

'Clearly Clarinets' now on display

By Travis Gulbrandson

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It's "Clearly Clarinets" at the National Music Museum (NMM) this summer.

That's the name of a three-month temporary exhibition that has taken residence in the Arne B. Larson Concert Hall since June 1.

"It spans pretty much the whole development of the clarinet," said Dr. Deborah Check Reeves, curator of education and woodwinds. "There are slightly more than 50 instruments, and after this exhibit they'll go back into storage, and who knows when they might be seen again?"

"I think people should regard it as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see these things," she said. "The instruments are always available for research. A person can request to see it. But to actually walk in and see these things, it might not happen again for a long, long time."

The exhibit includes one of the museum's earliest clarinets, dating from around 1800, as well as one of its newest, from circa 1965.

There also is a case of clarinet "relatives" and another featuring mouthpieces and reeds.

Clarinet top joints also are featured.

"Each one has a different thumb key, and when they're



This clarinet's B-flat from 1907-1908 is among those on display at the National Music Museum as part of the exhibit, Clearly Clarinets: Tools of Human Expression.

(Courtesy photos)

lined up next to each other you can actually stand there and see what's different about each one, whereas if they were just the whole instrument, you might not have your attention focused on that particular aspect," Reeves said.

Another feature new to the museum is the inclusion of what Reeves refers to as "story labels."

"There's a little introductory material, there's a little bit of information about each instrument that directs people to actually take a look at the instrument,

see if they can find it," she said. "I think it appeals to clarinetists as well as non-clarinetists, and the way we've done the whole exhibit is to have some really eye-catching, interesting things."

Clearly Clarinets began as a concept about 18 months ago when the clarinet instructor from the University of Nebraska contacted the NMM saying that the annual Clarinetfest would be held in Lincoln this summer.

Clarinetfest is the annual meeting of the International Clarinet Association.

"They'll draw anywhere from 500 to 2,000 people to attend this conference, and it's usually about six days long," Reeves said.

In the beginning, the plan was to have the exhibit on display concurrent with Clarinetfest, and then taken down.

"The more we got into it, the more we thought, 'If we're going to do all this work, let's do it for the whole summer,'" Reeves said. "It evolved into a lot bigger, more permanent kind of thing with actual display cases and big labels and

things like that.

"As far as a temporary exhibit, this is the first time we've done anything like this here at the museum, where we'll have something up for a few months and then take it down," she said.

So far, it has attracted plenty of visitors.

"Even the very first weekend we had a lot of people that stopped in and specifically said they stopped because they wanted to see the exhibit," Reeves said.

Clearly Clarinets will be on display at the NMM until Aug. 31.

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