected the following works.

Al Ha-nisim (For the Miracles), duo

Clowns (Dmitri Kabalevsky), solo

The Second Theme (Anton Karas), solo

Spanish Eyes (Bert Kaempfert), quartett

Windhofer Dance (Schorsch Windhofer), duo



From left to right: David Kyger, Heidi Lugmayer, Jane Curtis, Marie Skowronek, Karl Skowronek, John Snyder, Tony Walter, Richard Twitchell

Austrian-American Weinfest - Zitherists

Ludwig Kalbrunner and Jeff Palinek performed on October 19 at the 2014 Austrian-American Weinfest held at the Schwabenhof in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. Their selections included Schneewalzer / Münchner Walzerklänge / Kufsteinlied in the first set, and Wien du Stadt meiner Träume / Cafe Mozart / Third Man in the second half of the program.

In addition, the Greis Ensemble, (2 violins, accordion, mandolin, and guitar) performed Sperl-Polka (J Strauss Vater) and Schau ma eine (J Winhart), much to the delight of the audience.

Thank you to Rudolph Mueller for his report on the Austrian-American Weinfest. There is much happening in the zither community, so why not share your experiences? Send information regarding venues, programs and upcoming performances to dave@zither.us for inclusion in The Zitherplayer.

The Galacean Waltz

A Modal Folk Tune from the Appalachians
by Dr. Jane Curtis

Modal music has an alluring other-worldly air about it, which explains much of the charm of this issue's music feature The Galacean Waltz. If you are new to modal music, you will enjoy being introduced to it here. If you already know and love modal music, you will know at a glance that this piece is not in the key of C, despite the absence of sharps or flats following the time signature at the beginning. Neither is it in the key of G, despite the G bass and G chords that set the tonic in the first measures. It is in fact in the Mixolydian Mode, meaning that it is based on the G scale but without sharpening the F.

It is set for two zithers. Zither 1 plays the melody line throughout. Zither 2 harmonizes the melody, using the fourths and fifths so characteristic of Appalachian music. The rawness of the intervals spices up the smooth swirling waltz tempo, reinforces the motion, and adds to the slightly mysterious feel of the music. Play it faster and feel the ghosts of long-ago dancers in a sun-lit Appalachian glen – or play it slower and see the Little People dancing dreamlike in a misty clearing.

The arrangement is not difficult to play, but take care that the two voices strike simultaneously as they follow their parallel patterns. This is especially important in Line 2, Measure 3, and in Line 5, Measure 4, where the music comes rushing down and swirls back upward. Either way, make it sound as relaxed as though it were just happening of its own accord – and have a good time playing it!

Galacean Waltz

Zither arr Jane Curtis

Folk

Zither 1



Zither arrangement copyright 1996

Galacean Waltz

Zither arr Jane Curtis

Folk

Zither 2

