

HEAR HERE

TIM BROOKES discovers that music is sometimes a matter of **SIGHT AND SOUND**.



JOB SHARE

EVEN THE MOST organized among us procrastinate when it comes to chores. When the work piles up, it can take days to get things done.

With a little bit of planning and the help of Chorebuster, you can easily manage and delegate housework week by week. Chorebuster offers a Web-based program for organizing tasks. Users enter in their chores and the number of people in the household, and the program generates a schedule that is shared evenly among everyone.

Particularly helpful is the chore rating, which allows you to rate the level of difficulty. Users can also exclude people from doing certain tasks, and edit chores and manage people at any time. The program sends a schedule by email each week, so there's no need to log in. There is a small monthly fee, but first-time users can try **chorebuster.net** one month for free.

—Amanda Young

THE BACK ROOM of a small house perched on a hillside overlooking Los Angeles is the home of perhaps the most curious collection of musical instruments in America: the Miner Museum of Vintage, Exotic, and Just Plain Unusual Musical Instruments.

There's a Burmese boat-harp, and a chitarrone, which looks like the result of the happy marriage of a

lute and a garden rake, as well as various African gourd instruments. By far the most peculiar instruments, though, are American.

America is a nation of inventors and tinkerers, so it may not be surprising that musical instruments should have been the subject of constant experiment. What is surprising is the outcome of those experiments: mandolins as big as double basses and banjos ranging from miniature to elephantine.

But the excesses of scale aren't as strange as the mutants. Case after glass case is full of instruments that look like the aftermath of genetic experimentation. Harp-lutes, the banjeaurine, the banjolin, and four-string guitars made to be played by banjo players. No combination is too eccentric, too optimistic.

And no combination is as eccentric as the harp-guitar, an instrument that was first crossbred in 19th-century Europe but once on the shores of this country proliferated. The harp-guitar combines a guitar body and fingerboard with an arch strung with harp strings, but this construct isn't the most peculiar.

The most amazing harp variations went not larger, but smaller, mounting additional harp strings on mandolins and even ukuleles. The museum contains a tiny

uke with two extra harp strings mounted on each of two arms extending from each side of the fingerboard. It looks like a baby hammerhead shark.

The 200-plus instruments in the Miner Museum can be ogled by appointment. You can also hear these bizarre instruments in action upon ordering one of museum owner Gregg Miner's two-CD Christmas song collections, possibly the only recordings ever made with arch-top guitar, autoharp, ukelin, tremoloa, harp-mandolin, marxophone, and harp-zither. ★

TIM BROOKES is an ATTACHÉ contributing editor. His latest book is *Guitar: An American Life* (Grove Atlantic Press).

THE TICKET

Email gregg@minermusic.com to set up a visit. Go to minermusic.com for a look at a few of his instruments.

