

Recorder Reporter

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

Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

Our 65th Anniversary Year!

April 2024

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Chicago Chapter News

Yet another fine meeting on Sunday March 17. Peter Beck opened with a series of jazz pieces. We've played jazz on recorder before, but never with this level of attention to the craft of jazz itself.

A thoroughly American style, jazz originated in New Orleans before World War I, as an African-American form, and moved to northern cities as part of the Great Migration that began in 1910. Chicago emerged as a very important early center for jazz development.



Peter said that his main goal for the session was to get us accustomed to playing in the jazz feel, which is known as “swing.” Swing in jazz is a way of representing a set of 8th notes, and in fact swing is only about 8th notes. Swing is not a dotted 8th and a 16th. The playing is sort of a triplet, but swing is more a matter of instinct than technique, something more for a smoky club at 10 PM than for a midterm. Dixieland, a polyphonic early form of jazz, is what Bach’s Brandenburg Concerti might sound like if they were played with a swing feel instead of straight eights. The concept of swing itself is hard to teach on paper, and harder to explain; the idea is to learn it by listening and feeling. You don’t put swing in a score any more than the notes for an improvisation, other than “Swing” up top where you’d find the tempo indication.

In March of 1980 I interviewed Dick Buckley (1924 – 2010), host of Jazz Forum for WBEZ radio, for my college newspaper. Nobody knew more about jazz than

Dick Buckley in those days. For him, swing was something that you could hear but not define. He described jazz in 11 words, quoting Duke Ellington—“It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing.”

It’s a feeling not everyone is able to get. The right musicians under the right conditions can manage to swing. I don’t know, one of these days I’ll have to sit down and figure out something to say about that question.

The swing is always in context, with the rhythm section—piano, bass, and drums—providing the straight beat against the other instruments offering swing. Jazz is the source of the term “walking bass”; in typical jazz ensembles, the bass is a string bass. The bass doesn’t swing, it’s supposed to set the cadence for the rest of the band to follow, unless the bass player is called on to improvise. For us, the bass recorder serves as a walking bass rather nicely.

So we did some swinging on recorder. We played *Ja-Da* (first straight, and then swung), *St. James Infirmary* (a minor blues), *Sonnymoon for Two* (a blues where we tried to get the feel for “dragging” the notes), and *When the Saints Go Marching In* (learning about “stop time”).

The genius of jazz is improvisation. The form is all about spontaneous melodies; Peter arranged the melodies of the tunes for recorder ensemble, and then added sections where the ensemble played a supporting role so that someone could solo. Our solos were provided skillfully by Dennis Sherman and Jacob Shermer on soprano.

In the past, players learned everything by ear, and visual cues were also important—a soloist would decide he was on his final “chorus” and indicate the return to ensemble playing or the next soloist’s turn to shine by raising a fist, or pointing to his head, indicating the last time around, and then return to the “head” (beginning) of the tune.

After our swinging first hour, Lisette Kielson directed Glen Shannon’s *Friendship Canzona* with the goal of offering that as the chapter piece to play at our spring concert on May 19. We also played a six-part madrigal by Gesualdo and Jamie Allen’s *een mentaliteit*, a new piece offered by the ARS as a Play the Recorder Month composition for March of 2024.

We gather again on Sunday April 21. Nancy Chabala opens, and will offer a session of playing on crumhorns. If you have a set of crumhorns bring them along, though the same pieces will also work on recorder. Then, Lisette returns to *Friendship Canzona* for the 2 to 4 PM session, a final opportunity to rehearse before the spring concert. We will also explore Priuli's 7-part *Canzone* and selections from Challinger's *Ballad, Blues, and Riffs*.

We were sad to learn of the sudden death of Darlene Kay on Saturday March 23. We plan to publish a tribute to Darlene in our next newsletter, May 2024. Please contact Mark Dawson (msjddawson@sbcglobal.net) if you have photos of Darlene, or memories to share.

West Suburban Early Music Society

Members of the West Suburban Early Music Society were led by Dennis Sherman in a number of pieces written or transcribed by Dick Wood. Over 100 works attributed to Wood are on the ARS web site, even though he had no formal musical training. Wood took up the recorder in his later years and began composing and arranging in the late 1980s. He played in several recorder groups in his home city of Colorado Springs and was a frequent guest leader at the Denver chapter.



WSEMS played Wood's transcription of *The Water is Wide*, a well-known English/Scottish folksong, and *Bethena, A Concert Waltz*, by Scott Joplin. Wood wrote a fun piece called *Hemiola Picnic* which is loaded with hemiolas! We also played a march, *Anthem*, and *Fantasy*, a polyphonic composition. Finally, we played *Laudes Deo*, by Christopher Tye, a Renaissance composer. After the break, five members of the Alternate Altos played a selection of Elizabethan and Renaissance duets and trios, and the Biedermeier Dancing tunes from Eisenstadt.

The DaCapo group played a variety of music, including *When Daisies Pied* by Thomas Arne (1710-1778) and *Locus iste*, a lovely number that was composed by Anton Bruckner and transcribed by Nancy Orbison, a friend of ours from the Clearing workshop in Door County.

Finally, we played two modern pieces, *Ascendance*, by Bruce Sankey, available on the ARS website, and Mozart's *Minuetto – Recorder Quartet*, available on musescores.com. Elaine Gillies, a retired music director, leads our April meeting. Please join us on April 14th at 2 PM, Friends Meetinghouse in Downers Grove.—Kathy Hall-Babis

Spring concert celebration

This is our 65th season with the Chicago chapter, and the West Suburban Early Music Society has been meeting for 40 years. We are inviting members of the WSEMS to join us at our spring concert on May 19 starting at 1 PM.

We invite your creativity. Can you offer something special for our May 19 concert to mark 65 years of music making on Sunday afternoons? To take part, send the names of the people in your ensemble, the name of the piece or pieces you plan to perform, with the composer for each, to Mark Dawson at msjddawson@sbcglobal.net. Join us for a reception after the concert, and then for our traditional after concert jam session, directed by Nancy Chabala, to close an excellent season. The chapter will perform together as well, Glen Shannon's *Friendship Canzona*.

Early Music Festival, Whitewater

You can now register online for the annual music festival at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater. This excellent annual gathering runs Friday night May 31 through Sunday afternoon June 2, a great time for jamming and classes in recorder, singing, and gamba for all talent levels.

For those of you who are new friends to the Chicago chapter, Whitewater is a terrific weekend of fellowship and music making! I attended my first as a beginner recorder player. I had started lessons about four weeks earlier on alto and had no music background. So took the beginner's class, 8 kids and me, and set to work. I mourned that I had not started on the instrument earlier, but I figured that I could keep practicing and learning and in another year or two I could take parts in the Friday and Saturday night jam sessions at Whitewater, and contribute. And that is what happened. Many wonderful memories of music making in the years since. Ask any of the chapter members who have been attending Whitewater for years and watch his or her eyes light up.

Like so many other venerable traditions and institutions, Whitewater took a beating during the Covid-19 pandemic. But we have been recovering since. The last two years were both excellent events, lots of terrific music making with 40 attending in 2022 and 60 in 2023. We look forward to growing back to pre-pandemic levels. Whitewater Wisconsin is about 100 miles north of downtown Chicago. The campus is pretty spread out, so

many of us are used to walking a long way from the dining hall to the music center where the classes are held. Recorder playing is worth a long walk in the rain, in my view, though many of us drive. This year, however, we have been offered lodging in a new set of dorms that are close to the center of campus, making our journey easier. We also get suites for up to four musicians, and a shared bathroom. The festival offers new instructors for 2024, and new opportunities for loud band, including bag pipes, as well as extra classes for viol players, and new Saturday evening events including open mic (on recorder?) and an ice cream social. Honeysuckle Music will have a table again to provide sheet music and other items of interest; to order ahead and have something waiting for you when you arrive, visit www.honeysucklemusic.com.

Better Skills (and More Fun) With A Mixed Consort Class Online!

The Oregon Renaissance Band Trio, featuring Gayle Neuman, Phil Neuman and Laura Kuhlman, offers two mixed Consort Classes starting in the week of April 1, now open for registration. Several members of the Chicago chapter have joined previous online classes with the trio and have thoroughly enjoyed them and come away with a wealth of great music to share.

The Advanced Consort Class includes playing a mélange of Renaissance, Baroque, medieval and modern music with the trio, in real time, with performance advice, historical information and lively banter. They also offer a class for Intermediate Consort with a similar mix of music, but with technique and interpretation advice geared toward the intermediate player. This class offers more repetition and a somewhat smaller repertory.

To learn more and to register for either class, visit: <https://www.emgo.org/consort-class-online>. The ORB Trio invites you to come join the fun!—Larry Johnson

Music of the Middle Ages

The Newberry Consort offered a concert over the weekend of March 2, “I Sing a New Song,” featuring music offered by minstrels in medieval Europe.

Lots of great choral and instrumental works from the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, and featuring the medieval instrument zoo, shawms, recorders, rebec, slide trumpet, organetto, and bagpipe, besides drums and singing, and on Friday in the elegant Gothic confines of Bond Chapel at the University of Chicago.

But one of the most interesting features of the evening was to learn about the history of the minstrel, and how minstrels learned their trade. The program notes provided a fine summary of this early music form.



The minstrel was a musician who performed for various regional functions throughout Europe. Like the jongleurs, troubadours, and trouveres who came before them, minstrels were usually secular musicians who performed for the populace. Unlike their predecessors, who often combined poetry, theater, and other art forms with music, minstrels specialized in music alone, and their careers evolved to be less itinerant and more colloquial. Often, minstrels became members of regional guilds which advocated for their musicians, protected trade secrets, and controlled musical work in their cities. Other minstrels were civic musicians performed necessary musical functions for their regions, and still others worked for royal courts. Some were freelancers who worked alone. Almost all minstrels played a variety of instruments, and some likely sang. Many were men, but some were women, as shown by a surviving list of Paris minstrel guild members that include at least eight women's names. They learned their trade through an apprentice system and their techniques and music were passed down by oral tradition. Remarkably, one way that minstrels learned new music was by attending a continent-wide musical convention known as a minstrel school.

Once a year, during the season of Lent, when they didn't have much work to do anyway, minstrels travelled from all over Europe to a designated city where a minstrel school was held. The minstrel's guilds or sponsors would often pay for their members to travel to the event. The school was held on the fourth Sunday of Lent, giving minstrels enough time to travel the necessary distance, often hundreds of miles over dangerous terrain. Once there, hundreds of minstrels would perform for each other, hold musical competitions, network with one another, and share new songs from their homelands. Among the many activities of the minstrel schools, some musicians came to seek new employment, recruit minstrels for their towns, purchase new instruments, and learn the art by playing and singing songs with one another. When the school was over, the minstrels would return to their home cities, where they would share the

music they learned with all who listened. We have records of minstrel schools in Brussels in 1366 and 1442, Mons in 1339, 1406, and 1422, Valenciennes in 1432, Cambai six times over 14th and 15th centuries, and probably many times in Paris as well.

Music and More

The **Madison Bach Musician's** Summer Chamber Music [Workshop](#) will be held July 9 to 12 at Christ Presbyterian Church, 944 East Gorham Street in Madison, Wisconsin. Lisette Kielson will be one of the faculty offering ensemble coaching and classes, focusing on music from the Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical periods. "It is our mission to provide a place where chamber music lovers can come together and work intensely for a week with highly skilled faculty." Lunch and snacks are included. To learn more visit:

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, 939 Hinman Avenue in Evanston. The final performance of the season features the Bach Mass in B Minor. This is also the last concert of the Festival! After 50 years, the legendary Bach Week Festival comes to a close.

Richard Webster, the music director since 1974, says "My heart bursts with gratitude for the Bach Week family—the passionate musicians, appreciative audiences, generous supporters, tireless volunteers, and expert staff. My head spins with blissful memories of glorious music making in collaboration with world-class artists, as well as with 10-year-old choristers whose hearts were set ablaze by singing Bach's sixteenth notes."

Ah, well. I am very sad to see this grand tradition come to an end. For 30 years or more I have been savoring magnificent music from Bach Week, and I am thankful beyond measure for so much beauty and wonder.

I know, I know, life is all about change and goodbyes, the old yields to the new, one door closes and a new one opens, blah, blah, blah. I'm 64, every time I look in the mirror my beard looks more grey than it was the day before. Still. Couldn't we just for **once** say goodbye to, say, HipHop instead? Water in plastic bottles? Mega pickup trucks? Enjoy Bach Week for one last time in 2024, closing with the majestic B Minor Mass.

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	Carl Foote
Facebook	Hyacinth Egner & Cheryl Kreiman
Web site	Larry Johnson & Peter Beck
Members at Large	Ruth Dunnell
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)
Vice Convener	Linda Schub Lgshub@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Stephanie Duesing (stephduesing@gmail.com)
Secretary/Membership:	Elaine Gillies (Jegillies@comcast.net)
Hospitality:	Norm Adams Norman_adams@frontier.com
Web page support	Chris Culp cg.culp@gmail.com (630) 415-8413

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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