

Renowned as an internationally touring concert musician for over 50 years, Dennis James (Lecturer in Music at Rutgers University, NJ) is a graduate of Indiana University with a Masters degree in organ performance. James has performed solo recitals and appeared with ensembles in concert halls throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Each of his exotic and delicate instruments in his touring Musica Curiosa collection enjoyed an initial fame and heyday lasting for some nearly one hundred years, but each fell in turn to disuse and then nearly total obscurity. James will perform music written or transcribed especially for this presentation's selection of unusual instruments by such composers as Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven and many others. His performance of a Beethoven Sonata (WoO 51) that was composed expressly to be played on an Orphika will most likely be a US premier of this music.

The clavichord is a European stringed keyboard instrument that was very popular from the 16th century to the 18th century, mainly flourishing in German-speaking lands, Scandinavia and the Iberian Peninsula in the latter part of this period. It had fallen out of use by 1850. The clavichord produces sound by striking brass or iron strings with small metal blades called tangents. Vibrations are transmitted through the bridge(s) to the soundboard. Dennis James built his touring instrument in reproduction of a 1784 Clavichord design by Christian Gottlob Hubert.



The ottavino spinetto, an octave spinet harpsichord, was an eminently portable keyboard instrument. Dennis James built a copy of an original spinettina, dated around 1595, that is on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The museum allowed a close inspection of the original instrument from which were prepared detailed working drawings.

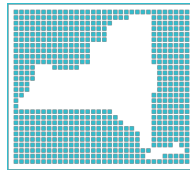
The orphika, developed in 1791, combines the musical characteristics and portability of the lute with the ease of playing and tuning stability of keyboard instruments and could be placed on a table or played in its case, which was provided with screw-on legs. The orphika was described as "like a theorbo and the lute, a bass instrument . . . According to its nature, it is made for calm and gentle emotions - made for the night, for friendship, for love." In 1999 Dennis James acquired a Viennese orphika made by Maximilian Haidinger, and had it restored at the Florence workshop of fortepiano restoration expert Donatella Di Giampietro.



A dedicated and imaginative devotee of music history and authentic performance practices, James developed a special interest in forgotten musical instruments in the early 1970s. The beauty and mystery of their intriguing music is now being revived internationally by his enchanting performances and intriguing lecture presentations. Recordings are now available on compact disc and cassette releases by the SONY CLASSICAL, French ADDA, Belgian SYRINX, English HYPERION and American GLASS MUSIC labels as well as on the ELEKTRA label accompanying popular vocalists Linda Ronstadt, Emmy Lou Harris and Dolly Parton.

This program is handicapped accessible, free, and open to the public. Please join us for this most interesting, educational, and entertaining program by world - renowned musician Dennis James.

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