

Zither Newsletter

OF U.S.A.

SPRING 1987

Welcome to the first issue of the Zither Newsletter of the USA.

Journeys into uncharted territory have adventure and anxiety factors. The adventure is whether or not we can be instrumental in expanding the zither world in the United States. We'd like to see if we can spark some new interest in the zither by providing a network of information and support for zither players and zither audiences.

We feel a sense of adventure when we get a letter that says, "Until I heard about you I thought I was virtually the only one trying to play this beautiful instrument", or, "The day before the Frets magazine came I bought an old Austrian zither that I know absolutely nothing about . . .".

We have been pulled into zither promotion and publicity activities due to the US tours of the Popp Lägel Zither Trio of Munich in 1985 and 1987. We have, because of those activities, become increasingly convinced there is a dormant constituency out there.

(continued page 9)



*Title page
"Collection of Exquisite Mountain Songs"
by Ulrich Halbreiter
dedicated to Duke Maximilian of Bavaria
see page 3)*

CALENDAR OF ZITHER EVENTS

July 15 - 19, 1987 - FIGA National Convention, Flint, Michigan. Zither Workshop and Jam Sessions. Contact: Janet Stessl, 6173 N. McClellan Ave., Chicago, IL. 60646 telephone 312-631-2854.

October 11, 1987 - Milwaukee Zither Club Concert. 3:00 PM Sunday. Tickets in advance \$4.00, at the door \$4.50. Bavarian Inn, 700 West Lexington Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53217. Contact Mr. & Mrs. Hans Gassner, 2952 North 48th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53210 telephone 414-871-1695

November 8, 1987 - Chicago Zither Club Concert and Dinner/Dance. Sunday, 3:30 PM Tickets \$20 advance only. For reservations contact Mrs. Ernestine Kandlbinder, 1601 Greendale, Park Ridge, Illinois 60068 telephone 312-825-5166.

Seminars and concerts in Europe. We have listings here in the newsletter office or can put you in touch with zither friends in Europe, if you are planning a trip and would like to hook up with a concert or seminar while there.

October 30 - November 1, 1988 - Quadrennial Congress of Deutsche Zithermusik Bund. Augsburg. West Germany. Hundreds of zither players performing in concerts all three days. How about making up a USA delegation!

The Zither Newsletter of the USA is published and edited by Janet Stessl as a service and information link for zither players in the United States of America. Your comments, articles, listing of events, classified ads or whatever are welcomed.

The newsletter will be published quarterly, deadline for next issue is June 15, 1987.

Suggested subscription rate is \$8.00 per year.

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Duke Maximilian of Bavaria (1808-1888)

Duke Maximilian was responsible in great part for the establishment of the popularity of the zither in Bavaria. He became intrigued when he heard the zither virtuoso Johann Petzmayer perform in 1837 in Bamberg. The Duke learned to play the zither and he performed solo and with his teacher frequently. Legend has it that he liked to go out incognito and play in local inns for the people.

Johann Petzmayer (1803-1884) was the first known virtuoso of the zither of the 19th century. He played in his fathers gasthof "Zum hl. Johann" in the suburbs of Vienna, even playing for the Kaiser. He made many concert tours throughout Austria and Germany. It was on one of these tours that Duke Maximilian became a patron of zither music in Bavaria.

Til his later years, Petzmayer played mostly on a simple zither with 18 strings and a diatonic fretboard, primarily playing in keys of G, D, and A major. (see illustration)

A 17 page souvenir album of Petzmayer's music is available from Musikverlag Josef Preissler. If ordered directly from publisher cost is 10-DM plus postage and handling, plus currency exchange costs. As a convenience to our readers, this music, and other selections from the Preissler catalog may be ordered through Zither Newsletter of USA offices, 6173 N. McClellan, Chicago, IL. 60646.

ZITHER PLAYERS INVITED TO FIGA CONVENTION
 FLINT, MICHIGAN
 JULY 15 - 19, 1987

All zither players and anyone interested in learning to play zither are invited to attend the Fretted Instrument Guild of America (FIGA) convention at the Flint, Michigan Hyatt Regency Hotel, July 15 - 19, 1987.

A workshop for beginning zither players will be conducted by Janet Stessl. Loaner zithers will be available for the workshop if you do not have one. While geared for new zither players, any player may participate in the seminar. Also, there will be ample time, in and around the convention schedule for informal jam sessions. A small selection of zither music and equipment will be available.

A trio, Lou and Janet Stessl, zitherists and Art Anderson, guitar, will perform in one of the convention concerts. Many concerts are scheduled in and around the Flint area as well as at the hotel, including an en masse concert by all members of the convention. Tours are planned to Frankenmuth Bavarian Village, Crossroads Village, and the Chesaning Showboat, among local attractions.

Since zither players here in the USA do not have an organization to call their own, FIGA has encouraged us to meet and greet each other under their umbrella. We should, no doubt, give some thought to establishing our own zither organization. We'd like your comments on that possibility.

Your editor is currently writing a zither column for the bi-monthly FIGA newsletter and it has provided some interesting correspondence and telephone calls. FIGA's members are primarily banjo, mandolin and guitar players. Dues are \$12.50 annually. Convention and hotel registration should be made with the enclosed forms.

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SUN CITIES SYMPHONY

FEATURES ZITHER DUET

The Sun Cities Symphony Orchestra of Sun City, Arizona performed a Night in Vienna concert on Sunday, March 1, 1987 which featured a zither duet by Ruth Welcome and Michael Maringer. Their medley of selections included Erst Wann's Aus Wird Sein, Im Prater Blüh'n Wieder die Bäume, Vogerl Fliegst in die Welt Hinaus, Live, Laugh and Love, Ein Kleines Cafe im Hernal, Zwei Herzen im Drei-Viertel Takt, and the Third Man Theme.

The symphony orchestra performed selections by Johann Strauss Sohn, Richard Strauss, Franz Lehár, and R. Sieczynski, some featuring soprano and tenor vocals.

Glad to hear the zither is being so ably represented in Arizona. Miss Welcome learned to play the zither at the age of six with her father in Freiburg, West Germany. She later continued her studies in music on the piano and violin at the Julliard School of Music in New York City. She returned to zither playing and made quite a name for herself as a professional zither player. From 1953 to 1968 she produced 18 record albums, including Zither Goes West, Welcome to Zitherland, Sentimental Zither, and Zither Goes Hollywood, to mention a few. The LP's are no longer available in record stores.

THE TEACHERS TABLE

Following are excerpts of a lecture given by Toni Gösswein, eminent zither teacher and artist of Munich, at the Trossingen Zither Seminar, April 1986, seminar sponsored by Deutsche Zithermusik Bund. Translated by Marianne Martynowycz and Janet Stessl.

Mistakes of Zither Players

We are all liable to make mistakes. You may make a mistake without knowing it, and I may, too. There are many possibilities for mistakes. Some play on a bad instrument. A bad player on a bad instrument can make no headway. Zithers are expensive, so perhaps a good player can make some headway on a bad instrument.

The zither should be tuned correctly all the time. Do not tune only the strings you are going to use. It is to your advantage to tune all the strings. The strings should be changed on a regular basis: every four months on the fretboard, every six months on accompaniment strings, every year on bass strings and every five years on contra basses.

The thumb pick doesn't have to be a \$35 one, although they are very nice and I use one. But whatever price, the pick should fit properly.

Play music appropriate for the situation. Classical music in a concert hall, beer drinking music at the beer table, etc. Play music appropriate for the zither. Some pieces do not adapt well, and sound like a joke if played on the zither. There are some nice little pieces which sound nice everywhere. A difficult, technical piece may not sound as nice as could be if a weaker player it. An easier piece may be better. Know your own limitations.

Watch your left hand positions. Fingers should not be held too far away from the frets. In any position you can have an "anchor" finger. It is usually the 4th finger, but any finger can become pivotal. Keep the thumb over the frets. Avoid moving the hand

back and forth to place the thumb. Good players barely move the hand, just the fingers. Know your positions and use them. Change positions as frequently as needed. It is a bad habit to try to play in one position all the time. Long finger nails will sometimes give a wrong tone.

The thumbpick should strike down into the zither with a straight thumb. Loudness is achieved by the right hand, not the left hand. Do not press the left hand to play louder. Play with color and changes of loud and soft. Do not play open strings - stop the frets. There are various damping techniques: do not damp with the fingernail, and damp quickly, not slowly, to avoid buzz. Automatic damping occurs on some repetitions. The side of the hand can be used in folk music.

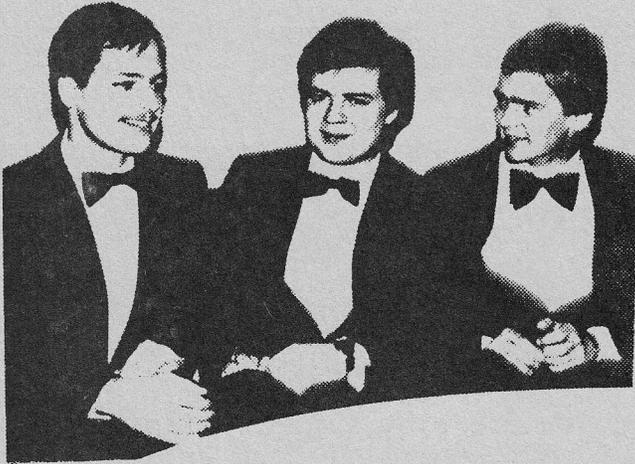
Maintain rhythm as for a dance - do not play fast, then slow. Do not make endings too grandiose. Do not always reach for a contra bass to end a piece. If you do use a contra, reach it in time, not too slowly. Binding notes should be done evenly. Be careful not to play triplets too fast - you will speed yourself up too much. Sixteenth notes are not necessarily fast. They must be played according to tempo.

Avoid pausing to find a chord, or your place in the music. Eyes should always be reading ahead. Don't play the upbeat too heavily. Watch phrasing. Don't play accompaniment too late. Play in different styles. Don't play everything in romantic style. Sliding up to a note, for example, is of romantic styling, sometimes sounding a little kitsch. Baroque music never has such effects.

Another lecture by Toni Gösswein will be in the next issue - "Methods of Practicing". Other teachers will also be featured. Your questions and comments are invited.

CHICAGO ZITHER CLUB

SPRING CONCERT



Popp-Lägel Zither Trio

SECOND CHICAGO VISIT

The Popp-Lägel Zither Trio of Munich visited Chicago for the second time February 24 - March 10. This trip was an enlarged version of their first trip here in 1985. More concerts were performed, a larger variety of audiences were reached, new people were introduced to zither music. The only constant feature was the quality of the trio's playing and the pleasure of their listeners and friends.

Their first concert was for an assembly of German classes from six high schools in southwest suburban Chicago. Over 500 students attended and for most of them it was the first time they had heard or seen a zither. That evening the trio renewed friendships at the regular rehearsal of the Chicago Zither Club.

Thursday evening, February 26, was a highlight of the trip when they performed in chamber music concert at the Sulzer Regional Public Library. It was a most unusual event for Chicago zither audiences - an all classical concert on the zither! The room was SRO and finally the doors had to be closed and 45 more people were turned away. It was the largest crowd the library had ever had for a concert. The next night was a folk and popular concert in a different location - equally appreciated.

(continued page 7)

The Chicago Zither Club will hold its Spring Concert on Sunday April 26, 1987 at Thirteen Colonies Banquet Hall, 8301 West Belmont, Chicago, IL. Dinner and dancing follow the concert. Attendance is by advance reservation only.

A variety program will be presented, beginning with a Spanish march, *El Matador*, followed by *Pizzacato Polka* by Johann Strauss, Jr. Other orchestra numbers will include the *Old Grizzley Bear*, and selections from the *Merry Widow*. A German Folk Dance will be played by the zithers only. Joan Culler, soprano and Cal Metts, tenor will be featured in three numbers: *To All the Girls I've Loved Before*, *I Feel Pretty*, and *Rote Rosen, Rote Lippen, Roter Wein*. The *Neapolitan Mandolins*, an ensemble directed by Fr. Della Penta will play *Naar Buiten* and *Maria Elena*.

The Chicago Zither Club currently has nine zither players. The orchestra also includes violins, mandolins, guitars, cello and bass. Carl A. Kandlbinder is the musical director of the club and Fred Fischer, assistant director.

Tickets may still be available, if this newsletter get to print and mailing on time. Contact the president of the club, Erna Kandlbinder, 1601 Greendale, Park Ridge, IL. 60068 or telephone 312-825-5166.



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CLASSIFIED ADS

Saturday, February 28 was the second Zither Seminar sponsored by the Chicago Zither Club. It was an intensive learning experience, but that evening we had a relaxed dinner and a few hours of fun together. But not, however, into the wee hours, as the trio played for two church services the next morning and then traveled to Michigan City, Indiana for a concert-dinner sponsored by the First Presbyterian Church of Michigan City.

The following week the trio played at the Black Forest Chalet Restaurant in Morton Grove, Illinois. Once again they were nearly overwhelmed by the numbers of patrons at the restaurant - enthusiastic friends and new converts to the beauty of zither music. The final day of their appearance at the restaurant included an Abschieds Dinner attended by members of the Chicago Zither Club.

Also during the second week, the youngest participant of the seminar (12 year old Cathy Lauber) invited the trio to perform at her school. After the concert for the entire school enrollment of 250, they sat in with her German class for a language exchange. It was nice to see the zither being played for so many young people here in Chicago.

Saturday, March 1, found students and groups scheduling extra lessons with members of the trio. The weather was unseasonably warm in Chicago that weekend. Many of the lessons were held in the garden. A telephone call to Munich revealed that it was extremely cold, -0° and snowing at home, but here we basked in 70° sunshine and loved every minute of it.

The visit closed with a filming of an instructional video tape which will be edited and available here in the USA in a few months.

WANTED TO BUY: Harp Zither in good condition. Helga Conrad. Write c/o Zither Newsletter of USA, 6173 North McClellan Ave., Chicago, IL. 60646

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FOR SALE: Audio cassette POPULAR, CLASSICAL, FOLK by Zither Trio Munich. Haydn/Divertimento, Toccata for a Wild Old Lady, Bauernmarsch and more. Send \$10.00 plus \$1.40 shipping and handling to Janet Stessl, 6173 North McClellan Ave., Chicago, IL. 60646.

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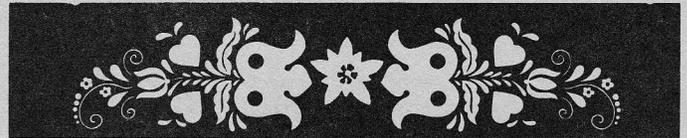
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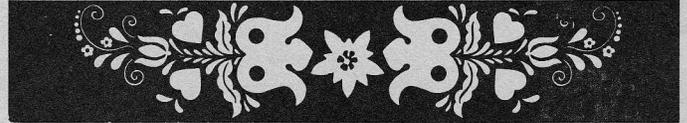
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Our anxiety centers around decisions which seem to loom large at this time: layout, pictures, mailing lists, translation of German articles, advertising rates, subscription rates . . . We have decided to plunge in and launch the ship (canoe) and think of the first year as a shakedown cruise, while we invite your input, articles, advertising, mailing lists of zither friends and **your subscription.**

More important, we'd like you to be zither ambassadors and spread the word that zither is alive and well in the USA - and growing. Feel free to pass this newsletter along. Send us names of music stores, organizations who might be interested. Our limited experience is that you must throw out big nets to find and catch the few zitherists that are out there.

Please join us on our journey and share the adventure and anxiety with us.

Janet Stessl
Editor

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①

System 1: Treble and bass clefs, 4/4 time signature. Treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet in measure 2. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment with quarter notes and rests. Measure 4 ends with a fermata over a chord.

②

System 2: Treble and bass clefs, 4/4 time signature. Treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet in measure 2. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment with quarter notes and rests. Measure 4 ends with a fermata over a chord.

③

System 3: Treble and bass clefs, 4/4 time signature. Treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet in measure 2. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment with quarter notes and rests. Measure 4 ends with a fermata over a chord.

System 4: Treble and bass clefs, 4/4 time signature. Treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet in measure 2. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment with quarter notes and rests. Measure 4 ends with a fermata over a chord.

System 5: Treble and bass clefs, 4/4 time signature. Treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet in measure 2. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment with quarter notes and rests. Measure 4 ends with a fermata over a chord.

Modern Songs, Book II includes Latin American rhythms. A demonstration cassette is also available from the publisher.

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