

Recorder Reporter

*Newsletter of two chapters of the American Recorder Society (ARS),
Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society*

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University of Chicago Folk Festival

The 57th Annual University of Chicago Folk Music Festival was a hopeful moment, free of the sense of gloom that haunted the 2016 event, which almost didn't happen for want of student volunteers. The University was able to recruit twice as many students to help out in 2017, evidently a better-informed group that recognizes the importance of blue grass to a well-rounded, educated citizen. And the president for 2017 already has ideas in mind for 2018. That is unusual in itself; for the first time in many years the festival has a student president lined up for the next season who has presided over the festival before. And the Folklore Society was able to restore the Sunday festival schedule, abandoned in 2016. Crowds were thin in the morning on Saturday, and the number of vendors and workshops have declined. But we can make plans for our 5th annual recorder workshop on Saturday, February 10, 2018, and maybe we can encourage the hurdy-gurdy players and the Russian folk singers to return, too.

did not have time to visit the Oriental Institute or the Museum of Science & Industry this year, and there was no snow so no cross country skiing in Jackson Park with my son as we saw in 2014. But future winters could be more promising. Join us in February of 2018 for snow and wind in Hyde Park, and recorder playing. And dancing.



Ben Eisenstein joins some younger players at the workshop

A fine morning gathering jamming on recorder with an eager audience, followed by jug band music and blue grass, watching Morris Dancers, and joining in with English Country Dance and with a barn dance. Recorder playing and dancing. How could we possibly improve on a day like that, unless we add sushi?

Shinju Sushi, 1375 east 53rd Street. My wife and I and son and daughter-in-law had lunch at Medici's, actually, but



Playing recorder in the library at Ida Noyes Hall

Recorders for Sale

Nancy Kelley of LaGrange, Illinois, is offering for sale two quality recorders once played by her late husband David. The instruments include a cherry Zen-on Tenor, 1990s, with the original case, for \$325, and a rosewood Mollenhauer soprano, 2002, with a hard shell case, for \$115. Contact Nancy Kelly at nancy@thekelleys.net.

Chicago Chapter News

After gathering at Covenant Presbyterian Church on Sundays since September 2009, the members of the Chicago Chapter all decided to become Protestants, at least for an afternoon. The 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing his 95 Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg approaches this October 31, and this grand moment had an influence on music in Europe in the 16th century just as it did on the theology and religion of the era, as well as the politics, economics, alliances—and war. Gail Gillispie returned for our February 19 meeting to talk about how sacred music and composition changed in Germany and France with the Reformation. So we played Lutheran hymns, and started with early devotional music that was popular in Germany before Luther and those who followed him transformed the religious landscape of the West. Of course we played an early version of *Ein feste Burg is unser Gott* with German lyrics (*A Mighty Fortress is Our God*), as well as pieces Luther composed himself, and works of contemporaries like Claude Goudimel, Johann Walther, and Heinrich Finck.



Gail Gillispie directs the Chicago chapter in February

Italy, Germany, and Spain had lay traditions of singing of sacred tunes, arising as early as the 12th century. In Italy, for example, religious social clubs known as *Laude* featured groups of men singing devotional works outside of church, though some of these singers were also lay members of the Dominican and Franciscan orders. After 1347 and the coming of the Black Death the *Laude* groups became flagellants, traveling from town to town, singing and beating themselves as an act of penitence. The flagellants were known as the *Geisslerlieder* in Germany, and these bizarre traveling singers, if you will, were common across Europe at the time.

The Church proved incapable of responding to the calamity, and clergy regularly panicked and fled. The

Black Death delivered a mortal blow to the influence and credibility of a Church that was already known for its corruption and decadence, and that had been divided as well from 1378 to 1414. The Great Schism featured two popes who claimed authority over the Church at the same time, each with his own followers, administration, and College of Cardinals. Further, this was an *era* of catastrophe. The calamities did not begin with the Black Death nor end with it. A famine in 1315-1317 led to millions of deaths across northern Europe, and the Bubonic plague returned more than once, along with other famine, war, and banditry. As a result the population of Europe fell by 75% between 1347 and 1470.

This deeply troubled age prompted a variety of movements toward personal piety and devotion in the 14th century, like the Lollards in England and the Hussites in Bohemia. This in turn created a demand for prayer books and sacred music that could be sung outside the church. But differences in culture and geography led Lutheran and Reformed music traditions in separate directions early on. Martin Luther served a church in a fragmented Germany, a collection of small provinces and fiefdoms with the Holy Roman Emperor exerting only nominal control. Germany did not unite to become the German Empire until 1870.

But France, where John Calvin was born and raised, had long been a single political entity with a powerful capital. The eyes of the French church in the 15th and 16th centuries were turned in the same direction as the eyes of anyone else who had or sought wealth and power—to the court in Paris. There clerical positions from local priests up to bishop's seats were handed out as political favors, and clerics tended to stay close to Paris if they could, regardless of their spiritual charge. Hence French priests frequently never visited their parishes, and some rural areas in France were known for peasants who never attended mass because there were no priests available to offer them the sacraments.

Martin Luther wanted to reform the church; John Calvin saw the church as unredeemable, and sought to create something entirely new. Martin Luther translated the Catholic liturgy and the Scriptures into German, and early Lutheran church music was rooted in the Latin hymns sung in church by monks or professional choirs (and sometimes, by nuns), and on the popular hymn singing tradition outside the church. Luther worked to combine these two traditions, writing his own music, in German, for parishioners, and encouraging them to join in. For the first time in centuries ordinary churchgoers were singing hymns as part of regular worship.

The French and Swiss Reformers also encouraged their congregations to sing hymns, but they sought music that

was much simpler, and willfully independent of the Roman tradition. Curiously, a poet in the French court, Clement Marot (1496-1544), was known at the time for translating the Psalms from Latin into French verse. Unlike the earlier Latin plainchant, these French psalms were written in meter, with stanzas, and when set to melodies of the time they became very popular songs, especially in the court. French and Swiss Protestants started using these Psalms in their worship services and they became identified with the Calvinist movement, to the point that the Sorbonne sought to ban them in 1542. So the church tried to prevent people from singing hymns in French based on the Psalms of David, but singing secular songs from the same period—a form so celebrated for double entendre that finding 16th century folk tunes that *aren't* filthy takes research—was left unrestricted.

Both French and German Protestants sang in unison. But as singing grew in popularity, both within and without the service of the church, and as the printing press made sheet music much more accessible, singing and playing instruments in harmony, frequently at home, became a standard. Jamming with friends after dinner in 16th century Europe was one of the most popular pastimes of the day. In Luther and Calvin's era, it was expected that educated ladies and gentlemen of reasonable means would know how to read music and play an instrument or follow a vocal part. So we owe part of our tradition of gathering to play recorder to the cultural forces of Reformation Europe, just as we owe to that era much of the music we sight read on Sunday afternoons and Tuesday nights. We share not just elegant harmonies of an earlier era, so unlike our own era of Twitter feeds and reinforced concrete. We also share in an historic musical practice.

Many thanks to Gail for another insightful afternoon, and for another afternoon of splendid music. Join us next on March 19 when Dennis Sherman will direct.

West Suburban Early Music Society

We gathered in Downers' Grove for our February meeting and welcomed Dennis Sherman, our conductor for a program entitled "Rockin' Rhythms". He offered a sampling of rhythmic conventions and styles from different periods. This included, "Oy comamos y bebamos", the "Albanian Folk Song" arranged by Emilie George, "In nomine XX: Crye", "O Felix Templum Jubila" by Johannes Cicconia, "Amor, and in te spera (4 Ballate)" by Francesco Landini. We had a good member turnout as well as a newcomer. We all had a rockin' time, learning some non-standard rhythms and how to approach the reading of unusual rhythmic ones.

We will welcome Dennis again on March 12. His program is still in the planning stages but here are some

hinted at possibilities: maybe it will be about dance rhythms and involve period costumed dancers! As soon as we have more information we'll email it along to our members and friends on our mailing list. And as always, if we get the music ahead of time we'll put it up on our website. Until then, think spring!—*Joanne Miller*



Dennis Sherman directs the WSEMS

Music and More Coming Up

On Monday March 20 the Art Institute of Chicago opens their new Deering Family Galleries of Medieval and Renaissance Art, Arms, and Armor. The medieval choral ensemble **Schola Antiqua** helps them celebrate the event by offering a concert in Fullerton Hall at the Art Institute on Sunday, March 26 at 3 PM.

"The program includes music inspired by beautifully illustrated books of hours and early sixteenth-century German art, as well as pieces celebrating the theme of arms and armor displayed in the galleries. The women of Schola Antiqua will perform works from a thirteenth-century liturgical book on exhibit, which is known to have been associated with a Dominican convent."

Spend the afternoon at the Art Institute enjoying Early Music and admiring the new galleries of arms & armor.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the **Music Institute of Chicago Chorale**, the Chorale offers a concert on Sunday, March 19 at 3 PM in Nichols Concert Hall, 1490 Chicago Avenue in Evanston. The music includes Thomas Tallis in his majestic motet *Spem in Alium* as well as works by Jacob Hassler, Ascanio Trombetti, Henry Purcel, and JS Bach, with singers accompanied by musicians on recorder, gamba, and trumpet. Visit www.musicinst.org/evanston-east. The Music Institute of Chicago is an easily walk from the Davis Street stop on the Purple line L train and from the Davis Street Evanston station on the Metra Union Pacific North Line.

The **Chicago Recorder Quartet**, featuring four people that we all really like, will play at the Byron Colby Barn on March 19 at 4 PM. Byron Colby Barn is at 32400 North Harris Road in Grayslake. Visit libertyprairie.org. Their concert, "Surfing the Channel," touring six centuries of music across the English Channel, French music of the Middle Ages to English Renaissance consort, from Machaut to Vaughan Williams.

Spring Recorder Workshop, April 2017

Please send in your workshop flyer now! Our workshop with Anne Timberlake is on April 8, 2017 at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2012 West Dickens. This is our regular monthly meeting place. We will play all day, starting at 9:30 and ending at 4 with a break for lunch, and will start with an hour or two of work on how, where, and why to articulate with recorder, and then move into the workshop theme, "Bad Boys."

The fee will be \$65 for members and \$75 for non-members. Lunch is on your own, but we can walk to any one of several restaurants near the site of the workshop.

Workshop brochures are available on the Chicago chapter web site, ChicagoRecorders.org, or email msjddawson@sbcglobal.net to have one emailed or sent to you by US mail. Covenant Presbyterian Church is at 2012 West Dickens in the Bucktown neighborhood of Chicago, near Damen and Armitage and near exit 47 on the Kennedy. Street parking is available, and a lot behind the church on Charleston may have spaces. The church is also easily accessible by public transportation. Take the Blue line elevated train to either Damen or Western Avenue and walk (www.transitchicago.com), or take either the #49 Western Avenue Bus or the #50 Damen Avenue bus. The church is also near the Clybourn stop on the Metra Union Pacific North and North West train lines (www.metrarail.com).

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.

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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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