

Recorder Reporter

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

Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

Our 65th Anniversary Year!

December 2023

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Chicago Chapter News

An even dozen (including the director) enjoyed our November 19th meeting, where we had fun while working hard. In the first hour, Lisette alternated Rooda exercises with a music piece in the same key. We paired Rooda's "b." seconds exercise (with no flats!) with *La Alfonsina* by Johannes Ghiselin (1445-1511). This had a canonical start with staggered entrances, turning even more enjoyable with later challenging rhythmic effects. We then matched Rooda's "e." seconds exercise (with no accidentals!) with *La Mantovana* by Gasparo Zanetti (1600-1660). This was a simple-looking dance-like piece, but made quite lively and interesting by Lisette's articulation and phrasing suggestions.

After a break, we proceeded to work on *La Marche des Rois* for the chapter to play at our Yuletide concert. If you have not been assigned a part by now, please attend in December to sit back and enjoy the performance. This is an updated arrangement of a traditional French tune by chapter member Peter Beck. We rehearsed it throughout the afternoon, attempting to apply Lisette's performance suggestions as we played. We broke from rehearsal to sight-read a four-part fugue by Bach, then returned to more work on *La Marche*. We had another reprieve to play *La Todeschina*, a canzonetta by Gioseffo (Giuseppe) Guami (1542-1611), before running through the piece one last time.

During the meeting, we also discussed the prospective workshop we plan to present on February 10, 2024, at the University of Chicago Folk Music Festival. Several of the above pieces were mentioned as possible February demonstration selections, maybe on low or mixed choir. If you would like to participate, send Lisette an email or let her know in December. Join us on December 17 for our traditional year-end Yuletide concert—*Thanks to Larry Johnson for contributing this review of our November meeting.*

Yuletide Concert

Our annual Yuletide Concert for the Chicago Chapter is in a few weeks, Sunday December 17 at 1 PM. Send the name of your group, the

names of the participants, the names of the pieces you plan to play, and the composers, to Mark Dawson at msjddawson@sbcglobal.net. Please feel free to bring some snacks to share, and plan to stay after the concert and holiday festivities to join in some jamming to close the year making music together

West Suburban Early Music Society

The West Suburban Early Music Society met on November 12th and played a variety of music together as a large group. These included the Renaissance pieces *Earle of Salisbury* by William Byrd and *Bouree I, Bouree 2*, and *Spagnoletta* by Michael Praetorius. We also played *Moonswing*, jazz music arranged by Inga Funck, who offers a weekly class in California that one of our members takes via the internet. We played *Wandsbecker Tanze* by Hans Poser, a 20th century composer for recorder, and two of movements from *Miscellaneous Thoughts on Music* provided in the most recent ARS publication. It was written in 1955 by Erich Katz. We found it quite discordant as was much of the music in that time period. Finally, we played *Bergamasca*, also written by a 20th century composer, Larry Bernstein. It was a quite melodic, a marked contrast from the Katz piece.



Alternate Altos

Following the break, we separated into two groups. The Alternate Altos gathered to play *Conuerte nos*, by Laurentus Lemin, the Grave movement from Francesco Barsanti's *Sonata Opus One*, and Glen Shannon's duet, *Carefree Afternoon*. The Da Capo group enjoyed playing three Playford dances, *The Beggar Boy*, *Chestnut* or

Dove's Vagary, and *The Chirping of the Lark*. We then played *Sentimental Songs*, an arrangement by David Goldstein, from the ARS Member's Library, 1990. These included *The Little Brown Church in the Vale*, and *Annie Laurie*. We then attempted two more challenging pieces, *Pange lingua*, by Touront, and *Puzzle Canon*, by John Lloyd, both Renaissance music.



Da Capo Group

We look forward to meeting again at the Friends meetinghouse in Downers Grove on December 10th. We will play holiday music. Join us!—*Kathy Hall-Babis*

A Wonderful Evening with the Vespers of 1610

On October 28th, I attended an excellent performance of Claudio Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine* at the First United Church of Oak Park. Organized by the Oriana Singers, and including the City Voices choir, the Chicago ARS was also well represented by Patrick O'Malley and Lisette Kielson on recorders and chapter member Carl Foote in the choir. As well as recorders, period instruments included cornetti, theorbo, violins, sackbuts and chamber organ.

It's interesting to note that, while Monteverdi wrote parts for up to ten voices, he wrote parts for only a few instruments, for example, cornetto, "trombone", flauto, violin, basso continuo, and in only five of the thirteen 'movements' of the vespers. There also arise questions on the number of singers; whether to use one-on-a-part or a choir. As a result, there is a lot of room for variation.

Lisette and Patrick have performed in this work a number of times, and Lisette remarks "on how every performance is unique because of how an ensemble might choose to orchestrate sections with the various instruments, especially the recorders, cornetti, and sackbuts showcasing their colors (quasi double choirs) on the ritornelli." For me, the chance to attend a performance of the Vespers was overdue, since I first heard a recording years ago. I had missed the

opportunity to attend in 2010, the 400th anniversary of its publication, in the National Cathedral in Washington DC, no less. This recent performance was worth the wait! The size and talents of the choir, the quality of the soloists, the number and virtuosity of the instrumentalists, plus a wonderfully appropriate venue for solo and combined sounds, really made for a beautiful and impressive experience.

The original source of this work is just one printing of part books from 1610, which also included a full six-part Mass setting. The part books weren't printed again for another 200 years. With no complete score and all the many parts in Renaissance notation, it seems an incredibly daunting task to transform the printed material into a single and complex whole. The Vespers is accurately described as a monumental and ambitious example of the transition from Renaissance to Baroque musical styles.

As Patrick observes, "it's a magnificent composition, still thrilling to hear more than 400 years later." For Carl, "it was a wonderful weekend; a special time to have the music, the early instruments, the acoustics, come together as they did."

I agree with all three participants' comments. This Vespers performance provided a single awe-inspiring experience by bringing together Monteverdi's unique musical vision, an impressive array of talented musicians and the perfect space to contain and enhance it all.—
Larry Johnson

The Music Scene in 2023

The video "**Why Pop Music is Dying**," observes that the music industry today is stagnant, with few new stars appearing and popular music in decline.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN-Q70iF9IM>

The video claims that TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter have changed the nature of the music industry over the last ten years, promoting artists of doubtful ability but who manage to create videos that go viral. Before 2010, young musicians often worked in obscurity for years, playing at small venues while they gradually developed a stage presence and built an audience. The recording industry only noticed them when it was clear that they were popular—and talented.

Now music industry executives are so afraid that they might miss out on the next TikTok sensation that they sign contracts with TikTok stars even though many of these acts lack skill and burn out quickly. Meanwhile the enormous pressure on "successful" TikTok influencers to post daily videos to the site also leads to mediocrity. As a

result real stars fail to emerge; too much content, not enough practice. The field of pop music today is noted for vast amounts of lousy art.

Launched in 2018, TikTok now has 1.7 billion users, 150 million in the United States, including two thirds of all teenagers. Over one billion videos are viewed on the platform every single day. In 2022, more than 100,000 new songs were uploaded to streaming services every day. But TikTok is part of something much broader, a relentless realm of options for modern entertainment. The video observes:

Being a pop star or a rock star no longer holds the same cache as that it once did. Pop music is no longer at the forefront of youth culture or pop culture for that matter—social media is. Countless articles over the years have proclaimed that entrepreneurs and influencers are the new rock stars and pop stars. How can the music industry compete against all of the other entertainment and gaming options available, when it never had to previously? In an era of *infinite choice*, the abundance of entertainment is overwhelming.

Video gaming has moved past juggernaut status to become a whole separate sub-civilization. Some 227 million American men and women play video games several times a week, two thirds of the population. Nearly 75% of households feature at least one person who plays video games regularly. Some 200 video streaming services have emerged, desperately trying to compete by offering staggering amounts of movie and television content. I should mention YouTube as well, 2.7 billion active users, besides the rest of the social media space.

That doesn't leave much air to breathe for the rest of us. Movie theater attendance is still down by a third since the pandemic, and by more than half since 2019, following a long-term trend. People started going to movies less after the Internet emerged, and in more recent years production companies undermined theaters further by moving content to streaming too quickly. Audiences complain about the poor quality of recent films, but more important, going to the movies these days is too expensive—and not very convenient. Living history museums have been fading for many years (attendance at Colonial Williamsburg is about half today what they knew in 1985) and participation in Civil War gatherings and other historical re-enactment events has dropped significantly too, and more recently, as this community ages. And we could tell stories of other traditional practices and communities that are fading.

Our two chapters are obliged to compete against all of these entertainment options as well. But we *can*

compete—we can offer something social media can't. Real community, besides quality art. We offer something old, but also distinct. For those who want something more than watching videos on a cell phone, who want to be part of a fellowship beyond a long list of “friends” that they will never meet in person, we gather on Sunday afternoons once a month, and make terrific music together.

Music and More

The **Chicago Recorder Trio** plays at Byron Colby Barn, 1561 Jones Point Road, Grayslake, Illinois on Sunday, December 10 at 4 PM. The trio features three friends of the Chicago chapter, Lisette Kielson, Patrick O'Malley, and Mirja Lorenz. Tickets are \$20 at the door, cash or check only, and free for those under 16. To learn more visit:

<https://www.lisettekielson.com/upcomingevents>.

The **Festival of Ancient Music Utrecht** offers Monteverdi's *Vox Luminis en Capriccio Stravagante*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01CZiNxFBaw>

This piece features just about everything when it comes to early music, including lutes, recorders, krumphorns, sackbut, and more.

Another agreeable collection of Renaissance instruments and vocalists. **Cantar Lontano** here sings with Capella de la Torre, in missas by Josquin:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O71wjSoystA>

From the Early Music Festival Utrecht 2018.

Here **Marie-Sophie Pollak** sings the *Alleluja* from Mozart's *Exsultate, jubilate*, at the Castle Nyphenburg:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxO9p3LJoKM>

She sings out the window, to a crowd on the plaza below.

Grace Lutheran Church, 7300 West Division in River Forest, offers their 53rd annual **Bach Cantata Vespers** on Sunday afternoons once a month until May 2024, with the next event offered on Sunday January 28. They also provide a 10 AM vespers on Christmas morning, Monday December 25. Each afternoon gathering opens with a lecture at 3 PM, followed by an organ prelude at 3:45 and the Bach at 4 PM. Visit <https://bachvespers.org/> to learn more and to find the schedule for the upcoming season.

Two more anniversaries in 2024; Bach Week reaches 50 years, and Handel Week holds its 25th season. For **Handel Week**, performances are on Sunday February 18 at 3 PM, featuring Handel's Water Music, Sunday February 25 at 3 PM, The Intimate Handel, and Sunday March 3 at 3 PM, the Messiah. All performances are at Pilgrim Congregational Church, 460 Lake Street in Oak

Park. Receptions follow, and pre-concert lectures are provided at 2:15 PM for the February 18 and March 3 events. To learn more visit www.handelweek.com.

For **Bach Week**, visit <https://bachweek.org>. Their concerts are on Friday April 26 at 7:30 and 10 PM at the Music Institute of Chicago in Evanston, Sunday April 28 at 3 PM at All Saints Church in the Ravenswood neighborhood in Chicago, and Sunday May 5 at 4 PM at St. Luke's Church in Evanston. Bach in the Subways is free on March 24 at 12:15 in Union Station in Chicago.

Join **Apollo's Fire** for Wassail, An Irish-Appalachian Christmas at the Museum of Contemporary Art on Chicago Avenue near Michigan, an easy walk from the Red line subway stop at Chicago. Both performances are Friday December 8, 4 PM and 7:30 PM. This program follows the hopes and fears of Irish immigrants to America, and features fiddlers, medieval harp, bagpipes, and hammered dulcimer. Apollo's Fire, formed in 1992, is the premier Baroque ensemble from Cleveland. Visit <https://apollosfire.org/event/wassail-chicago>.

Visit the **Smart Museum of Art**, of the University of Chicago, at 5550 South Greenwood in Hyde Park, for the exhibit *Ruth Duckworth: Life as a Unity*, until February 4. Born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1919, Duckworth left for England in 1936 to avoid Nazi restrictions on her study of art. She moved to Chicago in 1964. Duckworth considered herself a sculptor in ceramics, and this exhibit features her extensive work in this medium. Duckworth's monumental *Clouds over Lake Michigan*, once on display in the Chicago Board of Options Exchange Building in the Loop, was installed permanently in the lobby of the Regenstein Library recently. Both the library lobby and the Smart Gallery are well worth a visit. The Smart Gallery is open free Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 to 5 and until 8 PM on Thursdays.

More events coming up at the **University of Chicago**. Bach at Bond, Bond Chapel, 1025 East 58th Street, on Monday December 4 at 3:30 PM, featuring the complete organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Monday December 11 join a Christmas event at Bond chapel at 2:30 PM, and Brass & Pipes are offered on Sunday, December 10 at 3 PM at Rockefeller Chapel. This event is also free, and with organ music, hot cider is served. The traditional Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols services is offered at Rockefeller Chapel at 4 PM on December 24, featuring the Rockefeller Chapel Choir and the Rockefeller Children's Choir.

Chapter Information

Our chapters are open to anyone, regardless of musical training, who wants to cultivate appreciation of the art, history and use of the recorder and related instruments. Our

meetings, programs and publications help members to come together with 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 as well as this newsletter. The *Recorder Reporter* is published monthly, September to May by the Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society.

Chicago Chapter ARS (ChicagoRecorders.org)

President	Mark Dawson
Vice President	Open
Secretary	Open
Treasurer	Cheryl Kreiman
Facebook	Hyacinth Egner & Cheryl Kreiman
Web site	Larry Johnson & Peter Beck
Members at Large	Ruth Dunnell, Carl Foote
Chapter Representative	Larry Johnson
Music Director:	Lisette Kielson lisettekielson@gmail.com

You can contact the chapter through our web site.

Like us on Facebook: 
<https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoARS>

Chicago Chapter meetings: The third Sunday of each month, September through May, 1 PM, at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2012 West Dickens, Chicago. Enter either door of the parish building west of the church and go to the large fellowship hall.

West Suburban Early Music Society (westsubems.org)

Convener/Chapter Representative:	Kathy Hall-Babis (kathy.hallbabis@gmail.com)
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WSEMS meetings: Second Sunday of each month, September through April, first Sunday of May, 2-5 PM at the Downers Grove Friends meeting house, 5710 Lomond Avenue in Downers Grove. 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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