A Gift of Sound

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Essay by Sally B. Brown

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
THE TRUSTEES
OF THE
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
REQUEST THE HONOR OF YOUR
PRESENCE AT THE INAUGURATION CEREMONIES OF THE NEW BUILDING ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER FIFTH, 1894, AT TWO O’CLOCK.
HENRY G. MARQUAND, PRESIDENT.
LP DE CESNOLA, SECRETARY.

To Mrs. J. Crosby Brown
President’s Note

On March 22, 2018, The Met’s André Mertens Galleries for Musical Instruments reopened to the public after a two-year renovation. This reinterpretation of the Museum’s collection of musical instruments—among the oldest and most comprehensive in the world—brings a new perspective to these extraordinary works of art by grouping together examples from different cultures, highlighting common aspects of music making around the globe. Other key innovations include an audio guide and kiosks that, for the first time, allow visitors to hear select clips of the instruments being played.

Among the instruments to receive the "gift of sound" in these renovated galleries is a gold-lacquered Burmese harp given to The Met in 1898 by one of the most prolific and surprising donors in the Museum’s history: Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown (1842–1918). This Bulletin tells Brown’s remarkable story, from her unlikely beginnings as a collector (she was untrained in music and otherwise fully engaged as the mother of six children) to her legacy of giving to The Met. She and her family eventually donated some 3,600 instruments to the Museum, including such notable works as a piano by Bartolomeo Cristofori that is considered the earliest extant version of the instrument. Even more extraordinary is the fact that roughly two-thirds of the Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments, as it is known today, are from non-Western cultures. This feat of vision and tenacity would be unusual in any era; that all this was achieved by a woman in late nineteenth-century America is truly exceptional.

And yet there is another improbable twist in the story, for we owe much of our knowledge of Brown and her collecting activities to the author of this Bulletin, Sally B. Brown, cochair of the Visiting Committee to the Department of Musical Instruments, who also happens to be Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown’s great-granddaughter. The Met is deeply grateful to Sally for her determination to document, preserve, and, most important, tell the story of her esteemed ancestor’s life. Her efforts reflect the same perseverance that surely propelled Mary Elizabeth as she cultivated correspondents around the world and, in so doing, built her collection by sheer force of will. Finally, we are deeply grateful to the Friends of Musical Instruments: The Amati, for their gift to this publication in honor of Sally Brown, and to the Lila Acheson Wallace Fund for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which supports, in part, the quarterly Bulletin series.

Daniel H. Weiss
President and CEO, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown
An Incurable Collector of Musical Instruments
Sally B. Brown

In 1884, Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown (1842–1918), a seemingly conventional, upper-class New York matron, the wife of a merchant banker and mother of six, embarked perhaps inadvertently on an improbable quest that would become her life’s work: to assemble a collection of the musical instruments of all nations. Over the next thirty-four years she acquired more than 3,600 instruments—a collection lauded in her own day as rivaling the world’s finest—which, beginning in 1889, she systematically gave to The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The first comprehensive and catalogued collection of musical instruments in the United States, it formed the foundation of the Museum’s world-renowned Department of Musical Instruments, whose collection today includes more than 5,000 examples from around the globe.

Brown and her gift appeared to come out of nowhere. While prosperous, she was by no means a member of Gilded Age high society. At the time, neither she nor her family had ties either to the Museum or to New York’s prominent musical institutions, such as the Philharmonic Society, Academy of Music, and Metropolitan Opera. Nor did she bring specialized knowledge to an esoteric, 1.

1. Instruments room in Brown’s country home, Brighthurst, in New Jersey. Several of the first instruments Brown acquired are visible, including the serpent (89.4.1090) mounted on the column.
male-dominated field. But through perseverance and force of will, Brown came to
be recognized worldwide as an exceptional collector and a scholarly authority who
published widely, beginning in 1888 with a groundbreaking, 380-page catalogue
hailed as “a most important contribution to musical literature.”

Brown’s obsession to acquire instruments from all over the world apparently sprang from a simple decorating project. In 1884–85, she commissioned a
niece in Florence to find some old instruments that would be suitable ornaments
for her music room. The four she procured—a harp, a mandolin, a five-octave piano, and a serpent (a type of bass wood instrument that was a predecessor of the
tuba)—“were the original nucleus from which the whole collection grew,” Brown later wrote. “Their arrival thoroughly aroused my interest in collecting and from
that time I was keen to secure old instruments.” As her collection rapidly expanded, her music room became her cluttered instruments room (fig. 1).

By 1889, she had 276 instruments, most from non-European cultures. In
this Brown was remarkably prescient. Long before widespread awareness of art
beyond the Western canon—and before the Metropolitan Museum had depart-
ments dedicated to the arts of Asia, Africa, Oceania, the Islamic world, and the
precolonial Americas—she focused on collecting instruments from those and other
lesser-known cultures. Among the intriguing examples she ultimately acquired is a
zoomorphic Burmese mí-gyaùng, or crocodile zither (fig. 2). Brown sensed an
urgent need to preserve musical instruments as the tangible evidence of vanishing
indigenous cultures. She observed that her collection “is of value as a whole, as
illustrating the habits and tastes of different peoples. It will become more valuable
every year, as many of the instruments . . .  are rapidly disappearing and even now
some of them cannot be replaced.” While such instruments constitute the major-
ity of the collection to this day, among them are also masterworks from every cate-
gory of Western instrument (fig. 3), notably an outstanding array of European and

2. Mí-gyaùng (crocodile zither). Myanmar (formerly Burma), late 19th century. Along with the saìng-gauk (harp) and khene (mouth organ), the mi-gyaùng was among the instruments played by Burmese musicians and dancers in the ninth century at the court of the Tang dynasty.
American keyboards (fig. 4). Driven by a belief that music was the most universal and expressive of the arts, Brown assembled a collection that was unparalleled in both size and scope. However, she deliberately did not include any famous violins among her acquisitions. Brown had “no sympathy with the practice of locking up in museums instruments known for rare beauty of tone,” although she hoped the collection ultimately would include examples by the great Italian violin makers. Her wish was fulfilled later in the twentieth century, when Stradivari and Amati violins were added to the Museum’s holdings.

Brown was very much part of an educational movement. In post–Civil War America, forming collections of whatever interested or pleased them was commonplace among those of means. As affluent Americans were accumulating scientific specimens and objects of art, they were also establishing and supporting institutions that would enhance their cities and show off the erudition that accompanied their collecting. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, all founded in 1870, incorporated into their mandates and charters commitments to public education for all classes. Brown likewise made education the primary goal of her collection. Her emphatically instructive purpose was clear from her systematic displays, organized geographically, and from reflections she recorded in her diaries (“Home Records”): “It had been my desire to make it an educational institution rather than a curiosity shop, in every way interesting and helpful to others.” Her galleries grew to include hundreds of pieces of supporting material: models and replicas of instruments to illustrate their construction, makers’ tools, instructive photographs, portraits of musicians, and even plaster casts of ancient sculptures in which musical instruments figure. The public apparently responded to her approach. According to Isaac Hall, curator of what was then The Met’s Department of Sculpture, Brown’s collection was “studied not a little by writers and illustrators” and “provided such a benefit to students and workers.” Indeed, it was noted that her collection “differs from many other collections in that it is visited by hundreds of people every month.”

The collection’s widespread popularity may have reflected the increased importance of music making in American households rich and poor after the Civil War. Music rooms were de rigueur in upper-class households, and many...
Attributed to Johann Schmidt (active late 18th century). Pianofortes with pedal boards may have been built as practice instruments for organists. This rare example has eighteen leather-covered pedals operated by a player’s feet. The lowest five extend the piano’s range by five bass notes; the other thirteen pedals duplicate the lowest notes on the keyboard, striking the same strings with a different set of hammers.
middle-class homes boasted pianos, organs, harps, violins, or guitars. The singing of hymns among devout Protestant families like Brown’s was considered morally and spiritually uplifting, and informal classical musicales in affluent American homes showed sophisticated awareness of European trends and taste. Brown, herself no musician, deeply regretted the absence of music in her early life and had vowed to make it a part of her own future household (figs. 5, 6):

I have always been very fond of music, and in my youthful days at home, sometimes shed a few tears, because, though having everything else in the way of sympathy, I was conscious that nobody cared for music in the way I loved it…. I had some music lessons as a child, but must have had a most unattractive and tactless teacher. She did absolutely nothing to inspire me…. When we were engaged, I said to John, “If we have a home, we are going to have some music in it.”

Despite the growing interest in music making, musical instruments were not recognized as a collectible category of general interest to American individuals when Brown began her work. American institutions only modestly collected instruments, with initial efforts at the New England Conservatory of Music, founded in Boston in 1867. In 1879, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, guided by its assistant secretary, G. Brown Goode, an amateur musician, first included musical instruments as a separate classification of artifacts in the soon-to-be National Museum (1881).
International expositions of the late nineteenth century, with their prominent displays of hundreds of musical instruments, stimulated the market, but Brown led the way for serious and systematic collecting.

Earlier, however, in 1884, Joseph W. Drexel, a retired businessman and an early trustee of the Metropolitan Museum and the American Museum of Natural History, acquired forty-four musical instruments in Paris for The Met. (They were not formally accessioned until 1889, the same year Brown made her initial gift.) Brown received permission to visit Drexel’s instruments shortly after they were installed in 1885. That was before her four European instruments had even reached New York, possible evidence of a preexisting interest in the field. Whether challenged or inspired by Drexel’s donation, Brown rapidly acquired and then contributed significantly more instruments to the Museum.

Her conviction in the importance of music to all peoples probably directed her pioneering and resolute commitment to collecting musical instruments, but making a scholarly contribution by exploring the origins, history, and traditions of a little-known field surely intrigued her and challenged her purposeful nature. Perhaps most remarkably, Brown conducted her far-reaching work largely from home and almost entirely by correspondence. Frequently unwell, she suffered from gastritis, rheumatism, and chronic, painful throat and skin infections. She herself never traveled beyond the United States, Mexico, and Europe, and by 1897 illness limited her visits even to the Museum. Yet at that time her collection amounted to less than half of what it would become, and work on her multivolume collection catalogue had only just begun. While her accomplishment was singular, she could not have assembled her collection from distant corners of the globe, researched so exhaustively, or published so extensively without considerable help, beginning with her husband and her eldest son. (She confessed that one catalogue, “an immense piece of work,” was “made out of the blood and bones of the Brown family.”) She also
drew upon a legion of unnamed secretaries and the faithful, unstinting support of her assistant, Frances Morris. Without hesitation, she pressed into service a worldwide network of missionaries, her husband’s business associates, American consular officials, musicologists and anthropologists, explorers and traders, shipping agents, and dealers in art and ethnography. Through a vigorous letter-writing campaign, she enterprisingly reached out to people who could either assist her or connect her to those who would. Few refused her. As her son William later observed, she had a “commanding presence” and was a woman of “indomitable will.”

**Behind the Collection**

Mary Elizabeth Adams, born in New York in 1842, was descended from a line of New England educators, clergymen, and statesmen. Her maternal grandfather amassed a shipbuilding fortune, the source of a substantial inheritance she received upon her mother’s death, in 1885. Mary Elizabeth was a fragile child. In her youth, all manner of illness was omnipresent, and two of her five siblings died in infancy. A brother, Thatcher Magoun Adams, later described their family’s first New York home as “destitute of all sanitary conveniences and perfectly innocent of plumbing.” He marveled, “why any of the occupants escaped alive at a time when epidemics raged … has always been a miracle to me.”

Perhaps the presence of miracles in the Adams family could be partially attributed to their unwavering faith and belief in the existence of Divine Providence on earth. Mary Elizabeth’s father, the Reverend William Adams, was the renowned preacher and pastor of the prominent Madison Square Presbyterian Church in Manhattan from 1853 to 1873. An advocate for Christian unity and missionary activities, he was the third president of Union Theological Seminary from 1873 to 1880. His ecumenical principles and extensive travels brought richness and breadth to his household, which “abounded in missionaries from … all parts of the earth.” That exposure may have contributed to Brown’s unusually cosmopolitan and broad worldview; certainly, church connections and a global network of missionaries would later be vital to Brown’s collecting.

Poor health persisted through Mary Elizabeth’s childhood, interrupting her formal education. Frequent attacks of intestinal illness kept her in bed, particularly in spring and fall. As a small child, she spent many months recuperating with her mother’s family in Medford, Massachusetts, where her aunt Martha Tufts Magoun served as a surrogate mother. Aunt Tufts, who had children of her own, ran a large household; she hosted weekly ladies’ meetings to discuss the latest books and set an example of industriousness, never eating “the bread of idleness.” Aunt Tufts’s influence extended to her frequent citation of Charles Wesley’s warning against “the lust of finishing things,” an aphorism that appeared often in Brown’s later writings, although the irrepressible collector seemed incapable of ever heeding it.
After on-again, off-again schooling in New York and Massachusetts, Mary Elizabeth's formal education ended at age sixteen (1858), and she returned to New York to keep house for her parents. But she continued to study independently, a habit of scholarly diligence she would later apply to researching and documenting the history of each instrument in her collection: "[As] I have always been fond of study [I] worked very hard by myself. Most of the little I know has been learned in that way." European history was a particular interest. She also believed knowledge of languages was of utmost importance and later studied French to become as fluent as her rigorously educated husband. The two “never spoke to Bessie [a daughter, Eliza, born in 1868] in English until she was three years old.” The family would become fluent in German as well.

The aforementioned husband was John Crosby Brown (1838–1909), a graduate of Columbia College (later Columbia University) whose father had established the merchant bank Brown Brothers and Co. in New York. The firm was an affiliate of the earlier Brown family banking houses in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Liverpool. Deep Protestant convictions were as prominent in the Brown family as with the Adamses. It is not surprising then that John Crosby Brown called on some of the clergymen of New York on New Year’s Day in 1864, including the household of Reverend Adams and his daughter Mary Elizabeth. The young couple was married later that year, on November 9, by her father in his Madison Square Presbyterian Church.

Their’s would prove to be a marriage of mutual devotion, dedication to family and the church, and a commitment to service. John affectionately called
Mary Elizabeth “Molly,” and he wrote in his journal that “all good ideas worked out in our married life [were] Molly’s of course.”\footnote{20} The family’s adored patriarch, he was “the one who has not only given the true keynote to our home, but whose firm yet gentle touch has resolved all its transient discords into harmony.”\footnote{21} John ardently encouraged his wife’s undertakings and financially supplemented her purchases. That she called her collection the Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments of All Nations, in her husband’s honor, not only reflected the deference expected of women in the Victorian era but also recognized John’s active participation in what she called “her work.” Ultimately, John served as trustee (1895–1909) and treasurer (1905–1909) of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, among his many charitable activities. Both Browns were importantly involved in philanthropic movements in New York and New Jersey, particularly settlement houses and educational efforts to improve the lives of immigrants.

By 1870, they had three children and had begun building a town house at 36 East Thirty-Seventh Street, which would be their city residence for almost fifty years. By 1878, three more children had arrived, and the Browns had built Brighthurst, their country home in Orange, New Jersey. During those formative years of motherhood, “though closely occupied with family cares,”\footnote{22} Brown did not neglect her intellectual life: she made note of reading and abstracting books by William H. Prescott, John Lothrop Motley, and other historians, and of translating François Noël and Charles Pierre Chapsal’s influential grammar book, \textit{La nouvelle grammaire française}, which was “no light task especially as I often had a baby in my lap and another pulling at my petticoats”\footnote{23} (fig. 7). While tending to her children’s religious and moral education, Brown also saw to it that they developed an interest in music. The plan began with her husband’s decision in 1872 to take organ lessons so he

9. Christmas 1881 in the Browns’ music room/parlor in their top-floor lodgings at Vienna’s Hotel Metropole.
could play hymns at the Rivington Street settlement house, which he visited many Sunday evenings. By the end of the decade the family had formed a home musical ensemble, with the four oldest children playing on various instruments and their father at the house organ (fig. 8). The Browns and those four children, ages nine to sixteen, arranged to spend part of the winter of 1881–82 in Vienna, “to cultivate whatever capacity for music in us was either already there or could be discovered.”

Vienna, the glamorous capital of the vast Austro-Hungarian Empire, was regarded as the imperial seat of music, with ample opportunities for concert attendance.

Considerable European travel, including a salubrious month in St. Moritz, came before the family settled down to serious work in Vienna (fig. 9). Music lessons, instrumental practice, and German- and French-language study were supplemented by primary school attendance (in German) for the two younger children, and by drawing and cooking lessons for older family members. Brown took piano lessons twice weekly and had assigned practice times daily except Sunday. (The Browns rigorously observed Sundays as days of rest, with Bible study, church services, and family prayer. No music was performed at home, and no concerts were attended outside.) Also while in Vienna, Brown translated from German an instructive volume, Practical Thoughts of a Mother; her work was published in the United States in 1882. (She would go on to publish a number of other books in addition to her collection catalogues: a biography of her paternal grandfather, the headmaster of Andover Academy [1900]; an anthology of dedications [1913]; an extensive genealogy [1917]; and, in collaboration with her husband, A Hundred Years of Merchant Banking [1909], a history of the Brown family banks.)

John Crosby Brown’s organ teacher in Vienna was Anton Bruckner. At the time, Bruckner was respected as a university and conservatory teacher and as an extraordinary organist, but not yet as a composer. Bruckner came to the Browns’ top-floor rooms in the Hotel Metropole not only to teach, but also to make social calls on the family, an unusual practice in the day. Bruckner was then working on his Seventh Symphony, whose first measures he transcribed and signed for the Browns (fig. 10).
The family’s months in Vienna made them disciplined musical practitioners—two daughters and a son would go on to become recognized amateur musicians—and without doubt helped to form their mother as a discerning collector. There is, however, no evidence that she viewed or acquired instruments during her 1881–82 travels, although she could have seen a number of private and public displays of instruments. The year is recorded in “Brighthurst Abroad,” one of thirteen “Brighthurst Chronicles,” the twelve-pound scrapbooks that Brown meticulously maintained and which are the primary source for information about the Browns’ personal lives (figs. 11, 12). Despite her assiduity as a family record keeper, Brown does not lead us easily through the chronology of her collecting. The wonder is how, in short order, she was able knowledgeably to acquire and document a collection of 276 disparate musical objects, most from “primitive and savage” peoples, in the parlance of the day.

By 1886 she and her eldest son and coauthor, William, had commenced work on a catalogue of those first objects, recognizing that the collection could be understood and valued only if it were supported by published documentation. They sought advice from scholars and amateurs around the world and delved deeply into the available texts; the book ultimately included a bibliography of sixty works, principally in French, German, and English. Several of the texts were translated from indigenous languages; travel journals and records of scientific expeditions were additional resources. Reliable information on many of the non-European instruments was difficult to come by, however, and “no comprehensive work on the musical instruments of the East and the savage races [had] yet appeared.” Many of Brown’s sources in the field delivered the instruments they had found for her with
photographs and detailed accounts of how they were played, “thus preserv[ing] a great deal of knowledge that is not now available from other sources,” as a music journal observed years later.

The result of the Browns’ effort was the first catalogue of a musical instruments collection in the United States. *Musical Instruments and Their Homes* (fig. 13) was published in December 1888 by Dodd, Mead as an extravagant 380-page quarto volume and was sold for $10 (present value about $200). Detailed descriptions of each instrument were illustrated by William’s pen-and-ink drawings, which in many cases were the first representations of the objects seen in the United States. The book also included essays on the little-known musical traditions of Asia, Africa, and the indigenous cultures of the Americas and Oceania. As William Brown noted, “the chapter on the instruments of North America especially . . . contains a considerable amount of information which has never before appeared in print.”

The book quickly became known worldwide as Brown unabashedly sent copies to European experts—one of whom thanked her for the “priceless book of reference”—and to notables such as Queen Victoria and the kings of Hawaii and Siam. Significantly, the book validated the merits of Brown’s arcane collection, demonstrating its appropriateness and desirability for an institution that aspired to be a world-class art museum.

In January 1889 Brown invited a committee of trustees of The Metropolitan Museum of Art to visit the collection at Brighthurst to determine the suitability of her “musical progeny” as future residents of the Museum. On February 16, 1889, Brown offered her 276 instruments to the trustees, who accepted them two days later at a special meeting in the Grand Central office of Cornelius Vanderbilt, then chairman of the Museum’s Executive Committee. The initial gift occasioned both pride and relief on Brown’s part. Keeping the collection at Brighthurst had presented a weighty responsibility she described as a “problem of housing so numerous and exacting a family.” The collection was soon on its way to its new home (fig. 14) and would be on display to the public by the end of October.

**The Brown Collection at The Met**

Brown had included a crucial caveat with her 1889 gift to the Museum: that she and her son William have full charge of the arrangement of her collection and the freedom to make any additions and changes they saw fit throughout their lifetimes.
the unofficial curator in charge of her collection and explains, at least in part, how her collection grew thirteenthfold within thirty years.

In the early days of American museums, it was not unusual for a trustee or a donor to participate directly in management matters, or even in curatorial affairs. However, as a female connoisseur, collector, donor, and self-taught curator in an obscure field, Brown was a unique figure at the Metropolitan Museum. Women occupied only a “meager place” in the cultural institutions of the late nineteenth century, according to historian Kathleen D. McCarthy. Although women “figured prominently in a wide variety of charities and social reform movements, and dominated the literary scene,” they left “a limited imprint on the country’s major Gilded Age repositories, such as the Metropolitan Museum.” Brown’s expertise was clearly admired and her generosity appreciated, but her unrelenting focus on musical instruments did not align with the Museum’s broader priorities. Her somewhat overbearing personality and the sheer volume of daily correspondence insisting on obtaining new objects, rearranging galleries, and sending complimentary copies of her catalogues around the world certainly challenged its administrators. Seemingly exasperated, the Museum’s first director, Luigi Palma di Cesnola, wrote to her in 1899: “You must not forget that I have twenty-eight other collections, each of which demands the same kind of care from me as yours.”

Yet her determination to inform herself as she documented and curated her collection set Brown apart. She knew more in her field than anyone at The Met, and the Museum supported her conviction in the importance of the accurate, often didactic labeling of her objects. She increasingly believed that cataloguing was as vital a task as her acquisition of instruments and ultimately convinced the Museum to
publish nine separate collection catalogues, several reissued, between 1901 and 1914. The catalogues were initially issued in parts: Preliminary Catalogue, Gallery 27 (1901); Asia (1903, 1905); Europe (1902, 1904, 1906); Keyboard Instruments (1903); Musicians’ Portraits (1904); Historical Groups (1905); Africa (1907); Oceania (1907); and Oceania and America (1914).

In another remarkable “show of assertiveness,” Brown saw to it that Frances Morris, her invaluable protégée and assistant, secured a position on the Museum’s curatorial staff, only the second woman to do so. Morris, without whom Brown could not have accomplished her collecting or her cataloguing, had begun working for the Museum’s musical instruments collection in 1896 at the rate of one dollar an hour, underwritten by the Browns. Quickly, in response to the collection’s startling growth and Brown’s increasingly ill health, Morris took on more of Brown’s day-to-day curatorial work. In 1910 she was named assistant curator, with responsibility for both musical instruments and the Museum’s growing textile and lace collection. Morris went on to become the author and editor of Brown’s 1914 Oceania and America catalogue and, in 1921, an associate curator.

In the five years between Brown’s first gift and the opening in November 1894 of the Museum’s north wing and the collection’s two new galleries there, Brown’s collection had more than doubled, exceeding seven hundred objects. Brown personally sent out some five hundred invitations to the 1894 celebration (see illustration on p. 2). Within two years, her collection would almost double again, and an upper tier of cases would be built into the existing galleries to accommodate her new acquisitions. A third gallery was added in 1899, a fourth, dedicated to brass instruments, in 1900, and finally a fifth in 1901. At that point, rooms housing musical instruments occupied ten percent of the Museum’s galleries (see inside front and back covers), apparently to the dismay of Museum officials. The Museum’s president, Henry G. Marquand, wrote to Cesnola: “Regarding the musical collection of Mrs. Brown, if we add more it will overshadow all departments…. Mrs. Brown should be informed of the view of some of the officers as to limits.” No way was found to limit her, however, and between 1901 and the end of her active collecting in 1915 she went on to acquire more than one thousand additional instruments.

**Early Connecting and Collecting**

Brighthurst, not the Museum, was Brown’s command center. It was the hub of her life, where she simultaneously tended to her family, her household, her work collecting musical instruments, and her many charitable endeavors. Among the most
impressive and sustained of those was Brown’s weekly “Friends Day.” For more than twenty years she organized daylong visits to her country house for mothers and children from the slums of New York.

Brighthurst, which no longer stands, was built in 1874 on forty woodland acres high above the Hoboken, New Jersey, ferry that crossed the Hudson River to Manhattan. The architectural historian Vincent Scully described it as built in “late baroque stick style” (see illustrations in figs. 14, 15). Brown’s son William wrote of the house as almost a sentient being: “an example of hospitality which was ceaseless. Bankers and businessmen from the city; students and professors from the [Union] Theological Seminary; visitors from other lands; missionaries from the ends of the earth poured into Brighthurst in endless succession.” In one of seven densely filled Visitors Books, which Brown required guests to sign or, preferably, annotate with drawings or verse, is a quotation attributed to Emerson: “the ornaments of a home are the friends who visit it.”

Brown was by nature a collector of people, particularly those who could help her acquire objects for her collection. Dozens of missionaries—many of them professionals in secular fields—visited Brighthurst, corresponded with Brown, and subsequently sent her instruments. Among Brighthurst’s frequent guests was Candace Wheeler, the pioneering American interior designer and later the business partner of Louis Comfort Tiffany. She wrote in one Visitors Book of Brighthurst’s hospitality with praises emotional and sentimental, embellished by sketches and watercolor illustrations (fig. 15). As an independent woman, entrepreneur, and close friend, Wheeler served as a model to Brown at a time when virtually no married women of her class worked professionally.

From her Brighthurst base, Brown forthrightly conscripted those she knew and importuned strangers in distant places with an unceasing stream of letters. The

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16. Illustration from the 1888 catalogue of the Sioux drum and rattle (see figs. 17, 18) that Brown acquired from the explorer Robert Ormsby Sweeny.

17, 18. Chegah-skah-hdah (dance wand) and wakan-chan-cha-gha (frame drum). 17. Sioux, United States, 19th century. 18. Probably Sioux, United States, late 19th century. A traditional healer possibly played the drum during rituals. Its two heads have distinctly different decorations whose precise meanings are unclear: on one side a black line drawing of a catlike animal against a yellow ground, and on the other a bird with outstretched wings against a blue-green field. The rolled-metal cone jingles and brass crotal bells on the wand-shaped rattle were obtained through trade with Europeans. Similar cones are found on the dresses worn by women in the Great Plains culture region for the traditional performances known as Jingle Dancing.

19. Charango (guitar). Marcos Manufactory, Mexico, late 19th century. This Mexican adaptation combines basic features of the Spanish guitar with those of indigenous Andean instruments such as the armadillo-shell charango or the jarana of the Yucatán Peninsula.
first surviving correspondence from individuals looking for indigenous instruments on Brown’s behalf is dated 1885 and 1886 and is notably from American missionaries and traders in Western territories. Brown claimed that the arrival of her initial four European instruments in late 1885 is what sparked her interest in collecting, but it appears that by then she was already intrigued by the musical traditions of the Americas and the cultures of peoples worldwide. As early as 1886 she was exchanging her Aztec whistles for Native American, African, and Polynesian instruments with the Smithsonian Institution. After sending a preliminary catalogue of her fledgling collection, she and its assistant secretary, G. Brown Goode, became regular correspondents. (In January 1888, he wrote that her collection was “in some respects richer” than his own museum in Washington, D.C.37) She joined the Women’s Anthropological Society of Washington, D.C., as a corresponding member on June 2, 1887, and was made a full member a year later.

Over time, Brown became part of a network of instrument exchanges, trading duplicates among herself, the Smithsonian, sometimes the American Museum
20–21. Two tsii’ edo’altl (bowed zithers). Apache, United States, 19th century. 20. Made by Geronimo (1829–1909). 21. Made by Chappo Geronimo (1867–1894). The tsii’ edo’altl, a type of zither whose name in Apache means “wood that sings,” is held against the chest or stomach as the strings are sounded with a bow. The body traditionally consists of a tubular agave stalk strung with horsehair and decorated with symbolic emblems. Played for personal enjoyment, the instrument accompanied songs and dances in the home.

22–24. Three bird rattles. 19th century. 22. Tlingit, United States. 23. Tsimshian, Canada. 24. Masseth or Haida, Canada. Native peoples along North America’s northwest coast made many types of finely carved rattles depicting animal spirits. Those made in the shapes of birds, most significantly the raven (right) and oystercatcher, were used in dance and rituals for healing and gift giving. The double-headed eagle (left) suggests the Russian imperial emblem, which occasionally appears in Tlingit art after about 1804.
of Natural History, and European collectors. Goode died in 1896, and Edwin H. Hawley, a curator in the Smithsonian’s department of anthropology, became crucial to Brown’s endeavors.

As a specialist in indigenous musical instruments worldwide, he not only facilitated her instrument exchanges but was a most valuable adviser and correspondent. (In 1903, Brown even prevailed upon Cesnola to arrange for Hawley to take a leave of absence from the Smithsonian to work on her catalogues at her expense.) Her many other sources of American instruments—missionaries, Midwestern friends and family, and domestic business trips with her husband—provided connections to people who were concurrently exploring the traditions of Native Americans.

Among Brown’s early correspondents in the Americas was William Chapel, an Indian trader and postmaster in San Carlos, Arizona, who sent her an Apache flute for the price of eighty-five cents, with fifteen cents’ postage due. Another colorful character was Robert Ormsby Sweeny of St. Paul, Minnesota, an artist, natural scientist, and explorer of Indian territories who described himself as


He sent Brown several indigenous drums and received special mention in the 1888 catalogue (figs. 16–18). L. J. Austin, who knew Brown via the Madison Square church, sent her a primitive violin made by a Yac-a-tat Indian near Mount Saint Elias (elevation 11,250 feet), on the Yukon, Canada, border with Alaska. The painter Frederic Edwin Church, who guided both Browns on an 1886 visit to Mexico, later sent an Andean rattle box to add to the “barbaric part of your collection.” 39 On that Mexico trip, Brown herself acquired a wooden harp carved like a serpent, a pottery bell, and an earthen bird-shaped whistle, all from Morelia. 40 Her most unusual Mexican acquisition came later: a late nineteenth-century guitar made in Mérida from the body of an armadillo (fig. 19). It was on the 1886 trip or on one of the inspection excursions John Crosby Brown undertook as a railroad financier that the Browns visited the Carlisle Indian School, in Pennsylvania. There, in a flawed government social experiment, Native American children from many tribes were separated from their families and cultures to be assimilated as supposedly proper young American men and women. Brown acquired photographs of students she identified as Navajo, Pueblo, and Apache but made no comment on the school’s reeducation program. She was probably more interested in its policy of permitting Apache students to maintain their musical tradition of crafting and selling instruments. After their visit, the Carlisle director sent the Browns a flute and violin made by one of the “Apache boys.” 41 Brown’s collection of Apache fiddles grew to include one said to have been made in an Alabama prison by Geronimo himself and one by his son, Chappo Geronimo, while a student at Carlisle (figs. 20, 21). 42

25. Banjo. St. Louis, ca. 1884. Made by Hercules McCord (1855–1890). Made during a time of great popularity for the instrument, this banjo (whose back is illustrated) is an example of heightened technical innovation. It is the only known example of Hercules McCord’s ingenious 1883 patent design, which simultaneously tightens the skin head at twenty-eight positions with a single screw mechanism.
26. Double chromatic harp. Brooklyn, after 1895. Made by Henry Greenway (1833–1903). This harp has two sets of strings that cross near their midpoint: one row with the diatonic pitches of a C-major scale (like the white keys on a piano), the second with the accidentals (or black keys). The design, based on a cross-strung model by the Pleyel & Wolff Company, Paris, is intended to allow the harp to be played in any key without the use of pedals, although glissandi (the most characteristic sound of the harp) are possible only in C major.

The 1914 catalogue on Brown’s American and Oceanic instruments is illustrative of her abiding interest in those cultures. Among the most striking American instruments in that volume are several Northwest Coast ceremonial rattles (figs. 22–24) acquired by Brown via exchange with the Smithsonian, which had obtained them from James W. Swan, an Indian agent, ethnologist, trader, and explorer. Brown’s interest in the Americas extended to contemporary works, including North American folk instruments, particularly banjos, of which she acquired several (fig. 25). Brown was also aware of outstanding contemporary American instrument makers. She purchased a barrel piano and a double chromatic harp (fig. 26) made in the mid-nineteenth century in Brooklyn, New York, by builders who had emigrated from England.
Collecting from Afar: Asia, the Middle East, and Africa

To further her work overseas, Brown tapped into a large network of missionaries, including Union Theological students and graduates who had called on Brighthurst. George W. Gilmore, who in 1887 sent Brown her first Korean instruments, was one of the three Americans asked by King Gojong of Korea to establish the country’s first English-language school. In April 1888, Gilmore sent Brown another group of Korean instruments, which he described as “instruments of torture.” More respectfully he commented, “The Zither [kŏmun’go] I send you is by far the best I have seen. The Sāihwang [saenghwang] (a mouth organ) is very rare . . . they are not made for sale . . . and secured with the greatest difficulty.”

The missionary George E. Post, an amateur botanist, certified doctor, and dentist, was a professor of surgery at the Syrian Protestant College, Beirut. Early in 1886, Post sent Brown a list of two dozen “Arabic” instruments, which he had shipped from Beirut the following August. They included a qānūn (fig. 27), which he described as “a sort of open piano,” an ād, “played with a plectrum formed of a slip of a vulture’s feather,” and a darabukka, a pottery hand drum.

In many instances, when Brown sent payments to her missionary sources, she included extra money for their missions and the latest pamphlets or church tracts for their educational work. Alex S. Van Dyck, a missionary based in China, thanked Brown in 1889 for her gifts and noted that if “all families followed that excellent plan, our Board would not at present be burdened by the load of indebtedness.”

Without exception Brown’s missionary correspondents showed an involvement and interest in the work they did for her, although they sometimes questioned the merits of the objects they were sending. Writing from Rangoon, Burma, in 1886, Elizabeth Stevens, the wife of a missionary (who was connected to the Browns

27. Qānūn (psaltery). Turkey, 19th century. Smaller than its modern counterpart, this nineteenth-century qānūn (a type of zither or psaltery) also has less adjustable tuning levers, seen here on the instrument’s right side. The player wears metal picks to pluck the strings of the trapezoidal instrument, a type found mainly throughout North Africa and West Asia.
through their daughter’s New York primary school and through the Women’s Union Missionary Society, apologized for a group of instruments she was sending as “being very rude and low down in the scale of civilization.” However, Stevens praised the beauty and delicacy of a Burmese harp, also part of her shipment. The gold-leaf image on the cover of Brown’s 1888 *Musical Instruments and Their Homes* (see fig. 13) is without doubt a representation of that very harp. Just before her death, in 1898, Stevens found a superior Burmese harp, “several years old and very elaborately finished and highly valued by the family who had owned it. They are in need of money and are willing to part with it and that at a very moderate price.”

Stevens described the instrument in detail, noting the illustrations on the body of scenes from the Buddha’s life. (These were later interpreted to be scenes from the *Ramayana*.) She apologized for its expense, about $18.60 in U.S. dollars, almost

28. *Saùng-gauk* (harp). Myanmar (Burma), 19th century. This type of highly decorated arching harp originated in ancient India and was possibly derived from a Sumerian source. Appearing in Burma before the seventh century a.d., the instrument was associated with Buddhism, as reflected in certain features of this version. The upturned finial of the neck, for example, represents the Bodhi tree, beneath which, according to Buddhist tradition, the historical Buddha achieved nirvana. Thirteen twisted silk strings of varying diameter, secured to the neck with red twisted cotton tuning rings, are plucked to accompany songs, dances, and rituals.
In 1886, Brown had received a group of South Indian instruments from the Reverend J. W. Conklin in Madras, but her request for North Indian instruments was not as quickly fulfilled. For those she had contacted Sir Sourindro Mohun Tagore, a celebrated Calcutta-based musicologist known to the Browns by reputation and through international banking connections. He had commissioned and donated sets of typical Hindu instruments to institutions in the Far East, to Oxford University, and to King Leopold II of Belgium (some hundred instruments that later became the core of the Musical Instruments Museum, Brussels). Throughout 1887 both Browns importuned Tagore, writing frequently to his shipping agent and urging that instruments be sent as soon as possible, but it became evident that they were not going to arrive in time either for inclusion in Brown’s first catalogue or her February 1889 gift to the Museum. Late in September 1888, Tagore noted that his delay was partly owed to “some more instruments being added to the list,” presumably by Brown herself, as she believed that more was always better. The complete set of thirty instruments—including a spectacular taūs (bowed lute) in the form of a peacock and an elaborately decorated nineteenth-century sarod (short-necked lute)—did not arrive until autumn of the following year (figs. 29, 30). On October 26, just two days before the inaugural display of her collection, an undaunted Brown wrote to Cesnola: “[I] thought you would like to have our set of Indian instruments for the opening of the Museum.” She asked him to send a wagon immediately to collect them and an unidentified Italian spinet. Despite the considerable inconvenience, Cesnola added the last-minute instruments, acceding to her wishes as he would do repeatedly for the next fifteen years.

Twenty-one instruments in her original gift to The Met came from China, the largest number from a single country in Brown’s 1888 catalogue (figs. 31, 32). It is evident from their Museum accession numbers that they were among the first non-Western instruments she acquired, but many of their sources cannot be verified. In a May 1888 letter from Amoy (Xiamen), Alex Van Dyck acknowledged $400 in present value. Today it is displayed as one of the most valued instruments in The Met’s musical instruments collection (fig. 28).

29. Taūs (mayuri) (bowed lute). India, 19th century. Guru Hargobind (1595–1644), sixth Guru of the Sikhs of the Punjab, India, is credited with the design of the bowed lute known either as a taūs or mayuri, the Persian and Hindi words, respectively, for “peacock” (traditionally considered the vehicle of Sarasvatī, Indian goddess of music). Popular at nineteenth-century Indian courts, the instrument declined into obsolescence before recently enjoying a minor revival in the Punjab region. It borrows features of other Indian stringed instruments, particularly the esrāj, which has the body shape of the sāragī (fiddle) and the frets and neck of the sitar. Four melody strings and fifteen sympathetic strings sound when the instrument is played, typically to accompany popular religious song.
Brown’s draft catalogue and wondered if “a number of instruments sent by me are duplicates of those you already have,” suggesting Brown had other sources of Chinese instruments. In September he was still searching for objects for her and had a network of local dealers, including “a Chinaman helping me on the lookout.”

The Browns had a number of Chinese connections in America as early as the 1870s. In 1876, Wu Ying Ding, described by Brown as a “mandarin of China,” was accorded an entire page in the first “Brighthurst Chronicle.” In 1887 and 1888, the Browns welcomed a series of Chinese diplomats to New York and Brighthurst, and in January 1888, Brown presented a program on Chinese music at the Women’s Anthropological Society in Washington, D.C. The Browns’ friendship with John Foster, American ambassador at large and U.S. treaty negotiator in the Far East, was responsible for several encounters between the Browns and Chinese diplomats. Brown no doubt took all such occasions as opportunities to learn about and continue to acquire Chinese instruments.

By the mid-nineteenth century, interest in the Orient had swept Europe and America. Connoisseurs and collectors of all kinds grew particularly fascinated by Japan and all things Japanese. Brown was no exception. She was connected in 1886 through the Reverend Henry N. Cobb, a close friend, Brighthurst neighbor, and secretary of the board of foreign missions of the Presbyterian Church, to James L. Amerman, a missionary in Japan with whom she corresponded extensively. By May, Amerman was sending her instruments from Number 19 Foreign Concession in Tokyo (fig. 33). They rivaled her simultaneous Chinese acquisitions in quality and

30. Sarod (short-necked lute). India, ca. 1885. The sarod (Arabic for “music”), a modification of the Afghan rabab (short-necked lute), has been a prominent instrument in North Indian music since the early nineteenth century. Modern sarods have a metal-plated fingerboard and metal strings, which facilitate musical ornamentation and improve sustained tones.

31. Pipa (short-necked lute). China, 19th century. Made by Jiucheng (active mid-19th century). The pipa and other lute-like instruments were probably introduced to China from Central Asia during the late Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 200) as part of cultural exchanges along the Silk Road. The principal solo instrument played at court during the Tang dynasty (618–907), the pipa was also included in the imperial orchestra. Originally held like a guitar and plucked with a large triangular plectrum (or pick), by the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) it was held upright and plucked with the fingers. Although the precise origin of the name is unclear, one Han dynasty text suggests that pi means “to strike forward” and pa means “to pull back,” accurately describing the motion of someone playing the instrument.
quantity, numbering eighteen in the 1888 catalogue. Her friend L. Bayard Smith presented her with a purely decorative cloisonné ō-daiko (fig. 34), a Japanese drum that was made by order of the Japanese government for display at the Vienna International Exposition of 1873. When and how Smith obtained it are not known, but it is cited in Brown’s first catalogue of Asian instruments (1901).

As always, Brown accompanied her collecting with scholarship. Alessandro Kraus Jr., a musician-collector in Florence who was interested in exchanging Japanese instruments with her, had written an article on Japanese music. Brown asked him for permission to translate it from French into English. The Browns’ translation, carrying both Mary Elizabeth’s and John Crosby’s name, appeared in the Boston Musical Herald in October 1888.

Despite her considerable acquisitions, Brown knew that gaps remained in her collection of Japanese instruments. In 1894, she asked Brown Brothers and Co. to put her in contact with someone in Kyoto through whom she could obtain authentic indigenous instruments. After Brown Brothers reached out to its banking correspondents, apologizing for the unusual business request, Brown heard from Florence H. Learned, the wife of a missionary and professor at Doshisha University.
33. *Kagura suzu* (bell tree). Japan, 17th century. Japanese for “music for the gods,” *kagura* refers to Shinto instrumental music, songs, and dances performed at shrines and court. Female shrine attendants would hold this bell tree (*suzu*) during performances of the stately *kagura* dance. Each of its small crotal bells has a slit that terminates at either end with a heart-shaped cutout. According to an inscription on the handle, this example was used by the Shinto priestess Kuriyama Kamiko as part of rituals performed at Omiwa-jinja, in Nara Prefecture, one of the oldest shrines in Japan.

34. *Ō-daiko* (barrel drum). Japan, ca. 1873. Made by Kodenji Hayashi (1831–1915). The large drums known as *ō-daiko* are normally used in temples, by theater ensembles, and at festivals, but this unusually ornate example—with its cloisonné stand and body and cowhide skins decorated with lacquerwork dragons—was never meant to be performed. Instead, the drum was made by order of the Japanese government for the Vienna Exposition of 1873, the first in which Japan participated formally as a nation, as a symbol of peace, indicated by the colorful rooster perched atop the instrument. The significance of the imagery relates to an ancient story about a drum that was placed at a village gate to sound an alarm during an attack. As the years passed and the drum was never struck, it became home to hens and roosters, and this image thus became an emblem of contentment and serenity.
Learned, who had been in Japan for twenty-three years, would act as a source and agent for Brown through 1899. Without doubt Brown’s most efficient and sympathetic correspondent, she also wrote about aspects of her life in Japan, from personal matters to the 1897 funeral of Dowager Empress Eishō to the smoking habit widespread among Japanese children. Learned sent Brown more than three dozen instruments but was still eager to find a representation of large bells and gongs for the Metropolitan. In 1898 she identified an enormous sculpture of two three-toed devils (or oni) carrying a gong (dora) suspended from a pole on their shoulders (fig. 35). Learned nervously worried about including “those hideous looking monsters” in Brown’s galleries, but as with the ō-daiko, which likewise was more sculptural than musical, Brown accepted the piece with equanimity.

Brown was simultaneously at work expanding her offerings from Persia. In June 1899 John Tyler, the American consul general in Tehran, acknowledged her instructions (which included drawings) to purchase “instruments you require to

35. Two oni bearing a dora (gong). Japan, early 19th century. The pair of horned oni (demons), who stand more than five feet tall, carry a large, knobbed gong suspended from a processional pole. Gongs like this one are used in theater, tea ceremonies, and Buddhist ritual. Oni are popular characters in Japanese art, literature, and theater and are usually cast as agents of evil and destruction. In modern times they are sometimes seen as benevolent, however, capable of warding off evil. The gong they carry has Buddhist associations, possibly acknowledging their repentance.
complete your collection.” Brown had already acquired two instruments decorated with the ancient Persian inlay technique known as khatam-kari (figs. 36, 37) and wanted more. She and Tyler corresponded for more than a year, with Tyler explaining how agents were searching on his behalf in Shiraz and in Mashhad, on the Turkmen and Afghan borders, and the difficulty of fulfilling Brown’s request. Six months later he wrote: “I’ve seen almost everything made in Persia, but these I have never met with.” As the search continued, he elaborated: “During the last 300 years some arts … have entirely disappeared from Persia, and the processes by which they were made have been lost.” In April 1900, Tyler succeeded in sending Brown a dozen instruments, including a karana (trumpet) so large that it was built in two or three sections, but no khatam objects. Later, and from an unknown source, she acquired two examples of khatam decoration: a nāy-i narm, or soft flute, and a sorna, a so-called feast flute, a Persian ancestor of the European oboe. More often than not Brown chose to ignore the aphorism of her youth counseling against “the lust of finishing things.”

As the collection continued to swell, Brown’s correspondence grew proportionately, much of it involving the difficult, long-distance transportation of her
objects, both fragile and heavy. One of her more discerning connections was a linguist–missionary and Princeton University graduate, Evander Bradley McGilvary. He had visited Brighthurst in 1890 before rejoining his Scots–Presbyterian missionary family in Thailand (then Siam). Counseling about the great weight and challenging dimensions of some of the objects, he offered drums, gongs, flutes, and fiddles of all sizes. By the end of 1893 he had purchased fifteen or twenty instruments for her. One was an exceptional Siamese bowed lute, or sōsam sāi (fig. 38). Its body is a coconut shell covered with skin, and its neck and tuning pegs are ivory inlaid with mother-of-pearl. McGilvary identified one of the problems that Brown persistently encountered not only in Southeast Asia but in all of her collecting, namely, the authenticity of her instruments: “I cannot promise that everything I get is of pure Siamese and Lao origin. Burmese, Shan [northern Burma], Cambodian and Chinese instruments are used here and those of still other races, and frequently the oldest nation cannot tell whether an instrument is distinctively indigenous or whether its use has been imported from some of the neighboring states.”

After leaving Siam to study philosophy and ethics in California (ultimately becoming president of the American Philosophical Association), McGilvary continued to correspond with Brown about proper nomenclature for her instruments, just the kind of discussion she appreciated.

Obtaining instruments from Africa presented its own challenges. At her most active, Brown had connections to more than two dozen missionaries and diplomats throughout the continent, but most African instruments, like musical bows, were handmade of natural materials so fragile that they could not be safely shipped. Many of Brown’s instruments were hand-carried to the United States by missionaries; even then, some were damaged en route. When on leave in 1888 the Reverend W. C. Wilcox, a missionary in southern Africa, tooted home to Akron, Ohio, a muhambi (marimba) he had acquired for Brown in Mozambique; the wooden xylophone complemented its West African counterpart, a previously acquired bala (fig. 39). Drums were less delicate and more easily transported, and Brown successfully amassed more than sixty examples representing the whole of sub-Saharan Africa (fig. 44); that breadth makes her collection of African drums one of the world’s most significant to this day. She also acquired several small and sturdy lamellaphones, some of which she may have obtained from Wilcox, to which she later added a particularly beautiful example from Mozambique (figs. 40–43).

Objects from countries under colonial rule often found their way to their ruling country in Europe, and from there to established dealers; thus, Brown also used dealers in England and New York to expand her representation of African...
In 1896 she purchased a large ivory horn from F. R. Kaldenberg in New York. The cost was $125, $50 of which Kaldenberg contributed as a donation to the Museum. He described the instrument as a “war trumpet” “from the Lo Bengula tribe [Zulu adversaries], very ancient and stained with the blood of the vanquished.” From W. D. Webster in Bicester, England, she acquired a similarly “bloody” Ashanti war horn of elephant tusk, a mmppdwe. It is ornamented with two human jawbones, thought to give the horn spiritual powers, but claims of bloodstains on either horn are likely only the dealers’ hyperbole.

40–43. Four lamellaphones. 40. Nyonganyonga. Possibly Barwe people, Mozambique, ca. 1900. 41. Mbiira. Nigeria, late 19th century. 42. Kisanji (cisaji). Bateke people, Republic of the Congo, late 19th century. 43. Kisaanji. Chokwe people, Angola, late 19th century. Lamellaphones have thin metal or split-cane “tongues” (lamellae) that are fixed to one end of a board or frame and sounded by plucking or depressing. Lamellaphones fitted on boxes or single boards are found across sub-Saharan Africa and were brought by enslaved peoples to the Americas. They are known by many names depending on the context in which they are used, whether to accompany songs, summon spirits, or induce spirit possession. They are often inserted into gourds, which act as resonators.

39. Bala (xylophone). Mandinka people, West Africa, 19th century. Various types of xylophone are popular throughout Africa. Among the Mandingo people (including the Mandinka) of West Africa, professional musicians called jalis use rubber-tipped mallets to play the bala, usually as a solo instrument accompanying the recitation of heroic deeds, historic events, and praise songs. A gourd resonator under each bar is punctured and the side hole is covered by a membrane that modifies the sound. On older instruments like this one, that modifier is a spider’s-egg case, which produces a buzzing sound when struck.
drum. Vili or Yombe people, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century. Drums supported by carved figures (or caryatids) are common among several sub-Saharan African peoples. The coastal Congolese Vili and their inland neighbors the Yombe associate their sculpted drums with certain nkisi (spirit) rituals and with ancestors who speak via the drum. This one features a man who sits on a leopard, a symbol of courage and fierceness. He and the child seated on his lap each place a hand on a small drum, suggesting paternal protection and guidance, themes commonly found in the embellishment of these instruments.
European Acquisitions

In the early to mid-1890s Brown began in earnest to acquire instruments from Europe. She understood that her museum-worthy collection of mostly non-Western objects required an equally broad and outstanding representation of European pieces, but these had become more costly and competitive to obtain. Nevertheless, Brown prided herself on never overpaying. In a 1902 letter to a Museum official, she declared the prices of one European dealer to be exorbitant, and “after eighteen years’ experience I know the musical market thoroughly well.”

Although Brown sought out and acquired many rare and historic European instruments, she also had copies made of otherwise unobtainable examples, as was commonplace in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so that her displays could be as complete and instructive as possible. She also kept up with new developments. Innovations in technology, manufacturing, and design were widespread in every instrument family throughout the nineteenth century. Two noteworthy inventions of the era were the saxhorn, initially designed for military and civilian band use, and the more familiar saxophone, both pioneered in the 1840s by the Belgian Adolphe Sax. Brown eventually purchased ten pieces made by him and other members of that prominent family of instrument makers (figs. 45, 46).
Whereas Brown collected her non-Western instruments primarily through others, she undertook many of her European acquisitions personally. Between 1889 and 1897, Brown made four trips to Europe, each lasting four to six months and combining purchasing with pleasure and taking cures at St. Moritz. She obtained a prodigious number of instruments on all except the first trip, on which she was accompanied by five of her six children (see fig. 9). Even then, she may have added somewhat to her collection during two weeks in Munich and Nuremberg, both renowned centers of instrument making. A Nuremberg master was responsible for a beautifully carved ivory alto recorder that Brown acquired at some early point (fig. 47). In June 1898, when Brown’s collection numbered close to two thousand pieces, John Crosby Brown reported to Cesnola that “Mrs. Brown has visited and examined carefully the collections in London, Paris and Brussels and has been quite successful in securing more than two hundred additional instruments and, you may be sure, not an instrument has been bought . . .  which is not necessary to complete a family or illustrate a step in the history of musical development.”

Brown’s acceptance by the Metropolitan Museum as author, collector, donor, patron, and de facto curator had opened doors for her to scholars throughout Europe. Both she and her husband repeatedly asked Cesnola to send letters of introduction to the directors of European museums. If they did not visit those places, they requested catalogues and photos of instruments and contributed them to the Metropolitan’s library. The timing of Brown’s visits was perfect: Europe in the late 1800s was experiencing a revival of interest in early instruments and historical performance. One of Europe’s outstanding collections was the Conservatory Museum (later the Musical Instruments Museum) in Brussels, under the direction of Victor-Charles Mahillon. Mahillon, corresponding in French, introduced Brown to smaller private European collections, had copies of ancient instruments made for her, and arranged exchanges and purchases. Among these was a glass harmonica, a set of chromatically tuned glass bowls, which he obtained for her at a reduced price, as she had requested. Although they never met, Brown and Mahillon corresponded for more than fifteen years.

Brown’s understanding of the complex field also grew with the inspiration and assistance of three Englishmen. The first was Alfred J. Hipkins, a prolific writer on music, an expert on keyboard instruments, and by profession a piano tuner at the John Broadwood & Sons piano factory in London. His last work was his introduction

47. Alto recorder in F. Nuremberg, Germany, ca. 1700. Made by Johann Benedikt Gahn (1674–1711). Gahn is celebrated for his elaborately carved recorders. The decoration of this example features acanthus leaves and a mask, a motif linked to the city of Nuremberg that also appears on different types of instruments by other makers. The alto recorder, one of several members of the recorder family, became the favorite size after 1700. Numerous chamber pieces were written for the instrument, but solo parts in orchestral works of the period were also assigned to it.

45. Bass saxtuba in E-flat. Paris, 1855. Made by Adolphe (Antoine Joseph) Sax (1814–1894). Saxtubas consist of a family of instruments that historically ranged from B-flat soprano to B-flat contrabass. The striking appearance of this bass in E-flat (the second largest) was inspired by the Roman cornu, an instrument depicted on Trajan’s Column. Saxtubas were first used in 1852 in the premiere of Fromental Halévy’s opera Le Juif Errant as part of a fifteen-piece stage ensemble. They appeared in a military and national ceremony in Paris on the Champ de Mars later that year. This example is one of only two known to survive.

46. Cor omnitonique (omnitonic horn). Brussels, 1833. Attributed to Charles Joseph Sax (1790–1865). On traditional natural horns, the player sets the desired key using detachable crooks. The loops of tubing incorporated into the body of this innovative version of the instrument allow the player to change the key using the long plunger. The omnitonic horn never gained widespread acceptance, however, because of its additional weight and unwieldiness. During the mid-nineteenth century, players continued to use conventional natural horns but also adopted the valved horns that were then becoming more common.
Brown’s three-hundred-page 1903 catalogue, which illustrated and described the approximately eighty keyboard instruments in her collection, including a 1742 harpsichord (fig. 49). Arnold Dolmetsch was another of her musical authorities. An émigré from France, he had established himself in London as an instrument maker, one of the first to specialize in re-creating fifteenth- to eighteenth-century instruments. Brown, whose priority was ensuring that her instruments were fully documented and accurate (if not completely original) examples of their types, engaged Dolmetsch to construct a replacement keyboard for one of her most important pieces: a 1600 double virginal by the Flemish maker Lodewijck Grouwels, the only existing example of his work (fig. 48). The instrument consists of a main keyboard and, to its right, a removable keyboard called an octavina, which plays an octave higher than the main instrument. The octavina was missing when Brown acquired the extraordinarily rare object. Dolmetsch’s nineteenth-century addition to an early seventeenth-century masterpiece skillfully restored an important part of musical history.

Canon Francis W. Galpin was the last of Brown’s essential Englishmen and the most indispensable of her collaborators apart from Frances Morris. Galpin, a pioneer student of old instruments and performance practice, was also Brown’s competitor as a collector. Like her, he had a cross section of instruments from all over the world, later purchased by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as the foundation of its instruments collection. Galpin’s most important contribution to Brown was his advice on attribution, naming, and descriptions for her catalogues. He also
49. Harpsichord. Paris, 1742. Made by Louis Bellot (active 1717–1759). In eighteenth-century France, double manual harpsichords were played both as solo instruments and in ensemble performances. This example has three sets of strings that can be played either together, for a loud, brilliant sound, or separately. There is also a buff stop with leather pads that can be activated to mute one set of strings, producing a muffled sound with a gentler attack. The keyboards can be played together (coupled) or independently. These features afforded great expressive potential to composers such as Jean-Philippe Rameau, who wrote his last book of harpsichord music in 1741, a year before this instrument was built.
wrote parts of what would become the 1907 *Africa* catalogue, importantly reclassifying Brown’s instruments, as well as an article explaining his new methodology that appeared in the Metropolitan’s February 1907 *Bulletin*.

The Browns were welcomed and further aided in Europe by friends, by relatives in England, and by Brown Brothers business connections. The Mendelssohn Bank in Berlin was a long-standing business correspondent of Brown Brothers, and the two families were close. William Brown regularly spent Sunday evenings at the Mendelssohn home when in Berlin as a graduate student in theology. He later wrote, “I have heard good music since, but never where there was the same sense of reverent devotion that gave the evenings at the Mendelssohns’ almost the quality of worship.” Ernst von Mendelssohn-Bartholdy—a nephew of Felix Mendelssohn and his sister Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel—wrote to Brown of “looking for the desired objects.” Mendelssohn both located some instruments for her and put her in touch with photographers and several musical instrument collectors in Berlin.

One of the most significant instruments in Brown’s collection reached her through family. Mary Louise Potter Thompson, her husband’s niece, lived in Florence and kept abreast of the Italian instruments market to help fill gaps in her aunt’s collection (she helped purchase Brown’s first four European instruments in 1885). In 1894 Thompson sent Brown a psaltery and two small virginals (fig. 50), but Brown sought a bigger prize: one of the first pianos made by Bartolomeo Cristofori, the instrument’s inventor. Thompson’s search went on for months, complicated by the large number of copies and fakes in the Italian market. What finally

50. *Octave virginal*. Possibly Augsburg, Germany, ca. 1600. The ebony-veneered case of this virginal, with its gilt brass mounts, would have served as both a sewing box and a keyboard instrument for casual music making within a lady’s parlor (there are two drawers in the lid for sewing items). Fashionable in the first half of the seventeenth century, such instruments were a specialty of Augsburg cabinet-and instrument makers. This example has small keys and would have been tuned an octave higher than a typical keyboard. The inside lid is decorated with a pastiche of images from Flemish and Dutch prints.
unearthed her quarry were three devastating earthquakes that shook northern Italy in the spring and summer of 1895. Soon thereafter, Thompson wrote to the Browns, then in Switzerland, that she had found a Cristofori piano guaranteed as authentic by the Museo Nazionale del Bargello. It was owned by a “Florentine gentleman of good family who is compelled to part with the Cristofori because of misfortunes.” A letter the following week went on to explain his “tremendous losses since the earthquakes” and his “greatest distress for ready money.” John Crosby Brown immediately sent a check to Diego Martelli, owner of the piano, for 4,000 francs, approximately $800 in 1895 and about $17,000 today. Martelli wrote a lengthy letter describing the provenance of the instrument, a continuous history in his family since its purchase by his grandfather at an 1820 auction of items considered of little value from the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. Cristofori had been employed by the grand dukes from 1688 until his death in 1731; during that time he is known to have invented the piano (in 1700) and manufactured (in 1720) the piano purchased by the Browns. Along with the eighteenth-century glass harmonica Brown obtained with the help of Victor Mahillon, the 1720 Cristofori (fig. 51), now certified to be the oldest piano still in existence, was a highlight of the May 1896 reconfiguration of Brown’s instruments rooms at the Museum, with their double-tier galleries.

Another consuming interest, reflecting her devout Presbyterian faith, was Brown’s desire to obtain the perfect Bible regal: a small portable organ constructed so that it could be folded closed like a large book. Brown began her search with an
unsuccessful appeal to Mahillon in 1890. For the next ten years she pursued her quest with every European museum director and dealer she encountered. In 1896 she wrote to her daughter Eliza, who was then in Paris, that she would be uncharacteristically tempted to pay “almost any sum if one could be found.”65 Finally, in 1902, an antiquities dealer in Munich informed her he had a “great rarity,” a so-called Bible regal in perfect condition and signed 1575 by Georg Voll, considered the instrument’s inventor (fig. 52). Implying that he could submit it to others, the dealer stated that the “instrument presently is only offered to your address.”66 Although the price was nonnegotiable, Brown promptly bought it.

One more important addition to the collection of keyboards came via Brown’s older brother, Thatcher Magoun Adams, to whom she was always close. In 1899, Adams had purchased in Paris 550 prints, lithographs, and engravings of musicians to supplement his sister’s collection. In 1901, Adams wrote Brown from Rome that he had found a “most wonderful spinet or harpsichord … upheld by life sized figures and with two figures seated in front of it”67 (fig. 53). This was the enormous “Golden Harpsichord” and its supplementary statuary that had belonged to and been created by Michele Todini, a seventeenth-century musician, instrument designer, and proprietor of his own musical instruments museum, the Galleria Armonica e Matematica, Rome. By the time Adams saw the piece, the inner mechanisms had disappeared, Todini’s descriptive writings had been scattered, and contradictory stories had been spun about its provenance and supposed mechanical workings. The price asked was proportionate to the instrument’s extraordinary nine-foot length: 25,000 francs, but “22,500 for Mme. Brun.”68 No record exists of what she paid; at the quoted price, it would have been five or six times more costly than the Cristofori piano. The harpsichord set appears to have arrived in New York in 1903; for years, it was a musical enigma and at the very least a storage problem for the Museum, which for a time displayed it in the Great Hall. One exasperated

52. **Regal (pipe organ).** Nuremberg, Germany, ca. 1575. Possibly by Georg Voll (active ca. 1540–ca. 1575). A small pipe organ with brass reeds, the regal produces a loud, somewhat aggressive nasal sound. The volume of the instrument, which is sounded by someone pumping the bellows opposite the keyboard, allowed it to accompany large ensembles, and it was sometimes specified by composers for use in theatrical depictions of the underworld, as Monteverdi did in *Orfeo* (1607). This example folds up so that the keyboard fits inside the bellows for easy transport. Some were nicknamed “Bible regals” because they resemble large books when folded.
director described it as “very much like a lady in her underclothes on the verge of middle age.” It has since been reconsidered and appreciated not only for its musical attributes but also as a unique work of Roman Baroque sculpture. Now, after years of intense curatorial research and fortuitous discoveries, it is verified as the only surviving object from Todini’s museum of mechanical musical instruments.

Relevance and Recognition

From its inception the Brown collection caused a stir. The initial 276 instruments—many from exotic lands and bewildering to the eye—were unusual acquisitions for a fledgling New York art institution. The comprehensive collection was significant not for its provenance but rather as a historical document illustrating music’s contributions to peoples worldwide. The works’ dual nature, scientific as well as artistic, raised doubts in some quarters about their suitability. The Musical Courier suggested that Brown’s ethnological specimens might more appropriately be displayed at the American Museum of Natural History, while the most decorative examples should be kept at the Metropolitan Museum. Yet other contemporary critics had no such complaint, instead praising Brown’s didactic purpose and purposefulness. As one put it, “The patient search for instruments typical of the popular and the cultured music of all nations . . . the outwitting of oblivion in so many instances; and the presentation and vivifying of the whole ascertainable history of musical progress and achievement, deserve the gratefullest thanks.”

The collection quickly claimed a hold on the public imagination. Its debut was widely and exhaustively reported in the press, from daily newspapers and the society pages to specialty music publications; subsequent additions to the collection and gallery openings likewise garnered comprehensive coverage. In 1891, when the
Museum first began opening on Sundays—the only day working people could visit, as the six-day workweek was then standard—the New York Times reported that “The collection of musical instruments probably held the most interested crowd all day.”

During the twentieth century, as The Met’s departments expanded to include encyclopedic holdings from non-Western cultures and ethnographic works of art from around the globe, Brown’s collection became still better appreciated and understood. Even so, as late as the 1970s, experts were in doubt as to the country of origin of a delicate zither made of bamboo and palm fronds; the sesando (fig. 54) ultimately was determined to be Javanese.

The greater mystery, one unsolved to this day, was how a relatively unknown, conventional, and often housebound woman of the Victorian era emerged as an erudite, pioneering, and prodigious collector and donor. Although museum administrators may have been dismayed by the collection’s seemingly limitless growth, outside observers admired Brown’s unbridled ambition and quest for completion.
“In such hands … collection is not a mere mania without intelligence or purpose, a fad of ephemeral existence, or an ignorant ostentation, but a work pursued with intelligent purpose and then given to the world in most attractive form, to add to its stock of information on a given subject. Wealth thus applied is a benefaction.”

Brown, though duly proud of her accomplishment in amassing an unprecedented collection of instruments, was equally concerned that her many charitable social works and role as matriarch and keeper of the Adams-Brown legacy be recognized. In her only nod to Gilded Age indulgence, she chose to have her portrait painted by Anders Zorn. Among his notable American subjects, the Swedish artist had painted such doyennes of society and philanthropy as Bertha Honoré Palmer of Chicago and Isabella Stewart Gardner of Boston. It is not too much to surmise that Brown believed that a portrait by Zorn would acknowledge her importance as a New York patron-collector-donor on an equal social footing with those ladies. Family letters show that Zorn painted Brown in Paris, in May or June 1895, the same busy summer during which Brown secured the Cristofori piano and accepted Mahillon’s offer of a glass harmonica. Zorn was probably induced to paint Brown by their mutual friend, the interior designer Candace Wheeler, or by Wheeler’s daughter, the artist Dora Keith.

Unlike the Palmer and Gardner portraits, her image is not that of a light-hearted collector-socialite but of a somber, pensive matron seated half in shadow (fig. 55). Zorn shows Brown with an emblematic instrument, probably not one of her collection. Dressed in a high-necked, long-sleeved, heavy black gown, she wears little jewelry: one earring catches the light, as does what appears to be a brooch at her neck. The position of both hands emphasizes her wedding ring. As she sat for Zorn, Brown was no doubt pleased with both the social accomplishment her portrait represented and its allusion to her singular musical achievements. Toward the end of her life, she reflected:

As I look back I cannot imagine how I could accomplish so Herculean a piece of work. In fact it seems almost like a dream, and I can only say that it grew gradually under my hand, for I had no thought whatever of attempting an undertaking of such proportions. Yet at the time the work framed itself distinctly in my mind and I seemed to see how to do it step by step. I think it was ordained that I should accomplish this task which I hope will prove of value to posterity.”

Notes

5. Mary Elizabeth Brown to the Museum’s trustees, February 16, 1889. All correspondence cited is held in the Office of the Secretary Records, Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York, unless otherwise indicated.
8. Isaac Hall to Brown, December 28, 1893.
16. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. W. A. Brown, A Teacher and His Times, p. 58.
27. Brown and Brown, Musical Instruments and Their Homes, p. v.
29. [Brown], Preliminary Catalogue, p. 5.
30. Brown to the Museum’s trustees, February 16, 1889.
32. Cesnola, New York, to Brown, February 6, 1899.
33. McCarthy, Women’s Culture, p. 123.
36. W. A. Brown, A Teacher and His Times, p. 47.
39. Frederic E. Church to Brown, October 22, 1887.
41. R. H. Pratt, Carlisle, Pa., to M. E. and J. C. Brown, December 8, 1887.
42. Pratt, Carlisle, Pa., to Brown, February 16, 1894.
44. George E. Post, Beirut, to Brown, February 1 and August 31, 1886.
45. Alex S. Van Dyck, Amoy, China, to Brown, August 15, 1889.
46. Elizabeth L. Stevens, Rangoon, to Sarah D. Doremus, June 8, 1886.
47. Stevens, Rangoon, to Brown, July 25, 1898.
49. Brown to Cesnola, October 26, 1889.
50. Van Dyck, Amoy, China, to Brown, May 17 and September 18, 1888.
52. Brown Brothers, New York, to Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp., Kyoto, July 27, 1894.
54. John Tyler, Tehran, to Brown, June 19, 1899.
55. Tyler, Tehran, to Brown, October 26, 1889, April 19, 1900, and December 11, 1900.
58. Brown to Roversi, September 30, 1902.
59. J. C. Brown to Cesnola, June 13, 1898.
61. W. A. Brown, A Teacher and His Times, p. 88.
63. Mary Louise Potter Thompson, Florence, to M. E. and J. C. Brown, June 11 and 18, 1895.
64. Diego Martelli to Brown, November 23, 1895.
66. Siegfried Lamale to Brown, November 3, 1902.
68. Ibid.
69. Francis Henry Taylor to Emanuel Winternitz, February 23, 1943.
Works Illustrated

All instruments are in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments, 1889.

FIG. 2 (PAGE 5)
Mi-gyaung (crocodile zither)
Myanmar (formerly Burma), late 19th century
Wood, gold leaf, and wire, L. 54 in. (137.2 cm)
89.4.1473

FIG. 3 (PAGE 6)
Oboe in C
Nuremberg, Germany, before 1735
Made by Jacob Denner (1681–1735)
Boxwood body with brass keys, L. 22 3/4 in. (57.5 cm)
89.4.893

FIG. 4 (PAGE 7)
Pianoforte
Salzburg, Austria, ca. 1785
Attributed to Johann Schmidt (active late 18th century)
Cherrywood veneer case, black-stained wood naturals, and bone-covered accidentals, L. 83 1/2 in. (212 cm)
89.4.3182

FIG. 17 (PAGE 18)
Chegah-skah-hdah (dance wand)
Sioux, United States, 19th century
Wood, metal, and leather, L. 21 in. (53.3 cm)
89.4.597

FIG. 18 (PAGE 18)
Wakan-chan-chah-gha (frame drum)
Probably Sioux, United States, late 19th century
Wood and skin, Diam. 10 in. (25.4 cm)
89.4.631

FIG. 19 (PAGE 19)
Charango (guitar)
Marcos Manufactory, Mexico, late 19th century
Wood and armadillo shell, L. 33 1/8 in. (85.2 cm)
89.4.2881

FIGS. 20, 21 (PAGE 20)
Two tsii’edo’o’tl (bowed zithers)
Apache, United States, 19th century
20. Made by Geronimo (1829–1909)
Wood, metal, and gut strings, L. 17 1/2 in. (44.5 cm)
89.4.596a, b

21. Made by Chappo Geronimo (1867–1894)
Wood, L. 22 1/4 in. (56.5 cm)
89.4.636a, b

FIGS. 22–24 (PAGE 20)
Three bird rattles
19th century
22. Tlingit, United States
Wood, L. 10 in. (25.4 cm)
89.4.614

23. Tsimshian, Canada
Wood, paint, sinew, and pebbles, L. 12 1/2 in. (31.8 cm)
89.4.2161

24. Masseth or Haida, Canada
Wood, L. 10 in. (25.4 cm)
89.4.647

FIG. 25 (PAGE 21)
Banjo
St. Louis, ca. 1884
Made by Hercules McCord (1855–1890)
Nickel-plated brass hoop, cable, and walnut neck with rosewood veneer, ebony pegs, ivory frets, pearl position markers, and calfskin head, L. 36 in. (91.5 cm)
89.4.2677

FIG. 26 (PAGE 22)
Double chromatic harp
Brooklyn, after 1895
Made by Henry Greenway (1833–1903)
Spruce soundboard, maple body, iron frame and pins, gilding, and brass strings, H. 66 1/4 in. (168 cm)
89.4.1235

FIG. 27 (PAGE 23)
Qânûn (psaltery)
Turkey, 19th century
Wood, parchment, gut strings, mother-of-pearl, ivory, bone, ebony inlay, shells, gold foil, metal, and brass, L. 38 3/4 in. (96.6 cm)
89.4.330

FIG. 28 (PAGE 24)
Saùng-gauk (harp)
Myanmar (Burma), 19th century
Wood, deerskin, paint, cotton cord, metal, and glass, H. 35 3/4 in. (89.7 cm)
89.4.1465a, b

FIG. 29 (PAGE 25)
Tsãi (mayuri) (bowed lute)
India, 19th century
Wood, parchment, metal, and feathers, L. 45 1/2 in. (115.5 cm)
89.4.163

FIG. 30 (PAGE 26)
Sarod (short-necked lute)
India, ca. 1885
Dun wood, L. 35 in. (88.8 cm)
89.4.171

FIG. 31 (PAGE 26)
Pipa (short-necked lute)
China, 19th century
Made by Jiucheng (active mid-19th century)
Wood, ivory, bone, and gut, L. 37 3/4 in. (94.2 cm)
89.4.52

FIG. 32 (PAGE 27)
Yunluo (“cloud gong”)
China, 19th century
Bronze, H. 28 in. (71.1 cm)
89.4.15a

FIG. 33 (PAGE 28)
Kagura suzu (bell tree)
Japan, 17th century
Wood and metal, L. 13 1/2 in. (34.3 cm)
89.4.94

FIG. 34 (PAGE 28)
Ô-daiko (barrel drum)
Japan, ca. 1873
Made by Kodenji Hayashi (1831–1915)
Wood, metal, cloisonné, hide, silk, and padding, H. 62 1/4 in. (158 cm)
89.4.1236

FIG. 35 (PAGE 29)
Two oni bearing a dora (gong)
Japan, early 19th century
Metal, wood, lacquer, and polychrome, H. 64 3/8 in. (163.5 cm)
89.4.2016a–e
Figs. 36, 37 (Page 30)
Tombak (goblet drum) and tār (lute)
Iran (Persia), late 19th century

36. Various woods, bone, brass, and skin, H. 22 ¼ in. (56.5 cm)
89.4.1310

37. Bone, wood, brass, parchment, and various materials, L. 32 ¼ in. (83.2 cm)
89.4.1679

Fig. 38 (Page 31)
uşam sāi (spiked fiddle)
Thailand, 19th century
Coconut, skin, ivory, and mother-of-pearl, L. 46 ¼ in. (117 cm)
89.4.2600

Fig. 39 (Page 32)
Bala (xylophone)
Mandinka people, West Africa, 19th century
Wood, gourd, hide, and membrane, L. 34 ½ in. (86.5 cm)
89.4.492

Figs. 40–43 (Page 32)
Four lamellaphones

40. Nyonganyonga
Possibly Barwe people, Mozambique, ca. 1900
Wood, shell, metal, and beads, L. 9 ¼ in. (23.4 cm)
09.163.6

41. Mbira
Nigeria, late 19th century
Wood, L. 12 ¼ in. (31.1 cm)
89.4.482

42. Kisanji (cisaij)
Bateke people, Republic of the Congo, late 19th century
Wood, L. 17 in. (43.2 cm)
89.4.485

43. Kisanji
Chokwe people, Angola, late 19th century
Wood and metal bridge, L. 10 in. (25.4 cm)
89.4.484

Fig. 44 (Page 33)
Ngoma (drum)
Vili or Yombe people, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century
Wood, fiber, and glass, H. 30 ¾ in. (78 cm)
89.4.1743

Fig. 45 (Page 34)
Bass saxtuba in E-flat
Paris, 1855
Made by Adolphe (Antoine Joseph) Sax (1814–1894)
Brass, L. 51 in. (129.5 cm)
89.4.1109

Fig. 46 (Page 34)
Cor omnitonique (omnitonic horn)
Brussels, 1833
Attributed to Charles Joseph Sax (1790–1865)
Brass, H. 21 ½ in. (54.9 cm)
89.4.2418

Fig. 47 (Page 35)
Alto recorder in F
Nuremberg, Germany, ca. 1700
Made by Johann Benedikt Gahn (1674–1711)
Ivory, L. 19 ½ in. (48.6 cm)
89.4.909

Fig. 48 (Page 36)
Double virginal
Middelburg, Zeeland, The Netherlands, 1600
Made by Lodewijck Grouwels (active 1593–1600)
Spruce soundboard, pine case, polychrome with gilt decorations, iron pins, ivory naturals with black accidentals, and various other materials, W. 75 in. (190.5 cm)
89.4.1196

Fig. 49 (Page 37)
Harpsichord
Paris, 1742
Made by Louis Bellot (active 1717–1759)
Spruce soundboard, poplar or lime case decorated with polychrome and varnish with old specks, ebony-veneered naturals with pearwood arcades, black-stained accidentals with bone veneers, iron pins, and other various materials, L. of case 94 in. (238.7 cm)
89.4.1218

Fig. 50 (Page 38)
Octave virginal
Possibly Augsburg, Germany, ca. 1600
Ebony veneered case, gilt brass mounts, spruce soundboard, bone natural keys, black stained accidentals with ebony veneer tops, pearwood jacks, parchment rose, paper decoration, and other various materials, W. 17 ¾ in. (44.1 cm)
89.4.1778

Fig. 51 (Page 39)
Pianoforte
Florence, 1720
Made by Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655–1731)
Cypress (?), wood case, spruce soundboard, boxwood keys (accidentals stained black), iron pins, brass strings, and other various materials, W. 37 ¼ in. (95.6 cm)
89.4.1219

Fig. 52 (Page 40)
Regal (pipe organ)
Nuremberg, Germany, ca. 1575
Possibly by Georg Voll (active ca. 1540–ca. 1575)
Painted wood case, hide-bound bellows, boxwood keys, and brass reeds, L. 27 in. (68.6 cm)
89.4.2883

Fig. 53 (Page 41)
Harpsichord
Rome, 1672
Designed by Michele Todini (1616–1690); carving by Jacob Reiff (1627–1700); gilding by Basilio Onofri (active second half of 17th century)
Cypress soundboard, gilded-wood case, and other materials, L. of case 9 ft. 10 in. (299.7 cm)
89.4.2929

Fig. 54 (Page 42)
Sesando (tube zither)
Java, Indonesia, late 19th century
Bamboo, wood, palm, and wire, H. 22 ¼ in. (56 cm)
89.4.1489
Acknowledgments

Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown must be very grateful to all the people she never knew who made this Bulletin possible. The present curators in the Department of Musical Instruments—Jayson Kerr Dobney, Frederick P. Rose Curator in Charge; Bradley Strauchen-Scherer, Associate Curator; and J. Kenneth Moore, Curator Emeritus—have safeguarded Brown’s voluminous Museum-related correspondence as a pioneering American collector and have generously encouraged research and interpretation of her work. Without them, this Bulletin would never have seen the light of day.

Beyond the Museum, there has been great interest in Brown’s energetic personal life, which she carefully recorded, as if hoping that future generations might benefit from her experiences and reflections. Mimi Bowling, Consulting Archivist, first evaluated and archived 145 linear feet of Brown’s personal writings and photographic records. Subsequently, Ursula Mitrani patiently conserved and restored many volumes of these disparate and fragile nineteenth-century books and papers. Dwight Primiano, assisted by Gordon Arkenberg, photographed and digitized at least half of Brown’s personal papers, documenting and preserving the record of her extraordinary life. Michael Ryan, Director of the Patricia D. Klingenstein Library at the New-York Historical Society, has regularly consulted on the disposition of Brown’s voluminous personal papers. Gretchen Schumacher, a single person doing the same job as dozens of Brown’s anonymous assistants, has diligently ordered, transcribed, and kept track of reams of Brown’s documents, making them accessible to modern scholars. Loretta Drelles has further brought Brown into the twenty-first century with her computer expertise and implementation.

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Thatcher Magoun Brown III plays several critical parts in this story. Like me, he is one of Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown’s great-grandchildren. More significant still, he is my husband, at once a great agitator and a patient enabler. He and our three children, Geoffrey, Thatcher, and Eliza, deserve the most credit for their encouragement and forbearance in the lengthy realization of this Bulletin, and it is to them that this publication is dedicated. SBB
A Gift of Sound

The Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments