The Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments:
Its Origin and Development

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In the 1870s Mrs. John Crosby Brown fell in love with a little lutelike Italian instrument made of ivory, a pandurina. This started an infatuation that led in time to the formation of one of the richest and most systematic collections of musical instruments in the world, the Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments of All Nations. Now in the Metropolitan Museum, it comprises today about 4,000 objects, and has to be regarded as a monument of early American collecting.

Mrs. Brown was an extraordinary person in many respects. She must have combined a clear vision and directness of decision with unusual sensitivity. Her oldest son, William Adams Brown, discusses her vividly and tenderly in his book A Teacher and His Times (New York, 1940):

Four characteristics remain indelibly impressed upon my memory; her commanding presence, her passionate nature, her unquestioning faith, her indomitable will... Never having been to college, she lacked the discipline that college life gives, but she made up for the lack by the persistence of her application to whatever it was to which she had set her hand. The range of her interests was wide and where she could not follow them out herself she found ways of setting others to work. More than one volume owes its existence to her initiative. The most impressive was my father's book on merchant banking, but there were others of her own: An Anthology of Dedications; the story of the St. Cloud Church; a genealogical study of the Brown family (Alexander Brown and His Descendants, 1764–1916); the

FIGURE 1
Mrs. John Crosby Brown, by Anders Zorn, Paris, about 1900. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, bequest of Eliza Coe Moore, 60.85

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biography of her grandfather, John Adams; an illustrated catalogue of her musical collection (Musical Instruments and Their Homes, 1888).

Mrs. Brown's regular features appear in the portrait, now in the Museum's possession, that Anders Zorn painted of her in Paris about 1900 (Figure 1). She was the mother of six children, of whom four became excellent musicians. William Adams Brown played the flute, his brother James Crosby Brown the violin. Two daughters studied piano with Leschetizky in Vienna; one of them, Mrs. Eliza Coe Moore, played chamber music with a number of the distinguished quartets of her day, and the other, Mrs. Amy B. deForest, was also an accomplished pianist.

Mrs. Brown combined her duties as wife and mother with many other activities. Her writings and the creation of her large collection seem still the more admirable when one learns that she suffered from rheumatism a large part of her life and spent much time in her later years in bed.

The collection grew rapidly. In 1884 she obtained four instruments from a friend in Italy to decorate the music room of her country home, Brighthurst, on Orange Mountain, New Jersey: an eighteenth-century Savoyard harp, a seventeenth-century Paduan ivory mandolin, an eighteenth-century Viennese piano made by Anton Vatter, and an eighteenth-century Italian serpent. By 1889 she had amassed 276 objects, chiefly of "oriental nations, and savage tribes," as she informed the Museum, which at that time possessed only forty-four instruments, largely European and all of them gifts of Joseph Drexel. Since Mrs. Brown could hardly accommodate these instruments any longer in her town and country houses, she decided to make them available to the public. In her letter to the trustees of February 16, 1889, she wrote:

The Collection is the result of the work and study of a number of years. The instruments have all been carefully catalogued, and accurate pen and ink drawings, inscriptions and measurements have been prepared by my son, Wm. Adams Brown. You can judge somewhat of the character and value of the collection by reference to the Volume recently published by Dodd Mead & Co., "Musical Instruments and Their Homes", a copy of which I sent you for examination, and as a gift to the Library of the Museum. While it is my intention to make the collection over absolutely to the Museum I should like during my lifetime, and that of my son Wm. Adams Brown, to retain such limited control over it, as would enable me, subject to the Direction of the Superintendent of the Museum, and with his, or your consent, to have access to the instruments for purposes of study, and also the privilege as opportunity offers, to improve the collection by substituting superior for inferior instruments of the same kind. The collection even in regard to instruments of oriental nations, and savage tribes, is as yet in some important respects incomplete. I hope however to continue my work, and to add to it from time to time and it is for that reason I ask for this limited privilege of control and oversight. The intrinsic value of many of the individual instruments is not very great, but the collection is of value as a whole, as illustrating the musical habits and tastes of different peoples. It will become more valuable every year, as many of the instruments of savage tribes now in the collection are rapidly disappearing, and even now some of them cannot be replaced.

The book written by her and her son, mentioned in her letter and today a collector's item, abounds in precise pen and ink drawings of instruments and imaginative vignettes suggesting the exotic atmosphere of foreign cultures (Figures 2, 3). As planned, the work continued. By 1893 the collection had grown to 700 objects, by 1896 to 2,000, and eight years later to no fewer than 3,390. The new acquisitions were presented to the Museum periodically and exhibited in galleries prepared for that purpose. The Metropolitan is fortunate in possessing Mrs. Brown's voluminous correspondence with musicians, collectors, dealers, agents, advisers, and museum officials. These letters are eloquent documents of her non-nonsense intelligence and her purposeful, indefatigable activity in securing interesting and authentic specimens. Her determined character is revealed in her beautiful, large handwriting (Figure 4). In building her collection she ingeniously utilized the services of foreign correspondents of her husband's bank, Brown Brothers & Co., United States consular representatives abroad, and, most significantly, missionaries. From a historical point of view, it appears that her methods of

FIGURE 2
Page with drawings of instruments from India by William Adams Brown, from Musical Instruments and Their Homes, by Mary E. Brown (Mrs. John Crosby Brown) and William Adams Brown, New York, 1888
13. **Vina.** A bar of hollow bamboo, to which are fastened two empty gourds. Strung with 8 wire strings of which 5 pass over a series of movable frets. 22 in number, upon the top of the bar. The other 3 pass over single fixed bridges, 2 on one side and one on the other. In playing, held diagonally across the breast, with the upper gourd over the left shoulder, and the lower under the right arm. The first and third fingers of the hand with little plectra. 2.56 in.


15. **Poongi (or Magoudi.)** A gourd, the small end of which is pierced to make a mouthpiece, and in which are inserted 26 bamboo tubes. Used by the snake-charmers. 20 in. x 4. Calcutta.
1. **San-Heen (San-Hsien)** - or three stringed guitar. The head covered with snake skin on both sides. Tuned in two fourths. 
   - L. 3½ ft; Diam. 6 in.

2. **Yue-Kin** or "Moon" guitar. Four strings at fifth

3. **Sona (van Aalst)** or Heang-Teik (Engel) A favorite instrument among the common people - entertainments exceptionally 
   Following is its scale
collecting information about musical instruments and securing the instruments themselves parallel those of the founders of the first large collection of musical instruments in Rome, assembled in the middle of the seventeenth century. At that time the learned Jesuit fathers, especially the great polyhistor Athanasius Kircher, sifted and collected interesting objects and the information about them as they streamed in from missionaries in the Near and Far East and in Africa. As a result of this, Father Kircher established the first large museum that included art objects from oriental civilizations and tools from so-called primitive cultures. This museum, the Museo Kircheriano, formed a part of the famous Jesuit educational institute, the Collegio Romano. We know of its contents from many important publications by Kircher and his pupils. The two-volume treatise *Gabinetto armonico pieno d'instrumenti sonori indi-
The correspondence of Brown Brothers, consular representatives, and missionaries were not the only aids of Mrs. Brown. They were chiefly helpful in acquisition, but what became necessary in time was expert guidance about the basic planning of a comprehensive and systematic collection. In this matter Mrs. Brown had the good sense to seek the advice of scholars. One of these was Rajah Sourindro Mohun Tagore of Calcutta, a distinguished musicologist and president of the Conservatory of Calcutta, whose generosity is reflected in a beautiful group of Indian instruments in the collection. The other scholars were Englishmen—in fact the only outstanding connoisseurs of musical instruments in England at that time. One was Alfred James Hopkins, a professional; the other was Francis William Galpin, a dilettante in the best sense of the word.

Hopkins worked throughout his life in the famous piano factory of John Broadwood & Sons in London. A proficient pianist and organist, he was also an expert tuner, and at one time he tuned Chopin’s instruments. He also wrote and lectured on problems of pitch, acoustics, obsolete and rare instruments, and early keyboard instruments. He bequeathed many of his own precious instruments to the Royal College of Music. In 1901 he wrote the introduction to the catalogue of keyboard instruments (clavichords, harpsichords, pianofortes, organs, harmoniums) in the Crosby Brown Collection.

The closest associate and adviser of Mrs. Brown was the Reverend Francis William Galpin. A parish clergyman with profound interests in botany and archaeology as well as music, he brought together in his country vicarage, Hatfield Regis, a remarkable collection of European instruments. Well known in England, the collection was constantly used by scholars and friends of music, who knew the owner as “Canon Galpin.” Galpin’s many writings cover numerous aspects of musical instruments from the Stone Age and Sumer to the “electrophonic” age. Characteristic of his scholarly zeal was his reconstruction of the hydraulic organ of the ancients, also his investigation of the nyasteranga, an Indian wind instrument containing in its mouth cup a certain kind of spider web. This web was set into vibration when the singing or humming player pressed the instrument to his throat. Galpin collected a number of nyasterangas and trained his Sunday-school children to play them for a public concert. Galpin’s collection of European instruments went in 1917 to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where it was called the Lesley-Lindsay-Mason Collection of Musical Instruments; it was masterfully catalogued in the 1930s by Nicholas Bessaraboff. Galpin’s cooperation with Mrs. Brown continued for many years. He not only gave valuable aid in acquiring missing specimens but played a leading role in establishing sound principles in cataloguing, especially a consistent terminology.

The catalogue of the Crosby Brown Collection, published between 1903 and 1914, was prepared under the direction of the donor by Miss Frances Morris. Its volumes covered Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Oceania, historical groups, and keyboard instruments. Today the publication is outdated in many respects, especially in its datings and attributions, occasionally also in its technical descriptions. One has to keep in mind, however, that it was compiled before the appearance of the standard works of our century that set a new pattern for classification and terminology: Curt Sachs's Real-Lexikon der Musikinstrumente (1913), Georg Kinsky’s catalogue of the Musikhistorisches Museum von Wilhelm Heyer in Cologne (1910–1912), and Julius Schlosser’s catalogue of the collection at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (1920). The chief model for our catalogue was Victor-Charles Mahillon’s monumental Catalogue descriptif et analytique of the Musée Instrumental at Brussels (1880).

One of the most admirable principles guiding the formation of the Crosby Brown Collection was its aim to represent all parts of the world as completely as possible. Of course some civilizations, such as those of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome, could not be represented completely, since only a comparatively

small number of their instruments have been preserved. In such cases reproductions were obtained of the best-preserved specimens. The richness of available material from more recent civilizations rendered reproductions unnecessary. In the words of the introduction to the catalogue:

No typical specimen which it was possible to obtain has been refused admission. . . . In the choice of individual specimens the educational purpose has been paramount. Though containing many examples of rare artistic merit, no instrument has been chosen for its beauty alone, nor has historical association been a determining consideration. In each case the specimen has won its right to a place because illustrating some step in the development of music. No special effort has been made to secure the works of famous masters. The collector has no sympathy with the practice of locking up in museums instruments noted for rare beauty of tone. In a few cases, indeed, it may be important to secure single specimens in order to illustrate some principle in the history of art. . . . Special efforts have been made to secure the complete representation of families where such are known to exist.

The latter point was of great importance to the educational purpose of the collection and to its aim of representing past periods of music as faithfully as possible. In the Renaissance, for instance, many instruments were built in large families, from the high treble down to double-bass size, matching, as it were, the various pitch levels of the vocal chorus (Figure 5). Only the connoisseur can appreciate how much patience and energy were needed to collect all of the members of these families of instruments. The following families are represented in their entirety: viola da braccio and viola da gamba, balalaika, transverse flute (with and without keys), recorder of the Renaissance and of the Baroque, galoubet, ocarina, clarinet, saxophone, sarrusophone,
cromorne, oboe and its ancestor the shawm, bassoon, cornet à bouquin, Russian horn, trombone, helicon, brass saxhorn (with rotary valves, and with piston valves), and saxhorn with bell over shoulder.

To economize on space, a policy of avoiding duplicates was adopted. Inspecting the collection today, some eighty years after its formation, one is astonished to see how successfully this principle was adhered to. Seeming exceptions have always had their good reasons. Of the several Burmese shoulder harps, for example, some are luxurious, highly decorated specimens for special use, others are primitive folk instruments. There are several Roman Baroque harpsichords of identical mechanism and similar tone, but they are entirely different from each other because of their outstanding painted and carved decoration. Many tribal instruments of apparently similar shape differ greatly in their methods of stringing and tuning, and in their tone. Certain Hindu instruments of similar shape again cannot be regarded as duplicates because of the religious symbolism inherent in their painted decoration. One could easily cite further examples.

Another basic problem facing the collection, and later the Museum, was the spatial arrangement within the exhibit area and the classification of the major sections. Here the great question, of course, was whether to classify geographically or historically. The reasons for choosing the geographical arrangement are stated in the general introduction to the catalogue, which refers to this form of display as follows:

This has not been due to any lack of interest in the principle of development, but solely to the belief that by the geographical arrangement it is possible to illustrate certain facts of interest in musical history which a purely developmental classification would obscure. The river has its rapids and its eddies, as well as its deep, quiet pools. So, in the development of music, each civilization molds the common musical material in fashions of its own. Progress is now rapid, now slow, and often we note what seems a retrogression. A geographical arrangement brings out the distinctive features of the different civilizations and enables one to see at a glance what each has contributed to the development of the art as a whole.

The Reverend William Adams Brown (Figure 6), a professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, remained interested in the collection to the end of his life. When, in 1943, I installed my first exhibition in the Morgan Wing (Figures 7, 8), interspersing the instruments with visual material such as paintings, prints, and tapestries, and in the vitrines, reproductions of old scores and tablatures and pictures of musicians playing the very instruments exhibited, Dr. Brown thanked me with tears in his eyes, exclaiming: “What would my mother have said of this day and of this exhibition?” This started a cordial relationship between us; he came from time to time to the Museum to look at our new acquisitions and exhibitions, and we had many talks about instruments, outstanding performances in the past, and music in Vienna, where he had taken flute lessons and where his father had studied organ with no less a master than Anton Bruckner. Once, he made me a precious gift out of the rich storehouse of his musical memories. A passionate Brucknerite, I had heard as a youngsters many performances conducted by friends and pupils of Bruckner, among them Franz Schalk and Ferdinand Löwe. Recalling this, I also told Dr. Brown that an uncle of mine had studied harmony with Bruckner, who as an old man was a lector at the University of Vienna, but that I could never get hold
FIGURE 7
Clavicytherium and lutes, exhibition in Morgan Wing, 1943

FIGURE 8
Keyboard instruments and pochettes, exhibition in Morgan Wing, 1943
of a precise technical description of Bruckner's legendary improvisations on the organ. Dr. Brown was delighted to fill the gap. He had heard Bruckner improvise and, to my great joy, he gave me an expert's recollection of the event.

To judge the achievement of Mrs. Brown's creation in historical perspective, one has to compare it with other outstanding collections of musical instruments, especially those in museums and conservatories. Apart from some small collections founded before 1900, such as those in the South Kensington Museum (established 1857, catalogued 1870), Copenhagen, Stockholm, Berlin, Bologna, Florence, and Milan, one finds only one large collection established and organized earlier than the Crosby Brown. This was the Musée Instrumental du Conservatoire Royal de Musique in Brussels, which originated in 1872 with the acquisition by the Conservatoire of the small private collection of the Belgian musicologist François Joseph Féris. It was enlarged in 1876 with a group of Indian instruments donated by Rajah Sourindro Mohun Tagore, already mentioned as a benefactor of the Crosby Brown Collection, and later by a large part of the famous Venetian collection, Contarini-Correr.

The Crosby Brown Collection was enthusiastically welcomed in the Museum among its many collections. Perhaps the memory of Thomas Jefferson was still fresh.
in 1889, for Jefferson was deeply interested in architecture and music as indispensable elements of a comprehensive aesthetic culture. But later the collection and its status as part of an art museum occasionally encountered prejudice. Why, it was sometimes asked, should musical instruments be included in a museum of the visual arts? Were they not machines, mechanical contrivances serving the ear rather than the eye? How could they belong with stained glass, medieval sculpture, Titians and Rembrandts? Lutes and harpsichords belonged in conservatories of music, while Hindu peacock lutes, Northwest American Indian rattles, Peruvian whistling jars, Australian bull-roarers (Figures 9, 10, 11, 12) belonged in ethnographical museums or museums of natural history. Narrow and amateurish as these opinions were, they often carried weight in the inevitable rivalry among the many Museum departments for appropriate or at least proportionate exhibition and storage space. Of course the curator brought forth his arguments: Were not many objects in other departments, such as mummies, toys for Egyptian chil-
dren, Cretan potsherds, medieval saddles, fragments of Coptic textiles—all cultural relics and documents of earlier civilizations—also products of a craft rather than an art, and often lacking in elegance and “beauty”? And should it be held against the instruments that, besides being shaped by master craftsmen for the eye, they served at the same time another art, music (Figure 13)? In fact, did not musical instruments play an outstanding role in the prototypes of our modern museums, the Kunst und Wunderkammern of the Habsburgs, Medicis, and Fuggers, where they were kept “to delight ear and eye alike”? Furthermore, in view of the Museum’s magnificent collections of art of the Near and Far East, why should equal status be denied the elegant and colorful musical instruments from these regions (Figures 14, 15, 16), quite apart from their significance as tools of the sacred art, music?

Today, for several reasons, the battle seems won in favor of the instruments. The aesthetic values of so-called primitive art have at last been discovered by the art public. Furthermore, the taste of our musical public has grown much more catholic, capable of appreciating the subtleties not only of early periods of music but also of so-called primitive cultures—or what Mrs. Brown, following the fashion of her time, still called “savage music” (Figure 17).

Looking back today at its origin a century ago, one appreciates the Crosby Brown Collection as a triumph of foresight. At that time, few students played the recorder, few concertgoers knew the exact differences in tone and mechanics between clavichord, harpsichord, and pianoforte. Few listeners could distinguish between a violoncello and a viola da gamba, and few had ever heard a zinken or serpent. No concerts with Indian or Japanese instruments were given in public auditoriums. Ethnomusicology, represented today by a large and rapidly growing organization, the Society for Ethnomusicology, was in its infancy, and no professor would have dared, as the writer of this article recently did, to announce graduate courses in the iconography and iconology of music. Today we are seeing a veritable renascence of interest in instruments of the past. Even the baryton, so dear to Haydn, has recently been revived, and “Mozart pianos” are constructed or reconstructed for use in concerts and recordings. Performances on Eastern instruments are no longer rare on European concert or theater stages. Indian, Javanese, Chinese, and Japanese instruments can be heard as a matter of course, while performances of Bach and Mozart are regular parts of concert programs in the Far East.

The Crosby Brown Collection eventually became the

**FIGURE 13**

FIGURE 14
P‘ip'a with ivory back. Chinese, Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, bequest of Mary Stillman Harkness, 50.145.74

FIGURE 15
Yü pang, slit drum in form of a fish. Chinese. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Crosby Brown Collection, 89.4.1711
basis of several far-reaching developments in the Museum. One was the introduction of early music in 1941 as a regular feature of Museum life. Strangely enough, this was brought about by the war. The Museum decided to send most of its art treasures into hiding, away from New York. The curator of objects as fragile as musical instruments was naturally worried about the impact of a different and drier climate on the collection, which also would be out of his hands for an unpredictable length of time. Moreover, he did not believe that New York would be bombed and therefore pleaded that the Crosby Brown Collection be retained in the Museum. Thus, there were thousands of instruments in a virtually empty, monumental building. This inevitably suggested the idea of organizing concerts—performing old masterworks, many of them using the old instruments. These concerts, free for Museum members, were given in the Morgan Wing, the Armor Hall, the Medieval Sculpture Hall, and the Great Hall. Most of these locations had to be acoustically adapted by stretching wires, hanging tapestries, and so forth. In the Great Hall music of an intimate character, such as madrigals, lieder, and string quartets could not be performed, so here the programs focused on larger choral or orchestral pieces, such as Giovanni Gabrielli’s antiphonal music, written for San Marco in Venice, Heinrich Schütz’s oratorios, and Handel’s Ode for St. Cecilia’s Day.

The idea immediately became so popular that many of the concerts had to be repeated, and the number given grew from year to year. One of the most popular series, which ran for years, was called “Music Forgotten and Remembered.” From their inception these concerts commanded the services of such distinguished performers as Adolf Busch, Elizabeth Schumann, Alexander Kipnis, Wanda Landowska, Joseph Fuchs, George Szell, Ralph Kirkpatrick, Mieczyslaw Horszowski, and Rudolf Serkin.

Long-range, systematic planning suggested itself. What was to be the musical role of an art museum in a city like New York, humming the year round with mu-
sic of all kinds? Evidently our programs could not and should not compete with the midtown activities, and since the concerts were free to members, the Museum offered something like an experimental stage upon which unknown or little-known music could be performed, without consideration of the box office. Free from commercial limitations, we could break the vicious circle of "the fifty pieces" that are performed on the commercial stage over and over, on the unproven assumption that people want only to hear what they know.

There was also another difference: tapestries, statues, and other works of art contemporary with the music created a congenial and thought-provoking environment (Figure 18); a spark, at least, could be kindled there to illuminate the eternal intertwining of the arts throughout their history and their crystallization in national realms. Finally, the collection of musical instruments itself provided a stimulus, if not an obligation, to rediscover forgotten instrumental masterpieces.

The attendance figures in the annual reports confirm the success of the concerts. Looking back at many rich years of unconventional programs, it is not easy to single out a few for mention here. Medieval music by Perotin and Machaut was performed by the Dessoff Choir under Paul Boepple, who also presented many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century composers, including Dufay, Binchois, Lantins, Brumel, Mouton, Josquin des Pres, Jannequin, Senfl, Palestrina, Lassus, Gallus, and Claude le Jeune. Other rarely heard Renaissance and Baroque music, including works by Pierre de la Rue, Andrea and Giovanni Gabrielli, Phillip de Monte, Gesualdo, Weelkes, and Monteverdi, was presented by the Yale University Collegium Musicum under Paul Hindemith (Figure 19). Other choral concerts included Carissimi's Jephtah and polychoral music in the Venetian style. The Cantata Singers, under Arthur Mendl, presented The Christmas Story by Heinrich Schütz, the Dettingen Te Deum by Handel, and rarely heard cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach. Under the direction of Alfred Mann, they presented Handel's Ode for St. Cecilia's Day, and his Jubilate for the peace of Utrecht. Many smaller instrumental works by Alessandro Scarlatti, Geminiani, Telemann, Rameau, Domenico Scarlatti, Couperin, Quantz, and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach were played by various performers.

Of Joseph Haydn's music we heard, among other pieces, his Double Variations in F Minor, played by Mieczyslaw Horszowski, and the original string quartet version of The Seven Last Words of the Savior on the Cross, presented by the Busch Quartet. The neglected oeuvre of the inexhaustible Mozart was represented by many of his smaller divertimenti for winds; his great serenade for thirteen players—one of his most imaginative and

**FIGURE 17**

Vitrines with African instruments, Musical Instruments of Five Continents, 1961
FIGURE 18
Musical instruments and stylistically related furniture, small exhibit in Great Hall, 1941

FIGURE 19
Paul Hindemith conducting a rehearsal in the Armor Hall, May 1948, using ancient instruments from the Museum’s collection
original wind scores—conducted by George Szell; some of his early symphonies; many of his a capella canons; some of his undeservedly neglected pianoforte variations; and his arrangements of fugues by Johann Sebastian Bach and Wilhelm Friedemann Bach for string quartet and string trio.

Many little-known lieder by Schubert and Hugo Wolf were sung by Elizabeth Schumann and Alexander Kipnis, and a long list of compositions for piano four hands by Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, and Reger recaptured the spirit of house-music. And these are only a few pearls from a long string. It is perhaps not without interest that through their Museum performances many of these works found their way into the midtown repertoire and into commercial recordings—sometimes even into new editions.

Through the preparation of these memorable concerts, the curator of musical instruments learned a great deal about the practice of performance in various periods of music. So did the performers, exposed to the difficult old instruments. The tone colors of the early compositions can be produced only by the ancient instruments themselves. No modern violin with metal strings, designed to fill Carnegie Hall, can reproduce adequately the fine, silvery timbre of a consort of viols, no pianoforte the sharp bleating of a pair of regals, and no metallic orchestral flute the mellow wooden sound of a recorder. And if the occasion of a museum concert suggests a comparison of music with the visual arts, we must remember how much more critically today's art connoisseur views the tone values of old paintings than the modern listener considers instrumental timbre in old music. In many instances, modern methods in the restoration of painting have recaptured the original intensity of color. Not so in music; in most public performances of music written before Johann Sebastian Bach's time, modern instruments are still substituted for the original ones, falsifying the tonal values.

If old instruments in playing condition to provide the true timbre are rare, so are players for them. Professional players of modern string and wind instruments, soloists as well as members of orchestras, are naturally

**FIGURE 20**
The curator demonstrating a hurdy-gurdy to visitors, 1942
reluctant to abandon their accustomed tools. As a rule, they have crowded schedules that allow them little time for experiments, and they tend to be a bit impatient with instruments that have been replaced by "better" ones, easier for lip and fingers and more pleasing to the modern ear. Also, if they adapt themselves thoroughly to the embouchure and fingerholes, the softer bows and thinner strings and flatter bridges of the old instruments, they endanger their "modern" technique. It was on this basis that a most rewarding cooperation between the Yale Collegium Musicum and the Museum developed. Out of its rich collections of ancient instruments, the Museum provided the ones needed, repairing and preparing them for rehearsal and performance. The student members of the Collegium devoted themselves to learning the blowing and fingering methods of bygone days. And if occasionally an old, unwieldy cornetto was a little out of pitch, it at least gave the right timbre. This role of our collection as a gold mine of information for student performers of old music was, of course, precisely in the spirit in which Mrs. Brown had created it.

Some of these concerts employed Renaissance and Baroque ensembles of as many as twenty-five instruments; unforgettable was the hypnotic combination of heterogeneous sounds produced from the small plucked harps, vielles, and rebecs, from the majestic trombone, the mellow cornetto, the reedy shawm, cromorne, and regals. Even the tromba marina was used. Besides conducting, Paul Hindemith, a noted viola player, bowed, plucked, or blew many instruments in the small ensembles that regularly formed part of these concerts.

Many of these performances were recorded on discs or tape for educational use in the Museum and as a cornerstone for a future Musée du Timbre, in which our instruments would be supplemented by samples of their true voices.

Still another example of reconstruction of timbre should be mentioned. One of the priceless treasures of the Crosby Brown Collection, the gravicembalo col piano e forte built in 1721 in Florence by Bartolomeo Cristofori, the inventor of the pianoforte, was brought into playing condition. When fitted with the appropriate thin harpsichord strings, this first pianoforte developed a surprising tone, warm like a violoncello in the bass region and silvery in the higher ranges. Sonatas by Lodovico Giustini di Pistoia, in all probability the first compositions expressly written for the pianoforte, were played on it by Mieczyslaw Horszowski. It may be regarded as a worthy homage to the ingenious inventor of this instrument that its reborn voice came home again to Florence, across the Atlantic, when a tape recording of the Museum's performance was broadcast by the Terzo Programma of the Radio Italiano to many places in Europe.

To explain the rare and early music performed, evening lectures preceding the performances were given by the curator, who also wrote extensive program notes for each concert. Among the gratifying results of these concerts were a rapid increase in Museum membership and a decision to replace the old lecture hall with a modern and acoustically superior concert hall, the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium.

Apart from the concerts, the Department of Musical Instruments has provided, since the early 1940s, instruction in the history of instruments on all levels, through formal evening lectures and through guided tours and demonstrations for children (Figure 20), casual visitors, and specialized groups such as war veterans and blind people. This last group proved particularly sensitive to the sound of the instruments, which they were permitted to touch in order to ascertain shape and function.

Time has indeed worked for our collection. Mrs. Crosby Brown would be gratified if she could watch the ever growing public that not only draws information and pleasure from her instruments and admires the countless colorful shapes of these tools of music of the past and from far lands, but also learns to listen to their voices. For it is their specific sounds that transport us into past periods of sacred and secular music. In all of these regards, the Crosby Brown Collection fulfills today its educational mission, contributing its share as an important part of a temple of the arts and as an indispensable complement to the Museum's manifold treasures in the visual arts.

The crowning climax has now been provided by the assignment of new galleries in the Morgan Wing. This development was made possible through a generous grant from Clara Mertens, in memory of her husband, André Mertens. These galleries will accommodate the most important instruments from the Crosby Brown Collection and other more recent donations, with three galleries devoted to European objects and three to
those of other continents. This will be the first time in many years that the beautiful American Indian instruments, and others from India and Oceania, will be accessible to visitors. Audio equipment will enable the visitor to hear the voices of instruments that have been silent for generations. Thus, the great exhibitions of art treasures during the Museum's centennial year will be appropriately supplemented by the long-awaited permanent display of a large part of the Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments of All Nations.