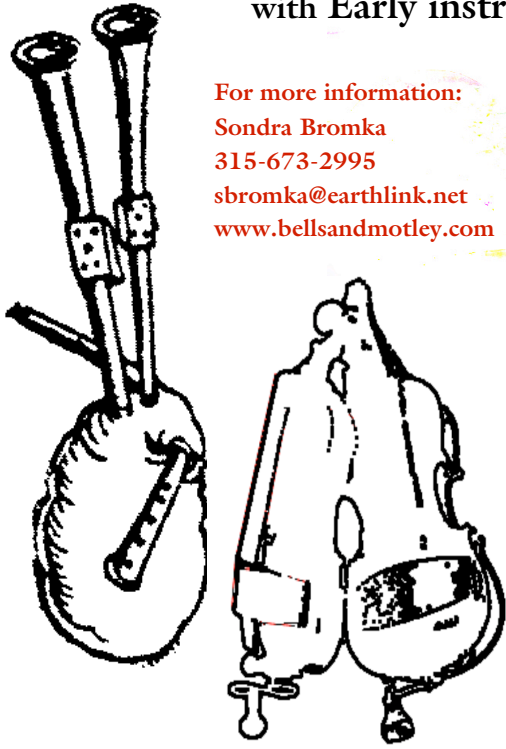


# Bells & Motley Olden Music in Concert presenting “of Bards, Bagpipes, & Rhymers”

A Concert of Historic Music, Rare & Rustic,  
with Early instruments, Evocative music, Elegant costumes



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A Feast for Eyes & Ears: Bells & Motley’s “EARLY INSTRUMENTARIUM”



This versatile and knowledgeable duo performs on a veritable salmagundi of instruments: sundry bagpipes, hurdy gurdy, harps, hammered dulcimer, early fiddles, assorted winds and reeds, and more. These seasoned performers offer a spirited performance of the music of bygone days --- from evocative songs of troubadour poets and Celtic bards, to rambunctious dance tunes of village pipers and lusty rustic merrymakers.

This exciting and unusual crossover concert will have broad appeal for audiences both young and old, for musical scholars, country music lovers, and even “rockers” --- All are drawn by the sights and sounds of the instruments as they weave a continuous thread of ideas and emotions, moving through the dramatic stories told in ballads, traveling into the mists of sublime musical airs, and tapping to the lively rustic traditional dance rhythms, all roots of our own American musical heritage.

Performers, artists-in-education, avid historians, and traditional storytellers, the Bromkas’ approach to early music is broad, versatile, and informed. Of their huge Instrumentarium, some of their historic stringed instruments, such as the the hurdy gurdy (an early French keyboard fiddle) cittern (an octave mandolin), and early fiddles, are crafted by the artists themselves. Others, like the Scandinavian nyckelharpa, Breton veuze bagpipe and Catalan Spanish flaviolle, are by traditional makers who Sondra and John met in their countries of origin. Among these instruments are those that proved to have exceeding staying power with immigrants to America, and are now firmly entrenched in our own traditions, such as squeezebox, dulcimer, and Scottish and Irish bagpipes, Spanish guitar, and fiddle.

**DANCE** is always an option with Bells & Motley, who frequently present a double bill of **Concert + Dance**. Sondra is an expert teacher, and can bring together your group into real camaraderie as they enjoy learning a historic dance or two, or an entire evening’s worth, translating the compelling rhythms of John’s live music into the patter of footsteps. The artists are equally adept at ---

Renaissance, Traditional French, British Isles, and American Heritage Music and Dance Traditions

## ARTIST INFORMATION

Bells & Motley Consort brings an innovative and vibrant concert presence to the field of early and traditional musical performance. In their crossover program “**Bards, Bagpipes, & Rhymers,**” musicians Sondra & John Bromka begin by unraveling threads of evocative historic musics... weaving in and out of it rustic folk traditions, still heard even today in the remote corners of France, Germany, and the British Isles, and became the cornerstones of our American music and dance traditions. Side by side, these musical selections enrich each other to paint vivid living pictures that evoke the boisterous village festivals, the soulful shepherds’ plaints, the passionate love songs of noble troubadours, and richly embroidered mystical ballads that connected people of all levels of society.

The bridging of culture, literature, history, and community tradition has been the heart of the Bromkas’ efforts since they began their collaboration, now over 25 years in duration. Multi-faceted performers, Sondra and John are accomplished musicians, playwrights, storytellers. They are also dance historians, versatile and skilled visual artists, early instrument builders, and even former teachers. This combination of talents makes their programs resonate with the authenticity and energy of living history, attracting audiences of all ages, experiences, and interests.

Bells & Motley are most known for their uncommon instrumentation, and for this presentation they perform on a diverse collection of historic and folk instruments. You'll hear harps, lute, early keyed fiddles & nyckelharpa, recorders, crumhorns, various French & English bagpipes, hurdy gurdy, and much more. The hurdy gurdy (one of several historic instruments built by Mr. Bromka) is a sort of keyboard fiddle enhanced with resonant drones, invented way back in 10<sup>th</sup> century France, and still important across Europe today. Among the instrumentation the Bromkas use are one-of-a-kind copies that have not survived the ages, not to be found even in museums, but rather are careful reconstructions of images in the paintings, illuminations and sculptures the Bromkas seek out in their annual research pilgrimages to Europe.

## MORE ABOUT THE PERFORMERS, SONDRA & JOHN BROMKA

Every May, Sondra and John Bromka embark on a month-long musical performance, teaching, research, and rejuvenation pilgrimage to Western and Eastern Europe. In addition to their own presentations, their travels bring opportunities for advanced studies in historic music, dance, traditional arts, and instrument building from international specialists...an excellent trade! Through these learning adventures, Sondra and John gain resources as well as inspiration, and a broad-based multicultural overview that allows them to contribute valuable insights and techniques to their field.

This ongoing exploration has garnered substantial fruits in their instrument, art, photo, and music collection --- a musicologists’ paradise. The artists use it throughout the school year to illuminate their arts-in-education integrated humanities programs. As performers, teachers, and workshop leaders, they maintain an active schedule in schools and communities throughout their home state of New York, the Northeast, and beyond.

## INSTRUMENTS PLAYED, A PARTIAL LIST:

### Medieval Instruments, Renaissance

Both artists: recorders; crumhorns; voice; percussion

Sondra’s specialties: Medieval wire, gut, and silk strung harps; shawms and early oboes, percussion

John: lute; hurdy gurdy; Medieval bagpipes; medieval fiddles; Medieval keyed fiddle

### Traditional Celtic, French, European, and American Folk

Both artists: pennywhistles; 3-holed pipes (English, French, Spanish styles); international percussion

Sondra’s specialties: harps; hammered dulcimer; early button accordions; Breton bombarde, folkloric double reeds

John’s specialties: guitar; fiddle; banjo; French-style hurdy gurdy; cittern; mandolin; Swedish nyckelharpa; assorted bagpipes (Northumbrian Scottish, French...)

### Publications & Recordings:

- “**Faires & Festivals-Medieval & Renaissance: How to Have a Successful Event**” – A Guidebook for teachers and communities hosting celebratory events
- “**Branslez!: An Array of Court & Country Dance Music 1450-1750**”
- “**Seasons and Lovers**” *A Cycle of magical traditional Musics that bring the seasons into alignment*
- “**Wassail! A Bells & Motley Christmas**” *Early music for the Yuletide Season*
- “**Popular Music of Our Grand Erie Canal**” *A collection of our favorite songs & tunes, with historic instrument*

## Living History Concerts and Special Events at Historic Sites and Museums

### *HISTORIC MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, DANCE, & HOLIDAY TRADITIONS*

Bells & Motley is a New York State musical duo bringing historic music, dance, theatre, and pageantry to life at Historic Sites and Museums across the northeast. We are known for programs that are warm and interactive, with broad appeal to audiences of all ages. From rustic & robust music performed on early bagpipes, hurdy gurdy, and button accordion, to more sophisticated settings on lute, harp, recorders, fiddles, and more... audiences delight to discover that historic music is most definitely not too esoteric for modern ears!

In addition to concerts, we offer participatory Erie Canal Operettas, Wassailing Plays, and traditional storytelling enhanced by live music, and representing a variety of early immigrant cultures. Hands-down, our most favorite places to perform are New York State's Historic Sites (and we especially enjoy designing and implementing project partnerships with sites and museums.)

#### *Examples of past programs and partnerships:*

**JOHNSON HALL STATE HISTORIC SITE** In 2001, Bells & Motley first teamed up with Wanda Burch of Johnson Hall to offer a pairing of performances with an eye towards attracting new audiences and appreciators of history. First, on Saturday afternoon in the neighboring village of Glen, the Bromkas performed "Who Has Heard the Wind," a family program of traditional storytelling. The story sought to introduce young people to "times long ago" and was accompanied by a mini-concert on historic wind instruments (recorders, gemshorns, crumhorns, bagpipes...) On Sunday afternoon, the audience was invited back to hear the Bromkas at Johnson Hall for a concert entitled "of Bards, Bagpipes, & Rhymers," with friends and relatives in tow! Sondra and John are very excited by that site's Colonial connections, replete with unique and relevant bits of history, such as Sir William Johnson and his desire to crown his barony to perfection by importing a blind Irish Harper. Since that first year, the Bromkas have returned to Johnson Hall for a variety of programs, including teaching historic dances to folks on the lawn, and "St. John's Day" Christmas concerts, and Sondra's Celtic Harp always feels very much at home.

**OLANA's** Jim Ryan first invited the Bromkas to perform at Olana back in 1990. Some of you might recognize Frederick Church's famous stairwell stage as the photograph that graces "Wassail!" (the artists' CD of historic Christmas music.) As visual artists themselves, Sondra and John feel very much at home with Church's studied realization of color and exotic decorative motifs, with his ideas and information gained through extensive travels, and the inspiration brought by the glories of nature. The views of early winter sunsets over the Hudson are not to be missed. Memories of past performances on the stairwell stage, next to the life-sized white marble sculpture of reclining Dawn, all bathed in the stained-glass window's golden light make John and Sondra eagerly await their performances at the annual Christmas Open House! Bells & Motley have provided music at Olana's Victorian Picnic concerts on the lawn in summer time, and in mid-winter, John has presided at holiday revels for several years running in the guise of a Victorian Father Christmas, and a participatory traditional English Mummers' Wassailing Play for children.

**LORENZO STATE HISTORIC SITE** is Sondra and John's own local site. For over 20 years, music by Bells & Motley Consort has been an annual holiday tradition at Lorenzo's Candlelight Christmas, and they feel honored to perform at their "second home" mansion estate. The duo holds court in the wonderful upstairs hall library, receiving enthusiastic guests, and leading impromptu sing-alongs that resonate through the entire house. Faithful visitors return year after year, acknowledging that it would not be Christmas without it! The Bromkas have also enjoyed playing for summer weddings in the extensive historic gardens. Lorenzo has also worked in partnership with the Bromkas on notable special projects over the years. Such was the famous **Jane Austen Mid-Winter Ball**. Working closely with site manager Russ Grills and local Cazenovia College, Sondra and John taught a series of dance workshops that brought in all manner of folks-- young, old, beginners, and more experienced -- to learn the steps of the English Country Dances that were popular in America during Jane's time, and which would have been enjoyed at Lorenzo's own household gatherings. The culminating gala ball was a sold-out success, and wouldn't you know, host Russ himself cut a fine figure as the most accomplished of dancers. The unique and memorable project further enriched the community by extending the Lorenzo/Bromka partnership to include Cazenovia's college, schools, library, historic Lincklaen House, merchants' organization, and the village Winterfest Celebration.

## **OUR PAST PERFORMANCE VENUES HAVE INCLUDED:**

### **HISTORIC SITES**

**Ste Marie Among the Iroquois "Never to Forget" photo exhibit**, with lecture, plus performances and workshops of French music and dance in the New World

**French Azilum, PA**

**Herkimer Home**

**Clermont**

**Madison Historic Society "Cottage Lawn" Living History Faire**

**1890 House, Cortland, Celtic Christmas Open House**

**Albany 1st Nite: Celebration of Historic New Years**

**Onondaga Historical Museum - Onondaga History Festival**

**Fenimore House - teacher workshops**

### **HISTORY MUSEUMS**

**Albany Institute of History and Art**

**New York State Museum "15 Years on the Erie Canal"** an original musical theater performance piece, ours was the first of its kind, and boasts all manner of rare and exciting period instruments

**Erie Canal Village, Rome New York**

**Erie Canal Museum, Syracuse "Bells & Motley's Merry Tunes for Early America & Old England"**

**Springfield Museums "Founders' Day Living History Celebration" on the Quad**

**Zadock Pratt Museum "100th Birthday Celebration"**

### **ART MUSEUMS**

**Springfield GWV Art Museums**, commissioned "Bawshou" traditional Chinese musical piece to accompany exhibit; also, hosted Renaissance Workshops Day in music, art, dance, costume making

**The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls** - workshops in Renaissance music, dance, historic art-as- document for student groups. Summer camp labyrinth building residency and installation

**Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center "Making Music Together"** bringing an instrument to play;

Christmas Mummies' Play and Pageant

**Roberson Museum of Art, Binghamton**

**Johnson Art Museum, Cornell University**

**Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse**

**Parish Art Museum, Southampton NY**, Children's summer program workshops and performances

## **Exciting New PARTNERSHIP PROJECT PLANNED FOR 2006:**

**Sackets Harbor Battlefield Site "Canadian-American Day"** featuring French traditional music, dance instruction, and even a French barbeque in July.