Historic & Folkloric MUSICIANS
STORYTELLERS
INSTRUMENT MAKERS

John Bromka
Sondra Bromka

www.bellsandmotley.com

Bells & Motley

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Our Renaissance Faire “Instrumentarium” -
where we present Concerts, Musical Theater Performances, teach historic dances

ARS LONGA
VITA BREVIS EST

Harp
Lute
Hammer Dulcimer
Hurdy Gurdy
Recorders & Whistles
Assorted Reeds
Fiddles & Viols
Nyckelharpa
Cittern
Pipe & Tabor
Ttun ttun
Tromba Marina
Asst’d Bagpipes
BELLS & MOTLEY ARE MAKING MUSICAL HISTORY
MUSICAL STORYTELLING ~ AROUND THE WORLD, ACROSS TIME

• “15 Miles on the Erie Canal” Sing-along Folk Operetta – heritage instruments, music, tall tales! “Music Along the Canal” intro & other options available

• “The Boy Who Went to Visit the North Wind” Traditional Tale of a heroic boy
  “Who Has Heard the Wind” wind instruments of long ago ~ DOUBLE TREASURE!

• “Stone Soup & the Hurdy Gurdy Man” story & concert ~ DOUBLE TREASURE!

• “The Ant & the Grasshopper” Aesop’s Fabled Tale of Dreaming & Doing

• “Bawshou and the Dragon” Chinese Pageant Authentic instruments, many options for participation - Dragon Mask-Making, Dragon Dancing, more

WITH CONCERTS FOR ALL AGES ~ MANY SPECIAL THEMES, HOLIDAYS & SEASONS

• “Music & Instruments of Long Ago & Far Away”

• “Music, World Instruments, and the Science of Sound” unique instrument inventions

• “Sculpted Sound: From Wood to Art to Music” Concert/Historic Art Images

MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROJECTS ~

• Renaissance & Medieval Arts: Music, Dance, Theater, Art

• Colonial Conviviality Early American music, dance, cultural celebrations

• Learn Historic Dances choose NYS Heritage, Renaissance, Victorian, more…

• Historic Book Arts: Illumination, Binding, Styling, and more

• Musical Instrument making
Concert: “From Art to Wood to Music: Sculpted Sound”
One of our most popular programs for Summer 2018: “MUSIC, WORLD INSTRUMENTS, and the SCIENCE OF SOUND”
Our donkey head, made from willow wicker by Sondra decades ago, has found its way into at least 4 original plays and many bagpipe parades.

Sondra’s university degree is in Art. Ed.

Making reeds for rare instruments, making quill pens from turkey feathers, from scratch. A skill Sondra picked up as a child growing up next to a turkey farm….

Backyard projects:: hides for parchment, for illuminations as well as drum heads.

Talk about STEAM!
Music and Instrument Mentoring: Making Music Accessible

Frequently heard from adults: “I always wanted to play the …”

Children are rarely shy!
One of our many Participatory Musical Storytelling shows

“THE ANT & THE GRASSHOPPER”

Aesop’s famous tale of Dreaming & Doing

Sondra is “Queen Isabelle” of the Ants, famous for working hard!

“Grasshopper John” leads with his giant Tromba Marina, which he built for this show!

our “Butterfly Dancers”

Percussion & Fiddlers
The Tromba Marina – played by “Jumping Jupiter Grasshopper” (also our Chinese Dragon in our “Bawshou & The Dragon” Musical Storytelling)
A hungry traveler arrives…what do you do if you have no food to share?

But he brings a magic stone, a magic pepper grinder, and a great song to sing with us!
Audience members are always delighted to find they have roles in our improvisatory musical Christmas pageant. Whether our Wisemen and Donkey be children or adults, their off-the-cuff performances are always memorable and hilarious!
"Music Along the Canal" Multicultural Heritage Concert

NYS Traditional Music, Instruments, Dances

offered as an Interactive Stand-alone,
or as an introduction to our Erie Canal play

Above:
How do you play IRISH BODHRAN?
Sondra is showing children how to use pencils as “tippers”
and notebooks as drums
to learn the secrets of playing;
As John plays traditional Irish-style bagpipes

Right:
HAMMERED DULCIMER &
HURDY GURDY- how do they work?
"15 MILES ON THE ERIE CANAL" - our participatory Folk Operetta features an entirely different set of 19th c. NYS Instruments! Music, dance workshops & tall tale writing options

We modeled our original staged operetta after entertainments one might have enjoyed at the local opera houses of the mid-19th c. canal era. A weaving of Tall Tales, sing-alongs, and cameo roles for the audience to fully engage, the show features favorite traditional American instruments in our collection: fiddle, banjo, hammered dulcimer, squeezeboxes, boat horn, hurdy gurdy...
"15 MILES ON THE ERIE CANAL"
Our Historic Folk Operetta Performance
- Each & every audience makes it different!

A highly participatory performance program, there are plenty of opportunities for audience singing, movement, and action.
A choice cameo role: being selected to play the part of our trusty mule and hero, Sal
Children wrote & performed four original Tall Tales as part of the finale production.
Another unique expanded production:

Children become an even larger part of the our Erie Canal performance

A Boy’s Choir!
A Pennywhistle Orchestra!
“Bawshou & The Dragon” Pageant, community performance at Aurora Opera House

Sondra directs the Gong to open the Show. Children ceremoniously sound gong to announce every new scene, and are featured in the “multi-gong choir”

The Golden Phoenix bird flies and stays

Ghost Village Lantern Dancers arriving while Sondra plays Chinese guzheng, John pip’a
More scenes from “Bawshou & The Dragon” at the Aurora Opera House
But the River is too wide… it cannot be crossed!

John’s Tromba Marina Roars the Dragon awake
The original script is based on a beloved Chinese Folktale. Our play was commissioned by Springfield Art Museum, to accompany an exhibit of Chinese art, and includes traditional music on pip’a, guzheng, erhu, and a multi-gong choir.
In “Bawshou & The Dragon” pre-performance Mask and Lantern Making Workshops at Libraries, children create the tools that allow them to become part of the performance - as the sinuous dancing dragon
- as ghost village lantern dancers
- ceremonial gong players
- sound effects, percussionists, and more

preparing for our pageant
“Bawshou” lantern dancers prepare for their “Ghost Village” scene preparing for our pageant
As with all our history residencies, students made all their own costumes from common items, based on what they saw in period art documents.

**CHANTICLEER**

Chanticleer’s Proclamation

The Apparition “Dream Team”

Meet Our Narrator: Geoffrey Chaucer

4th Gr. Rebecca discovers that she dearly loves learning to speak many of her lines in Middle English. She surprises us all by setting Chaucer’s famous Prologue to music. As Narrator, she was also responsible for prompting, timing, and cuing the whole performance team.

Reynard the Fox

Our Trusty Farm Dog

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Medieval Musical Theater: “CARMINA BURANA”

“O Fortuna”
The ever-turning wheel of fortune, theme for a featured 14th song, eagerly sung by middle school students in Latin

Sondra and John have been going back to original 14th c. musical sources to take a fresh look, in their development of a new, authentically medieval-style musical theater piece for small ensemble of period instruments and voices, intended for performance by the artists in conjunction with school and/or community residencies...with a special eye towards enticing students to learn languages. They have scripted several other projects well-ornamented with languages other than English, such as “Le Roman de Renart” (Tale of Reynard the Fox).
Part of the Arthurian Cycle. A great many early versions of the Tale of Tristan and Iseult have come down to us from the 12th century, from the time of the troubadours, and of the French Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine. The origins of the story are actually much older, harkening back to legends of the 6th century, in which Tristan, Cornwall, and Brittany all play a part. This telling is richly enhanced with period music on the artists' historic instruments.
…Projects in Belgian schools, following the students through 3 consecutive years of Flemish Renaissance programs and research at Brussels Museum renowned collection of historic musical instruments
Our 1st of 2 Trips to Turkey
“The Boy Who Went to Visit the North Wind” Performance, Istanbul

Our ideas towards becoming better musicians, to inform our Medieval music “from the source,” and also to learn about Medieval History from a broader perspective than the traditional “Western European” approach, initiated an ongoing cultural exchange with this school in Istanbul.
Cultural exchange in Turkey, our 2nd Trip
“Grand Feast & Ball in Honor of Queen Elizabeth I,” with a nod to Wm. Shakespeare

Our Turkish students, their Costume, arts projects, and environment
We hope that you have enjoyed following us through our journey in the arts, cultural history, and all of their wonderful possibilities. Thank you for exploring. Custom programs always welcome!

~ Sondra and John Bromka

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