

Recorder Reporter

Newsletter of two chapters of the American Recorder Society (ARS),

Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

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Louise Austin, 1930 – 2016

Everybody knew Louise.

It hardly seems necessary then to write about her here in these pages, except to honor her at her unexpected death from a heart attack on September 26. But we honor her here because everybody loved Louise, too.

Unexpected, indeed! Louise Austin was 86. She had retired as a piano tuner four years earlier; we all figured our vibrant friend would still be directing workshops and teaching students and goofing off at Whitewater for another 30 or 40 years or so. When news of her death was announced, a natural thought was—wait, what? That can't be right. Louise?

“She was a real character, truly one-of-a-kind,” Louise’s daughter Lynn Armentrout said. “Vivacious, fun-loving, eccentric, always up for an adventure. And there was no hat too silly or outrageous for her to wear.”



Louise Austin and Patrick O’Malley, at Whitewater

Louise Faville started her performing career in 1947 as a teenager on a local Milwaukee TV station, in a five-minute a spot called “Let’s Look at Louise.” She left Beloit College at age 19 to join the Hormel Girls. This group of musicians, all women, danced, sang and played instruments all over the United States in the years after World War II, promoting Hormel products—Spam. Louise had a solo spot with a Beatrice Kaye vocal, “At the Rodeo,” and another called “Tico, Tico” by Mickey Katz and the Kosherjammers. She danced in the Pink Police Gazette, sang in the chorus, served as an announcer, and worked as a music copyist for the Hormel Girls. Before the Hormel Girls disbanded in 1953, they had grown to 60 members, and traveled

across the country in a fleet of 40 matching white Chevrolets. It was a tough travel schedule for the “Hormelovlies,” but many of them were military veterans, known both for their discipline and for their energy. Louise fit right in.

Louise married the arranger for the Hormel Girls and they had three daughters together. Her responsibilities as a young mother did not keep her from performing regularly in community theater and a lot else besides.

Louise started studying the recorder in 1965. She founded the Oak Park Recorder School in 1976 and the Early Music Festival in 1978, and she directed the School until 1983 and the Festival until 2002, now at the University of Wisconsin/Whitewater. She served for a number of years on the board of the American Recorder Society and provided music reviews for *American Recorder* magazine. Last April 30 she directed a workshop for the Milwaukee Area Recorder Society, “Starship Louise,” at Lake Delavan Lodge in Delavan, Wisconsin. Until her death Louise taught and performed on recorder, taught Renaissance dance, and served as the music director of the Milwaukee Area Recorder Society. Louise’s many performance groups included the Camarata Trio, King Cole and his Pipers, Chicago Baroque Ensemble, the Broderie Consort, and, most recently, the Genera Consort.

Louise taught the stars, or future stars. John Langfeld first took lessons from Louise on recorder. So did Tom Zajac, then Nancy VanBrundt. Dave Fitzgerald moved beyond tenor fingering at Louise’s encouragement. Most of us who still hang out at Pilgrim Congregational in Oak Park on Tuesday nights, more than 40 years after she started the School there, benefited from Louise Austin’s skillful teaching and leadership again and again. In fact, even though Louise moved from Oak Park back to Lake Mills, Wisconsin in 1983, she was mentioned in this newsletter—the newsletter for the *Chicago* chapter of the American Recorder Society—over 40 times in the last 10 years or so.

She loved to explore the world, as her daughter put it. She was determined to visit all 50 states, though in her early adult years money was tight and responsibilities looming. In 1969, still new to recorder, she decided to attend a recorder workshop in Massachusetts, so she drove across the northeast with two of her daughters and pregnant with

her son Greg. "Mom's maternity outfit was a pair of Osh Kosh B'gosh overalls," daughter Lynn recalls. "She really wowed the Provincetown hippie scene, this 39-year old pregnant camper in the denim overalls." Two years later, determined to see California, she drove for a month with her 18-month-old son and "three surly teenaged daughters" to the Pacific coast and back.

At 80 Louise visited a small mountain village in Mexico to see her granddaughter. Two years later found her frolicking in the Pacific in Hawaii while her daughter Lynn rested on the beach. They had just arrived and were tired from the long flight, or at least, Lynn was. At 84 she traveled with her daughter again, this time on a safari in Tanzania.



Louise directing the first meeting of the Chicago Chapter at Covenant Presbyterian Church, September 2009

"She was always unconventional," Lynn said. "She didn't dress or act like any of the other mothers I knew in 1950s and '60s Oak Park. She dressed like the tomboy she always was and acted like the eccentric character she always was." Eccentric enough to irritate her suburban neighbors, perhaps. They wanted their grass to look nice. Louise decorated her front yard with a fish pond and waterfalls, and built a bridge on the front sidewalk.

With a young family money was always short, so rather than call handymen, Louise fixed the house herself. Other women liked to shop on Michigan Avenue; Louise got a glint in her eye when she had a chance to shop at the hardware store. That's where she learned home improvement, from talking with the hardware staff, and eventually became so skilled herself she would trade plumbing services for classes for her daughters at the Stone-Camryn School of Ballet. Along the way Louise worked as a clown, a cab driver, managing extras in the Alfred Hitchcock film *North by Northwest* (Cary Grant helped her on with her coat), as a hearing aid assistant,

swimming instructor, choreographer, dance instructor, and much more. To supplement her income late in life, she learned to tune pianos in 1980, when she was 50 years old. This "second" career lasted for 32 years.

Louise Austin is survived by her brother, John Faville, four children, Dale Armentrout, Lynn Armentrout, Jill Armentrout and Gregory Faville Austin, seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. And too many friends to count.

"Louise was my first private recorder teacher, and a very good one," Nancy VanBrundt said. Always kind and chatty, I learned a lot from her and that love for playing has stayed with me more than 30 years. Rest easy, old friend. We will always remember your joyous energy and laugh."



Louise in the 1970s



At the ARS Festival in St. Louis, August 2009

Chicago Chapter News

It was a beautiful day for the October meeting of the Chicago Chapter with temperatures in the 70s! Lisette Kielson directed with music that represented the *pastiche* genre. *Pasticcio*, or *pastiche*, are works that are loose adaptions of existing works. For example, we worked on *The Capriol Suite*, a set of dances composed by Peter Warlock. It was based on tunes in *Thoinot Arbeau's Orchésographie*, a manual of Renaissance dances.

We also worked on Dennis Bloodworth's *Suite Pastiche* (1998). This is a fun contemporary dance suite that uses well known forms as its basis. Movement titles such as Latin American Rondo, Blues, Charleston and Quickstep indicate the dances. Lisette had us working on the music in parts. We worked on rhythms and getting the groups playing together in the trickier sections. This was also done to prepare us to play selected movements at the annual Yuletide concert in December.

We could use a few members to bring food and drinks for our January and March meetings, plus drinks for April. Our next meeting is on Sunday, November 20, with Andrew Schultze directing.

Yuletide Concert

Our annual Yuletide Concert approaches on December 18. Please let Mark Dawson or Ben Eisenstein know if you would like to perform, and provide the name of the pieces, the composer, and the names of the members of your group. Please plan to bring food or drink to share. You can reach Mark at msjddawson@sbcglobal.net or call him at 773-334-6376.

West Suburban Early Music Society

The WSEMS October meeting once again had Darleen Kay leading us. We started with *Aequale* by Anton Bruckner. This piece is excellent for practicing tuning and listening to group chords while adjusting your own tuning. Thanks, Dan, for bringing and introducing this piece to us! Then we played *Selenger's Round* by William Byrd, arranged for recorders by F.H. Mountney & Walter Bergmann. This arrangement was longer and more complex than many other versions I've played over the years. As a result it was rich and more interesting.

There was a Swain full faire by John Barrett from the *Musical Miscellany* (circa 1730), adapted for recorders by E. Frost Hurd; from the same time period we also played *Lesbia's Cruelty* by George Vanorugne adapted for recorders by E. Frost Hurd. And some 60's contemporary music arranged for recorders by Darleen Kay included "My Sin" and "A Taste of Honey."

Our meetings on November 13 and December 11 will be led ably by Nancy Chabala. We'll be concentrating on playing some winter/holiday seasonal music for both of these months. Come join us for chords and camaraderie!—*Joanne Miller*



The Pippins 20th anniversary concert, October 23



Music Coming Up

The Early Music ensemble **Rook** plays at Morton Arboretum in Lisle on Sunday, January 8 at 2:15 PM. The performance will be in the Arbor Room of the Thornhill Education Center. Tickets are \$30 for non-members. This is part of the Arboretum's Chamber Concert Series. Visit mortonarb.org/events to learn more.

Chicago Presents offers **Paul O'Dette** and **Ronn McFarlane** on lutes on Sunday, January 8 at 3 PM at the Logan Center Performance Hall of the University of Chicago, 915 East 60th Street in Hyde Park. They will present *Two Lutes: Virtuoso Duets from Italy and England*, showing off the virtuosity of English and Italian composers in the age of Elizabeth.

And Chicago Presents also offers **Sequentia** on Friday April 28 at 7:30 PM at the Logan Center of the Arts Performance Hall. This celebrated choral group will offer *Monks Singing Pagans: Medieval songs of heroes, gods, and strong women*. Monks of the medieval period frequently borrowed from Roman and Greek authors.

The **Chicago Recorder Quartet** are performing at the Byron Colby Barn on Sunday March 19 at 4 PM. The concert is called "Surfing the Channel," a musical journey along the shores of England and France. The Byron Colby Barn is at 1561 Jones Point Road in Grayslake. Visit <http://libertyprairie.org/earlymusic> or call (847) 543-1202.

Black Tulip offers a Dutch program as part of the series, One Tree, Many Branches, at the Lutheran Church of the Ascension, 460 Sunset Road in Northfield, Illinois, on February 4, 2017, Blacktulip.org. Black Tulip features our own Mirja Lorenz on recorder.

Memberships are due

Note that local dues for the West Suburban Early Music Society are now \$30, and combined dues for WSEMS and the National ARS are \$80. WSEMS members should send their membership checks to:

Kathy Hall-Babis
245 Indianwood Lane
West Chicago, IL 60185-6211

Chicago chapter dues are \$40, or \$90 for the chapter and National ARS. An additional \$100 allows you to sponsor a monthly meeting. Send your dues to:

Chicago Chapter ARS
c/o Valerie DePriest
PO Box 2132
Oak Park, IL 60303-2132

Chapter Information

Our chapters are open to anyone, regardless of musical training, who wants to cultivate and sponsor love and appreciation of the art, history and use of the recorder and related instruments. Our meetings, programs and publications help members to come together and to find others with similar interests. Chicago Chapter Dues begin September 1, and West Suburban dues cover June 1 through May 31 and are due in September. Both groups include membership in either chapter and in the *American Recorder Society*. Members are listed in the ARS directory, receive *The American Recorder* magazine and this newsletter. The *Recorder Reporter* is published monthly from September to May jointly by the Chicago Chapter and the West Suburban Early Music Society.

Tuesday Night Recorder Sessions

The Oak Park Recorder Society offers a fine way to gain

regular experience in playing with a group. OPRS members meet Tuesday night, 8 to 10 PM, in the basement of the Pilgrim Congregational Church, 460 Lake Street. Go to the back entrance near the parking lot and ring the buzzer for the basement.

Chicago Chapter meetings: The third Sunday of each month, September through May, 2 PM, at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2012 West Dickens, Chicago. Enter the front door of the parish building west of the church and go to the large fellowship hall on the right.

Chicago Chapter ARS (ChicagoRecorders.org)

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Recorder Reporter contact:	Eric Stern (egstern1@netscape.net) (630) 428-8464

WSEMS meetings: Second Sunday of each month, September through April, first Sunday of May, 2-4:30 PM at the Downers Grove Friends meeting house, 5710 Lomond Avenue in Lisle. The church is located near Maple Avenue and 355. From 355, take the ramp and go east on Maple for 4/10 miles and turn right (south) onto Lomond street. The church is on the right.

Visit us at chicagorecorders.org

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