

16th century harpsichord is Koster's favorite piece at National Music Museum

By Travis Gulbrandson
travis.gulbrandson@plaintalk.net

When John Koster arrived at the National Music Museum to work as a conservator in September 1991, then-museum director André Larson told him, "The glory days (of acquisition) are over."

"I think at that point there were on the order of 5,100 items in the museum," Koster said. "It's nearly tripled since then."

It's one of Koster's roles at the museum to help oversee the physical well-being of that approximately 15,000-piece collection.

Part of this involves monitoring climate control issues in the building and its storage areas.

"In this climate, particularly with the warm, humid summers of the past couple of years, it's been kind of a struggle," he said. "It requires constant monitoring so that we can be in touch with facilities management to tweak when necessary."

Storage and lighting conditions also factor into this "overseeing" aspect.

"Many things are very delicate – all sorts of materials that are not necessarily stable

under light," Koster said.

He also works on restoration projects at the museum, which falls into two main categories. The first of these is to restore instruments to playing condition.

"Of our 15,000 instruments, only a few – and I mean maybe 30 – are maintained in playing condition. And that is mainly the keyboard instruments," Koster said.

The other type of restoration is more common.

"That is basically consolidating or doing cosmetic work on instruments," Koster said. "They're not always in perfect condition when they arrive, so we have to make them exhibitable or photographable if we're going to put them on exhibit."

Students and interns are often involved in both types of restoration projects, he said.

Koster said his favorite restoration may have been that of a Neapolitan harpsichord, circa 1530, that was unveiled at the museum last September.

The instrument is noted both for its playability and its age.

"There may be somewhere between 20 to 30 16th-century harpsichords," Koster said at

Spotlight On

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

the unveiling. "Very few have survived. This one almost landed on a junk pile. The former owner was cleaning out his parents' estate and put it on the burn pile as a useless toy piano."

"Somebody fortunately said, 'Don't do that,'" Koster said.

Not only his favorite project, the harpsichord also is his favorite piece in the museum.

"If there were a fire or tornado or something, I would take that one," he said last week.

Harpsichords were what brought Koster into academics. Initially, he was a harpsichord builder, making copies of existing instruments, which led to his working on

older instruments.

Eventually he worked to restore them at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

"That grew into scholarship," Koster said. "These instruments are basically reviving something that very little is known about, so I had to look at old instruments in various collections and date them and so on."

This led to research, which led to writing articles – something to which Koster refers as "the more scholarly aspect" of what he does.

It is this research-related aspect that he likes most of all, he said.

"You can't just go and tear



JOHN KOSTER

into instruments and rebuild them," he said. "For example, with the Neapolitan harpsichord, that whole school of making was completely unknown 20, 25 years ago. ... It's really about making discoveries."

Koster compared it to the art world of the 19th century.

"People went around assembling the oeuvre of people like Botticelli and so on, and attributing and de-attributing paintings to Leonardo da Vinci," he said.

"With musical instruments, it's a scholarly discipline that's really relatively young.

"A lot of the basic work is being done right now in terms of categorization and figuring out the historical relations between things," he said.

In addition to being a conservator at the National Music Museum, Koster is the curator of keyboard instruments, and a professor of music and coordinator of graduate studies in the history of musical instruments at the University of South Dakota.

For more information about the National Music Museum, visit <http://orgs.usd.edu/nmm/>.

SESQUICENTENNIAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Cleo Erickson

Excerpts from the Plain Talk

1971

Mr. Myron Iverson has donated his 1961 Cadillac ambulance to the city and county. Mr. Iverson discontinued his ambulance business on July 1. All requests for ambulance service should be made to the Vermillion Police Dispatcher at 624-4408.

A request was made to the City Council to exclude racing pigeons from the ordinance regulating animals within the city limits.

A total of 13 area artists participated in the 1st annual Sidewalk Art Show and Sale sponsored by the Friends of the Museum was held on the USD Campus.

At the Council's regular meeting, an ordinance that would have amended the newly farm animal ordinance was tabled. It would have

excluded racing homing pigeons from regulation. The Council is split on exactly what to do with the pigeons. One Alderman stated that pigeons are a bigger problem than horses. He went on to say "Horses don't land on anybody's roof." Another Alderman suggested that "maybe make a pigeon leash law." The fate of the pigeon in Vermillion is unknown.

At this week's Council meeting and after months of discussion about pigeons the Council amended the animal ordinance that allows pigeons within the city limits if they are owned by members of the National Pigeon Association, the pigeons must be kept in a closed loft, be banded and exercise only on the owners property. So, keep your pigeons.

Frederick Manfred, well known South Dakota author, will be the guest speaker at the Missouri River

Conference on October 7th. His topic will be "The Missouri River in its Natural State."

Dedication ceremonies for the new Center of Continuing Education at USD will be held at the Center at 3:30 p.m. on October 8, 1971.

At Monday night's meeting of the City Council, Oden Implement Company was awarded the bid for the new ambulance. The model of the new vehicle will be a 1972 International Harvester.

Vermillion and other communities will need to find solutions to their solid waste disposal problems in the near future. The public is invited to a meeting regarding solid waste disposal on Monday, November 8th at the Center for Continuing Education.

The Newberry Store was the scene of an early morning

robbery. The Manager had just completed a bank deposit of \$1155.00 and placed it in the safe. He walked out of his office and when he came back the money was missing. Employees working at the lunch counter saw a man wearing a black trench coat and black hat walk into the store. Both employees said he was sharp looking as he walked to the back of the store. Chief Offerdahl said this was possibly the man and he seemed to know where he was going without hesitation. The investigation is continuing.

Shoppers!!! Don't forget to sign up for a free turkey to be given away by participating Chamber members. The names will be collected at the close of business on Saturday and 30 names will be drawn for

turkeys. There are a total of 100 turkeys to be given away. Shoppers need not be present to win and may register as often as possible.

Ground breaking ceremonies for the new \$3,050,000 Fine Arts Center will be held at 2:00 p.m., November 12, 1971. Guests include the South Dakota Legislature and the Board of

Regents. The College of Fine Arts is currently housed in eight different buildings.

A "Holiday Historic House Tour," has been set for December 12th from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. This is the first Tour of Homes sponsored by the Clay County Historical Society.

END 1971

CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS NEEDED For Hearing/Auditory Processing Study



The USD Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is seeking children ages 7-13 years and adults 18-25 years with no history of language, learning, or hearing problems to participate in a research study focused on updating normative values for diagnostic tests of Central Auditory Processing.

Participation will require two test sessions at the USD Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic in Vermillion. Each session will take approximately 1.5 to 2 hours and can be scheduled at your convenience (including evenings and weekends).

All participants will receive a free hearing test and central auditory processing evaluation. Participants also will be compensated for their participation.

To participate you must:

- Have no history of language, learning, or hearing problems.
- Have normal hearing
- Speak English as your primary language
- Be between 7-13 or 18-25 years of age

For more information, contact:

Jennie Bellis
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
The University of South Dakota
(605) 202-1345 • jdbellis@usd.edu

Allison Root
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
The University of South Dakota
(775) 313-4449 • Allison.Root@usd.edu

Teri James Bellis, Ph.D., CCC-A, FAAA, F-ASHA
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
The University of South Dakota
(605) 677-5474 • tbellis@usd.edu

0 Foot Pain + Comfort = LOVE
We have the insole & arch support right for you!
Make life better everyday without foot pain!
Boston Shoes to Boots
312 W. 3rd • Yankton • 665-9092

CASE III
Mark's Machinery, Inc.
TWO LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU
Yankton, SD • 605-665-4540 • Toll Free: 1-800-526-8095
Wagner, SD • 605-384-3681 • Toll Free: 1-800-693-1990
E-mail: marksinc@willinet.net • Web site: www.marksinc.com

CNH Capital
© 2006 CNH America LLC. All rights reserved. Case IH is a registered trademark of CNH America LLC. CNH Capital is a trademark of CNH America LLC. www.caseih.com

CASE III

M&M Excavating
We Move the Earth!



Tree Removal, Dirtwork, etc.

Competitive Rates
Home: 402-256-9312 • Cell: 402-278-1476

WANTED
Buying all types of SCRAP IRON
Farm Machinery • Cars & Trucks
References Available • Top Market Prices Paid
Home: 402-945-1512 • Cell: 402-533-3640
K&K Iron & Metal